

Main idea and details

The **main idea** is the most important idea of a story or article. The main idea is often stated in the first or last sentence of a paragraph.

Other sentences that give you more information about the main idea are called **supporting details**. For example, if the main idea of an article is that 'Robots take a long time to build', the supporting details might give some reasons why they take so much time.

Read this information. Look for the main idea and supporting details.

You have probably played with robot toys and have seen robots on television or in films. These robots probably looked like people. Most real robots, however, do not look like humans at all. You may have seen one and did not even know it. Robots are found in many places, such as in factories and hospitals and on farms.

Robots are machines that make life easier for people. They help us by doing tasks that are tiring or dangerous.



Which sentence best states the main idea of this article?

- Robots make good toys.
- Most robots look like people.
- Robots are very helpful.
- Some robots are invisible.

Choose and write one detail from the article that supports the main idea.

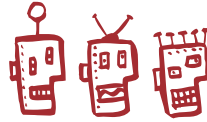
Tip

If the main idea is not written in any of the sentences, think about the details that are written, and write the main idea in your own words.



Read about robots that move. Look for the main idea in each paragraph. Take note of the supporting details.

ROBOTS ON THE MOVE



by Elizabeth Tyndall

Robots have changed over time. One of the major changes is in how they move. At first, robots used tracks and wheels, which only allowed them to move over smooth ground. Now robots can move in many different ways.

When we think of robots, we often think of humanoids, which are machines that look like people. These machines often have two legs. Walking on two legs is difficult for robots because it requires balance. Scientists have found that designing a robot that can

balance itself is very hard so they have found other ways to make robots move.

Australian-born scientist Rodney Brooks observed how insects and spiders moved quickly and easily. Brooks and his team created Genghis, the first robot to move like an insect. Genghis has six legs like a cockroach. These kinds of robots have few problems balancing as they have several feet planted on the ground.

Genghis can easily move on different surfaces because of its six insect-like legs.



Understanding the text

1 Why is it hard for robots to walk on two legs?

2 Why are insects a good model for robots?

Developing comprehension skills

3 Which sentence gives the main idea of the first paragraph?

- All robots are different.
- Most robots can move on smooth ground.
- The way that robots move has changed.
- The first robots could not move on rough ground.

4 Which sentence gives the main idea of the second paragraph?

- Humanoids are machines that look like people.
- Scientists have found new ways to make robots move.
- It is hard for humanoid robots to move.
- Robots cannot balance on two legs.

5 Write the main idea of the article in your own words.

Re-read the third paragraph of 'Robots on the move'. Now complete the chart by writing the main idea and two supporting details.

6 Main idea



7 Supporting detail

8 Supporting detail

Working with words

Write a word from the box to finish each sentence.

balance cockroach created humanoid planted quickly several

- 9 A _____ is a machine that looks like a person.
- 10 The robot called Genghis looks like a _____, an insect with long legs.
- 11 A robot like Genghis keeps _____ legs on the ground at all times.
- 12 Not being able to balance makes it hard for robots to move _____.
- 13 Genghis has its legs firmly _____ on the ground.
- 14 Humans can _____ on two feet without really trying, but robots cannot.
- 15 Scientists have _____ all different types of robots.

Making
the reading
and writing
connection



Genghis meets the toy!

Imagine that Genghis, the insect-like robot, meets a toy robot. What do you think might happen? What might they say to each other? Write the conversation they might have, or write about something that they do together. Write the main idea at the beginning or the end of your piece of writing.



Drawing conclusions

Sometimes an author does not write everything that they want you to know. You have to work things out for yourself. When you make your own decisions about the author's ideas, you are **drawing conclusions**.

You might come to your own conclusions about how a character feels or acts, or why an event took place. You can use what you have read, what you know and what makes sense to make your decisions. Being able to draw conclusions will help you understand why certain things happen in a story or an article.

Tip

Use what you already know, as well as information from the story or article, to back up your conclusions.

Read this article. Draw conclusions about the game being played.

Such a close game! The Jaguars were only two points in front, with less than a minute to go. Joe di Natale had just taken a spectacular mark for the Cockatoos, and the crowd was roaring. If he could kick a goal, the Cockies would win the game.

Joe concentrated on putting the ball through the two big posts. His heart was thumping in his ears. The ball hit his boot with a loud thud, and sailed through for a major score. The Cockatoos were champs!



Use details to draw conclusions from the story.

What team does Joe play for?

What game is being played? How do you know?

Do you think this is an important game? Give a reason for your answer.



Read this article about the early history of Australian Rules football. Use what you learn to draw conclusions.

From cricket to football

by Eve Recht

Thomas Wentworth Wills is often called the father of Australian Rules football. Wills was a member of the Melbourne Cricket Club in the 1850s, and he thought that football might be a good way to keep fit in winter. He and other cricketers had been to boarding school in England and Ireland, where they played rugby and other traditional football games.

An experimental game was played in Melbourne on 31 July 1858, but no one could agree on the rules, and it ended in a fight. A few weeks later Wills umpired a match between two Melbourne schools. This match began on 7 August, and ended on 4 September after three whole days of play.

The result of this extremely long match was a 1–1 draw. It was obviously time for different rules. Wills and other members of the new Melbourne Football Club wrote a set of rules in 1859. The new game was called 'Victorian Rules'.

The game of Australian Rules football has changed a great deal since those early games, but the two Melbourne schools still play a challenge match once a year.



A football match in Melbourne in about 1866



Understanding the text

1 What do you think is the most important idea in this article?

2 Many people say that Victoria is still the centre of Australian Rules football. What information in this article supports this idea?

Developing comprehension skills

3 Why do you think that the first game ended in a fight?

- There were too many players.
- It was an experiment.
- Wills was the umpire.
- The rules were not clear.

Use details in the article to decide if each statement is true or false. Put a circle around TRUE or FALSE for each one.

- | | | | |
|---|--|------|-------|
| 4 | Some schools in Melbourne are more than 150 years old. | TRUE | FALSE |
| 5 | All cricketers in the 1850s played football. | TRUE | FALSE |
| 6 | Rugby is older than Australian Rules. | TRUE | FALSE |
| 7 | The match that Wills umpired ended in a draw. | TRUE | FALSE |
| 8 | There was a lot of fighting at the first football match. | TRUE | FALSE |

Use what you already know, as well as the information in the article, to answer the following question, then complete the table.

9 Do you think that girls played football in Australia in the 1850s?

What helped you to decide?

Details in the article

What I know

Working with words

Write the word from the box that matches each clue.

fit long results same schools traditional umpire

- 10 opposite of short _____
- 11 places where children learn _____
- 12 opposite of different _____
- 13 healthy, in good shape _____
- 14 final score _____
- 15 the usual way of doing something _____
- 16 the person who makes sure a game is played fairly _____

Making
the reading
and writing
connection



Writing about another sport

Write a paragraph about a different sport. Give clues about this sport, but do not write its name. Ask a friend to read your paragraph. Can they conclude what sport you wrote about?

Sequence: order of events

The events that happen in a story usually follow a **sequence**, or order. It is important to keep track of the sequence of events so that you can better understand what happens in the story.

One way to follow the sequence of events is to look for words such as *first*, *next*, *then* and *finally*. Dates and times of day can also give you clues, for example, *in the morning* or *on Saturday*. When there are no clue words, you can picture the story events in your mind and ask yourself what happens first, next and last.

Read the story. Think about the order in which things happen.

We were on our way to basketball. Rushing as usual. Mum never leaves enough time to get there.

‘Stop! Mum, we have to go back. I haven’t got ...’

‘Sally, don’t yell at me when I’m driving!’ Mum yelled back at me.

‘But Mum, I need my basketball shoes.’

‘Why can’t you play in what you’re wearing?’ Paul wore his school shoes last week.’

‘But Mum, I can’t play in *slippers*!’

Mum slowed the car down and turned around. ‘I guess you’re right. Let’s go home and get them.’



Write the numbers from 1 to 5 to show the order of the events in the story.

- _____ Mum yelled at Sally.
- _____ Mum drove back home.
- _____ Mum and Sally left home to drive to basketball.
- _____ Paul played basketball in his school shoes.
- _____ Sally realised she was wearing her slippers.

Tip

When you read, think about whether the story would still make sense if the events happened in a different order.



Read the story about Aaron and Nicola. Look for clues to help you recognise the sequence of events.

Project time

by Marcus Ong

It was Thursday lunchtime, and Aaron and Nicola were eating their sandwiches. Aaron was looking a bit glum.

‘What’s up?’ Nicola asked him. ‘Have you got plain cheese again?’

‘No, Dad gave me peanut butter and honey,’ Aaron replied. ‘It’s just that I can’t think of any good ideas for my maths project. Have you started yours?’

‘Yep,’ said Nicola. ‘I started a couple of days ago. I’m re-drawing the patterns that my dad made with his new tractor. You know, when he sowed the wheat in our paddocks last month.’

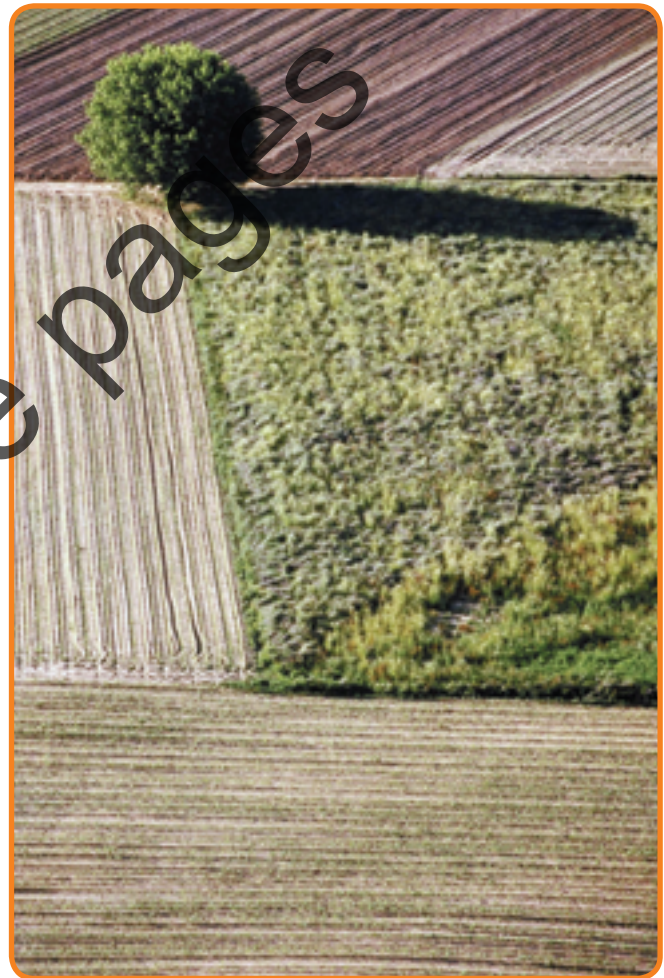
‘What a great idea! Maybe I could do something like that too ...’

Nicola stopped eating so she could think better. ‘Aren’t you having a big tree planting down near the creek this weekend?’

‘Yeah, I can’t wait. Lots of people are coming up from town to help. Mum went to Uncle Bill’s yesterday to borrow his big BBQ, so we can feed everyone. Hey, maybe I could make a tally of the trees we plant, and then add them all up ...’

‘... and you could do a map too, with the creek, and all the new trees.’

‘Problem solved! Thanks, Nicola. Want to come and help with the planting?’



Understanding the text

1 Where do you think Aaron and Nicola live? How can you tell?

2 Do you think that Aaron and Nicola are good friends? Explain your answer.

Developing comprehension skills

3 Write the numbers from 1 to 8 to show the sequence of events in the story.

_____ Mum borrowed a BBQ from Uncle Bill.

_____ Aaron invited Nicola to the tree planting.

_____ Nicola's dad sowed wheat in his paddocks.

_____ Nicola stopped eating her lunch.

_____ Aaron told Nicola about the exciting weekend coming up.

_____ Nicola told Aaron about her project.

_____ Aaron decided to do his project on the tree planting.

_____ Nicola started her maths project.

4 What word clues helped you to work out the sequence?

5 What might have been different if the tree planting had been a few weeks earlier?

6 The story gives you lots of clues about events that will probably happen after this lunchtime. List two likely events.

Working with words

Write the word from the box that matches each explanation.

borrow glum paddocks pattern plain tally tractor

7 not fancy or decorated _____

8 fields, especially on a farm _____

9 a shape or picture that repeats _____

10 sad, a bit down in the mouth _____

11 take something that you will later give back _____

12 a strong machine used on farms for ploughing and harvesting _____

13 to record or keep score _____

Making
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Writing about a school project

Think about a maths or science project you have finished recently. Write about where you got your ideas, and what you did. Use words like *first*, *then* and *last* to explain the sequence of events.

