

# STEPS IN COMPREHENDING A PARAGRAPH

## 1. DETERMINE THE TOPIC

(a word, name, or phrase that tells who or what the paragraph is about)

The topic will be part of the main idea sentence.



## 2. DETERMINE THE MAIN IDEA

(a sentence that tells the author's *most* important point about the topic)

The main idea will either be stated or implied.



Check first to see if you can find a stated main idea sentence in the paragraph.



If you cannot find a stated main idea sentence, then you must formulate (create) a sentence that tells the main idea.

### UNDERLINE THE STATED MAIN IDEA SENTENCE

(stated by the author as a sentence in the paragraph)

--OR--

### FORMULATE AN IMPLIED MAIN IDEA SENTENCE

(a sentence *created by you, the reader*, that tells the author's most important point about the topic)



Depending on the type of "ingredients" the author gives you in the paragraph, use one of these three formulas:



#### FORMULA 1

If there is a sentence in the paragraph that *almost* tells the main idea, *add the missing information* (usually the topic) to that sentence.

--or--



#### FORMULA 2

If there are two sentences in the paragraph that each give *part* of the main idea, *combine* those sentences in to *one* sentence.

--or--



#### FORMULA 3

If the paragraph consists of details, *write a general sentence that sums them up*. You may have to use words that are not in the paragraph.

**Any main idea (stated or implied) must have all of these characteristics:**

1. It must be a *complete sentence*. (It is never written as a question.)
2. The sentence must *contain the topic*.
3. It must tell the *author's most important point* about the topic.
4. It *sums up the details* in the paragraph.
5. All of the *details* in the paragraph *explain or tell more about* the information in *the main idea sentence*.

**If the sentence you have underlined or written does not have all of these characteristics, then it is not correct.**