

Identifying main ideas and supporting details

Master the reading strategy!



A topic sentence is a statement that

- captures generally all the key ideas presented in a paragraph
- may appear at the beginning, in the middle or at the end of a paragraph

Supporting details are supposed to

- be additional information, such as comparisons, reasons, descriptions, statistics, etc.
- illustrate, define, advance or prove the key ideas in the paragraph

In cases where a topic sentence is absent, readers have to figure out the main idea of a paragraph by understanding what is implied through the supporting details.

Let's have a closer look!

Topic sentence, followed by reasoned explanations and facts

You may be **jealous** of the child actors who get the opportunity to act with famous stars in films or TV dramas. However, **being a child actor is never easy, plus embarking on a career in acting at such a young age can even bring about negative effects on one's later life**. Constrained by busy schedules, child actors face, relatively speaking, a lot more pressure than their nonworking peers. They need to prepare for their performances while having to keep up with their studies, hence the difficulty of sparing time for recreational activities. In addition, fame as a child actor is usually fleeting. A now-grown child actor once said, 'When you're six, you're adorable. When you're fifteen, you lose what you had.' Is being famous at a young age **really such an enviable idea?** I think that now-grown actor has given us the answer.

How are these words associated with the main idea?

The main idea of the above paragraph is that being a child actor is not easy and not an idea to be envious or jealous of.

Let's practise!

Have you ever heard of Guinness World Records, an international authority on record-breaking achievements from different disciplines around the globe? Many people prepared themselves for months or even years to accomplish remarkable feats in order to set or break records, yet are clueless as to when and why all these world records started being documented. The idea for a book of records came about in the early 1950s when Sir Hugh Beaver attended a shooting party and argued with his friends about the fastest game bird, but he failed to find the answer in reference books. Beaver was inspired and composed this book of records to settle arguments surrounding everyday facts. In 1955, the first edition of the *Guinness Book of Records* was published.

The main idea of the above paragraph is _____.