

STEPS IN COMPREHENDING A PARAGRAPH

1. DETERMINE THE TOPIC

(a word, name, or phrase that tells who or what the paragraph is about)

The topic will be part of the main idea sentence.



2. DETERMINE THE MAIN IDEA

(a sentence that tells the author's *most* important point about the topic)

The main idea will either be stated or implied.



Check first to see if you can find a stated main idea sentence in the paragraph.



If you cannot find a stated main idea sentence, then you must formulate (create) a sentence that tells the main idea.

UNDERLINE THE STATED MAIN IDEA SENTENCE

(stated by the author as a sentence in the paragraph)

--OR--

FORMULATE AN IMPLIED MAIN IDEA SENTENCE

(a sentence *created by you, the reader*, that tells the author's most important point about the topic)



Depending on the type of "ingredients" the author gives you in the paragraph, use one of these three formulas:



FORMULA 1

If there is a sentence in the paragraph that *almost* tells the main idea, *add the missing information* (usually the topic) to that sentence.

--or--



FORMULA 2

If there are two sentences in the paragraph that each give *part* of the main idea, *combine* those sentences in to *one* sentence.

--or--



FORMULA 3

If the paragraph consists of details, *write a general sentence that sums them up*. You may have to use words that are not in the paragraph.

Any main idea (stated or implied) must have all of these characteristics:

1. It must be a *complete sentence*. (It is never written as a question.)
2. The sentence must *contain the topic*.
3. It must tell the *author's most important point* about the topic.
4. It *sums up the details* in the paragraph.
5. All of the *details* in the paragraph *explain or tell more about* the information in *the main idea sentence*.

If the sentence you have underlined or written does not have all of these characteristics, then it is not correct.