

LESSON

14

Main Idea

WORDS
TO KNOW

Main idea the most important idea of a passage. It is what the passage is mostly about.

Review It!

Read these sentences. Use the Hint to help you figure out the main idea.

Warm-blooded animals maintain a constant body temperature, no matter what the temperature of their environment is. They stay warm by burning food for energy. They cool off by sweating, panting, or moving to a cooler place.

Hint Look at the first sentence. How is the broad idea it expresses different from the information in the rest of the passage?

Try It!

Read this passage. As you read, underline phrases and sentences that express the most important idea in the passage.

- 1 Desert plants have adapted to deal with the lack of water in the southwestern desert. Some plants store water. Some have a waxy covering on their leaves and stems. This prevents stored water from evaporating. Small leaves, spines, and camouflage are also ways plants deal with the water issue.
- 2 Desert animals, too, have adapted to the lack of water. Some recycle water from within their bodies. Some tap plants for water. Others get water from dry seeds they eat.
- 3 Desert plants have also adapted to deal with the high heat in their habitat. Many live for only one season. They release their seeds and die. The seeds remain dormant until cooler weather comes. Then they sprout and new plants appear.
- 4 Animals deal with desert heat in different ways. Some leave the desert during the hottest times. Others burrow beneath the ground. Some only move around at night, when temperatures are cooler.

Now, use the passage to answer the questions on the following page.

1. What is the main idea of paragraph 1?
 - A. There isn't enough water in the desert.
 - B. Desert plants have adapted to survive with little water.
 - C. Many different kinds of plants grow in the desert.
 - D. Some desert plants die because of lack of water.

2. The main idea of paragraph 2 is that desert animals
 - A. have adapted to the lack of water
 - B. adapt in the same ways as plants
 - C. cannot live without water
 - D. can live without water

3. Which sentence **best** states the main idea of paragraph 4?
 - A. Most desert animals can't tolerate the heat.
 - B. The best way animals escape the heat is by burrowing.
 - C. Different animals deal with desert heat in different ways.
 - D. Animals are better able to survive in the desert than plants are.

4. Which sentence **best** states the main idea of paragraph 3?
 - A. Most desert plants die when it gets very hot.
 - B. Plants are scarce in the southwestern desert.
 - C. Desert plants have developed ways to survive the desert heat.
 - D. Plants sometimes release their seeds when the desert gets hot.

In Your Own Words

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



2.

Which answer choice restates the most important idea from the paragraph?

3.

The main idea makes a general statement about the topic. Decide which answer choices are the most general. Then ask yourself: Which choice best matches the information in the paragraph?

5.

Don't get bogged down in details. Ask yourself, What was the passage mostly about?