

The main idea of a story tells what the whole story is about. Being able to tell the main idea of a story means that you have answered the questions “*What is the story mainly about?*” or “*What point is the author trying to make?*”

Steps to Finding the Main Idea

Step 1

Read the story.

Step 2

Look at the details of the story. To do this, you need to read each sentence carefully and decide if it tells a small part of the whole story. If it does, then it is a detail. When you put all of the details together, you get the information you need to find the main idea.

Step 3

Decide on the main idea. Ask yourself, “*What do the details tell me about?*” Sometimes, the main idea is a sentence in the story. Other times, you have to come up with the main idea yourself. Remember, all the sentences add up to the main idea.

To help you remember these steps, write them in your own words.

Step 1

Step 2

Step 3

Use what you learned to find the main idea of the story below.

Cats' whiskers help cats with the sense of touch. The whiskers are attached to nerves in the skin. When the whiskers touch something, the nerves send messages to the brain. Cats' whiskers help them move around in the dark. They help cats tell when the flow of air changes direction. They also help cats know if they can fit through an opening.

Fill in the blanks to find the details of the story.

Detail 1: The _____ are attached to _____ in the skin.

Detail 2: The _____ send messages to the _____ when the whiskers touch something.

Detail 3: Cats' whiskers help them move around in the _____.

Detail 4: They help cats tell when the flow of _____ changes _____.

Detail 5: They also help cats know if they can fit through an _____.

Now write the main idea. It is the sentence that is not a detail.

1. _____

Shade in the letter next to the correct answer.

2. *This story mainly tells*

- Ⓐ how cats' brains work.
- Ⓑ how cats' whiskers help with the sense of touch.
- Ⓒ how cats move around in the dark.

Have you ever been reading and run across a word you didn't know? How did you figure out what the word meant? Context is a way to figure out a word's meaning. Context means using all of the words in a sentence or story to understand one word. Think of context as a jigsaw puzzle. Looking at the pieces of the puzzle help you figure out where the word fits in.

Steps to Using Context

Step 1

Read the story. If you come across a word that you don't know, keep reading! Remember, the other words can help you figure out what the word means.

Step 2

Go back to the word you don't know. Read the words around it. Think of the words as clues. Ask yourself, "*What do the words tell me?*" If you are given a set of words and asked to choose one, plug each choice into the sentence. The right answer is the word that fits in with the other words in the sentence or story.

Step 3

Decide what the word means or which word fits the best.

To help you remember these steps, write them in your own words.

Step 1

Step 2

Step 3

Use what you learned to find which word fits into the story below.

Robert searched his bag frantically. “*Where are they?!*” he thought. Today was the first day of soccer tryouts, and he couldn’t find his shin guards. All the other guys were dressed and ready. Robert really wanted to make the team. This was not the kind of first _____ he wanted to make on the coach!

Fill in the blanks to find the clues in the story.

Clue 1: It was the _____ day of soccer tryouts.

Clue 2: All the other guys were _____ and _____.

Clue 3: Robert really wanted to _____ the team.

Shade in the letter next to the correct answer.

1. *This was not the kind of first _____ he wanted to make on the coach!*

The word that best completes this sentences is

- Ⓐ impression
- Ⓑ picture
- Ⓒ joke

Write your own sentence using your answer to Question 1.

2. _____

Everything you read has facts in it. Facts are bits of information that focus on the details of a story. They are things like dates, names, places, and things. Facts are things that you know are true. If you don't know a fact to be true, you can always look it up to make sure that it is.

So how do you find the facts in a story? That's easy! Just ask yourself *who*, *what*, *when*, *where*, *why*, *which*, and *how* type questions. Each type of question calls attention to a specific fact in a story.

Use what you learned to find the facts in the story below.

We don't usually see comets. The only time we see them is when they pass close to the sun. In 1705, a scientist named Edmond Halley said that comets seen in 1531, 1607, and 1682 were really one comet. He said that this comet showed that it traveled around the sun. Halley said that the comet would come back every 76 years or so. He was right! The comet is now called Halley's Comet.

Shade in the letter next to the correct answer. Then write the type of question (*who*, *what*, *where*, *when*, *why*, or *how*) on the line.

1. Who is Halley's Comet named after?
- Ⓐ a doctor named Edmond Halley
Ⓑ a scientist named Edmond Halley
Ⓒ a reporter named Edmond Halley
- _____

2. What did Halley's Comet show?
- Ⓐ that it traveled around Earth
Ⓑ that it traveled around the moon
Ⓒ that it traveled around the sun
- _____

3. When was Halley's Comet first seen?
- Ⓐ 1531
Ⓑ 1607
Ⓒ 1682
- _____

4. How often does Halley's Comet come back?
- Ⓐ every year
Ⓑ every 25 years
Ⓒ every 76 years
- _____

Sequence has to do with time. It is the order in which events happen in a story. It is also the steps involved in making or doing something. Knowing the sequence helps you better understand the story.

Steps to Finding Sequence

Step 1

Read the story.

Step 2

Look for clue words. Clue words can help you find the sequence. They are words like *when*, *before*, *after*, *next*, *first*, *later*, *during*, *last*, *then*, and *finally*.

Step 3

Look at the order of the sentences in the story. You do this when a story doesn't have clue words in it. The order of the sentences gives the order of the events that happened.

Step 4

State the sequence.

To help you remember these steps, write them in your own words.

Step 1

Step 2

Step 3

Step 4

Use what you learned to find the sequence in each story below.

Homemade ice cream is easy to make! First, fill a gallon-size food storage bag half full of ice. Then, add 6 tablespoons of rock salt and seal the bag. Next, put a $\frac{1}{2}$ cup of milk, a $\frac{1}{4}$ teaspoon of vanilla, and 1 tablespoon of sugar in a pint-size food storage bag. After that, place the small bag inside the large one and seal it. Then, shake the bag until you have ice cream. Once you have ice cream, you can open the bag and enjoy!

Number these events in the order that they happened.

1. _____ Fill a pint-size food storage bag with milk, vanilla, and sugar.
_____ Shake the bag until the mixture is ice cream.
_____ Fill a gallon-size food storage bag with ice and rock salt.

Henry eyed the clock. There were 15 minutes until closing time. As manager, he had to close the store up for the night. When the clock struck 10:00 p.m., Henry locked the front door. He checked the aisles to make sure that there weren't any customers still in the store. He walked over to the cash register and closed it out. On his way out the back door, Henry turned the lights off. He locked the back door and headed to his car.

Shade in the letter next to the correct answer.

- | | |
|---|--|
| <ol style="list-style-type: none">2. What did Henry do right after he checked the aisles?
Ⓐ eyed the clock
Ⓑ locked the front door
Ⓒ closed out the cash register | <ol style="list-style-type: none">3. When did Henry turn the lights off?
Ⓐ as soon as the clock struck 10:00 p.m.
Ⓑ on his way out the back door
Ⓒ before he locked the front door |
|---|--|

Writers do not always tell you everything in a story. Sometimes you have to look for clues to understand things that are not stated in the story. This is called drawing a conclusion. When you draw a conclusion, you use information in the story to help you make a decision about something.

Steps to Drawing a Conclusion

Step 1

Read the story.

Step 2

Look at the story's details. Ask yourself, "*What do the details tell me?*" The details are the clues that you use to draw your conclusion.

Step 3

Draw your conclusion. To be correct, your conclusion must be supported by the details.

Use what you learned to draw a conclusion from the story below.

Alex paced backstage. His solo was next, and the butterflies in his stomach would not calm down. Images of his voice cracking or forgetting his lines flashed through his head. He had worked so hard for this. He couldn't fail now! He heard the music start and stepped onstage.

Clue 1: Alex had _____ in his stomach.

Clue 2: He thought that his _____ might crack or that he would _____ his lines.

Clue 3: Alex thought he might _____.

Shade in the letter next to the correct answer.

- From the story, you can tell that
 A Alex was nervous.
 B Alex didn't like singing.
 C Alex hadn't worked hard enough.

Writers do not always put every detail in their stories. Sometimes they expect you to fill in the missing details with what you know. They expect you to make inferences.

Inferences are educated guesses. They are based on what you have read as well as what you know. When making an inference, keep in mind the difference between facts and inferences. Facts are details that you can find in a story. Inferences are the missing details that you fill in with what you've read and know.

In your own words, tell what an inference is.

1. _____

Use what you learned to make an inference about the story below.

The squirrel scampered into the hole in the tree, an acorn in its mouth. It put the acorn with the other nuts in the hole. Then it dashed back out. The squirrel stopped on a tree branch and looked around. It was getting very cold outside. It had been getting colder every day for the past few weeks. Knowing it had to hurry, the squirrel went off to find more nuts.

Shade in the letter next to the correct answer.

2. *Which of these statements is probably true?*
- Ⓐ Winter is coming.
 - Ⓑ The squirrel really likes acorns.
 - Ⓒ Acorns are hard to find.

PG 1 *Answers will vary.*

PG 2 *Detail 1: whiskers, nerves*
Detail 2: nerves, brain
Detail 3: dark
Detail 4: air, direction
Detail 5: opening
1) Cats' whiskers help cats with the sense of touch. 2) b

PG 3 *Answers will vary.*

PG 4 *Clue 1: first*
Clue 2: dressed, ready
Clue 3: make
1) a 2) *Answers will vary.*

PG 5 1) b 2) c 3) a 4) c

PG 6 *Answers will vary.*

PG 7 1) 2, 3, 1 2) c 3) b

PG 8 *Clue 1: butterflies*
Clue 2: voice, forget
Clue 3: fail
1) a

PG 9 1) *Answers will vary.* 2) a

Performance Objective Correlations:

- Demonstrate understanding of words and ideas
- Determine the sequence
- Draw conclusions
- Expand vocabulary
- Find relevant facts
- Follow directions
- Identify the main idea
- Locate the answer
- Make inferences
- Read for details
- Summarize information
- Understand the meaning of words and ideas
- Use context clues to derive meaning
- Use context clues to fill in the missing word