

🎯 Finding the main idea

- ✓ **Short passage:** usually stated in the first sentence and restated in the last
- ✓ **Longer passage:** often the last sentence of the first paragraph, sometimes in the second
- ✓ The **topic** is what the passage is about — named most often, or referred to by synonyms and pronouns
- ✓ The **main point** is what the author says about the topic: the new claim, explanation or perspective
- ✓ The right answer often **paraphrases** the main idea; a single detail or example is never it
- ✓ Ignore details that confuse you on the first read

↔ Old idea, new idea

Science and social-science passages often open with what people used to believe. The main idea follows the transition.

Old idea (background)	New idea (the main point)
For decades, people believed...	However, / In fact, / Actually,
Scientists have long thought...	New research shows...
It is commonly thought...	A new study suggests...
Everyone knows that...	Recently, scientists have learned...
In the past, people thought...	But is that really true?

😊 Fiction passages

- ✓ Look for the **moment of change** — in a character, a setting or the mood
- ✓ A turning point may be flagged by a rhetorical question or by narrative emphasis
- ✓ Characters are complex: their feelings can be mixed, even contradictory

🔍 Evaluating an argument

- ✓ An argument states a **claim** and supports it with facts, examples and details — the claim itself is still an opinion
- ✓ It may anticipate a **counterargument** and refute it, and often ends with a **call to action**
- ✓ **Strengthen or weaken:** which finding, if true, supports the claim, or most undercuts it?
- ✓ **Assumption:** what must be true for the conclusion to follow

❓ Main-idea questions look like

- ✓ The main idea or primary purpose of the passage is...
- ✓ Which is the best paraphrase of the main idea?
- ✓ Which would be the best title for the passage?
- ✓ The author would most likely agree with...
- ✓ Who is the intended audience?

☰ Supporting details

- ✓ Find the main point **first**: a detail is right only if it supports it
- ✓ Predict which detail fits before reading the choices
- ✓ Reject details the passage never mentions, or that don't bear on the main point
- ✓ Watch for **NOT** and **EXCEPT**: every choice but one is true, and you want the one that isn't

👤 Title and audience

- ✓ **Purpose:** to inform, persuade, entertain or challenge
- ✓ The author's **point of view** and **tone** — serious or amusing, sincere or cynical
- ✓ The likely age, place, profession and interests of the intended readers
- ✓ What readers are assumed to believe already

⚖ Fact or opinion

- ✓ **Fact:** can be independently verified — a measurement, a date, a cited source
Muntjac deer live in forests, grasslands and hilly areas.
- ✓ **Opinion** (subjective): *I think, in my opinion*, value judgments such as *better* or *worse*, or a claim with no support
Muntjac deer are the cutest deer species.