



## Reading Skill: Identifying the main idea

### Learn together!

Some questions test your ability to find out the overall message of a piece of text or a paragraph. There are three steps to answering such questions:

- 1** Read the title of the text to get a rough idea of what the text is about. A title usually tells the main idea in brief.
- 2** Skim through the text. Read the topic sentence of each paragraph to understand what each paragraph is mainly about.
- 3** Summarise the main idea of each paragraph to work out the most important message that the text intends to give.

### Learn more!

Do not mix up the topic sentence with its supporting details. A topic sentence is usually the first or the last sentence of a paragraph while the supporting details are explanations and examples that support the topic sentence.

### Give it a try!

**e.g.1** The news report is mainly about \_\_\_\_\_.

- A. how crowded each MTR compartment is during peak hours
- B. what happened on the MTR on 4<sup>th</sup> May and why it happened
- C. why passengers should offer their seats to the needy
- D. what the government did to promote the priority seats campaign

The **headline** roughly tells the main idea, which is about a fight over a priority seat on the MTR on 4<sup>th</sup> May. The **lead paragraph** also gives more details of what happened. Hence, the news report is mainly about the incident.

**e.g.2** Paragraph 4 is mainly about \_\_\_\_\_.

- A. who passengers should offer their seats to
- B. which party is responsible for the priority seats campaign
- C. why promoting graciousness on public transport is important
- D. what the priority seats campaign wants to achieve

From the **topic sentence** of paragraph 4, you can know that this paragraph mainly introduces the four kinds of people who the priority seats are designed for. The other information only supports and further explains the topic sentence.