



# Handy Handouts®

Free informational handouts for educators, parents, and students

## Fun Ways to Practice Main Idea at Home

by Becky L. Spivey, M.Ed.



What is the main idea? The main idea is a message about the topic that the author is sending the reader—minus all the details. It is the most important thing the text says about the topic. There are many ways to teach main idea. See below for some fun examples!

### Activities for Younger Children

**Give Me a Hand** – Trace your hand or your child’s hand on a sheet of paper. On each finger write a question word—Who? What? When? Where? Why? Read a story/paragraph/passage aloud to your child. You or your child will write the answers to the WH questions on the appropriate finger. These are the details of the text. Then have your child summarize the details into one short sentence—the main idea. You or your child will write the main idea in the palm of the hand. The details should support the main idea.



**Fairy Tale Find** – Read a fairy tale together. The moral or lesson of a fairy tale is usually the main idea of the story. At the end of the story, have your child tell you the main idea of the story in one sentence. Do the details from the story support the main idea?



**Family or Friend?** – Gather paper and crayons to create a special card about a special person. Have your child think of a special person and write a short sentence to describe him/her. For example, “Billy is my best friend in the whole world.” You or



your child will write the sentiment (main idea) on the front of the card. On the inside of the card help your child list the reasons (details). “He keeps my secrets. He plays my favorite games. He helps me with homework. He likes to go camping with me.” Do the details support the sentiment (main idea) on the front of the card? Make cards for special friends and family members. Have your child give out the cards and explain the sentiment to each person.

### Activities for Older Children

**Movies for Main Ideas** – Watch a movie together. At the end of the movie, have your child tell you in one sentence what the movie was about. Have him/her write the sentence on a piece of paper. Then have your child write details from the movie to support his/her answer. Do the details support the main idea?



**Main Idea Cut-Ups** – Copy sentences from a paragraph or other text and include some random sentences. Cut the sentences into strips. One strip will be the main idea, and the others will be detail sentences. (Some will support the main idea, and some will be off-topic.) Have your child read the strips and find what he/she thinks is the main idea. Then have him/her find the detail sentences that go with the main idea and take out those that are off-topic. Do the details match the main idea? Have him/her glue the main idea on a piece of paper with the detail sentences below it.



**Main Idea Graphing** – Ask your child’s teacher for copies of simple graphic organizers. You can find free ones to print online as well. Have your child read a story/paragraph/passage from a textbook or library book. Have your child fill in the main idea of the story/paragraph in the center of the organizer and fill in the details around it. Evaluate the details and decide if the details support the main idea.



For more FREE Handy Handouts®, go to [www.handyhandouts.com](http://www.handyhandouts.com)