



READING

**Main Idea, Topic,
Topic Sentence,
Supporting Details**



Why should I study this? Can't I just read the passage?

1. **These are BIG TOPICS on the TEAS.** The reading section has 45 questions. Out of those 45, *one third* are about Key Ideas & Details.

Key Ideas & Details includes the following categories: **Main Ideas, Topic Sentences, and Supporting Details** (covered in this video) and Summarizing Text and Using Text Features (our next video).

2. **You need practice.**

These concepts can't be memorized. It takes practice to identify the main idea or topic sentence of a passage, and every passage is different. The supporting details may be scientific facts or funny personal stories; the passages may be political speeches, historical essays, or romantic fiction.

The more you practice, the more deeply you will understand the concepts, and the quicker you will find what the TEAS is asking you for!

TOPICS



- A. Topic
- B. Main Idea
- C. Topic Sentence
- D. Supporting Details
- E. Myths about the TEAS Reading Section
- F. TEAS Cheatsheet: Reading Question Types

Topic



The **topic** is the general subject the text is about, often described in just a few words.

Examples: growing tomatoes, growing tomatoes in a cold climate, female aviators, the first female aviators in the 20th century

Main Idea



The **main idea** is the big point the author is making about the topic.

This idea is like an “umbrella” that covers almost everything in the text; most of the text should relate to or support this main idea.

Sometimes you need to work backwards, putting together the supporting details to figure out the author’s big point (also called their “argument”).

Topic	Main Idea
Growing tomatoes in a cold climate	Growing tomatoes in a cold climate requires special attention.
The first female aviators in the 20 th century	The first female aviators in the 20 th century were feminist pioneers.

Topic Sentence



A **topic sentence** is the sentence IN THE TEXT that best expresses the main idea.

Topic Sentence = To Search for in the text

Supporting Details



Supporting details serve as proof or examples of the author's point.

Supporting details can be statistics, personal anecdotes, historical facts, or many different types of examples. They can be facts or opinions. But they **MUST** be:

1. more specific than the topic sentence/main idea
2. relevant to the topic sentence/main idea

Myths about the TEAS Reading Section



1. **Myth #1: Main Idea = Topic Sentence**

Although the main idea and topic sentence express the same/a similar idea, they are NOT the same thing. The topic sentence can be found word-for-word in the text, while the main idea cannot. You can think of the main idea as the topic sentence rephrased in new words.

2. **Myth #2: Topic = Topic Sentence**

The topic is the subject of the text. The topic sentence is that subject + the point the author is making about it.

The topic is shorter than the topic sentence. Also, the topic is rarely found word-for-word in the text, while the topic sentence is.

3. **Myth #3: The topic sentence is the first sentence of the paragraph.**

FALSE. The topic sentence can be found ANYWHERE in the paragraph - the first sentence, the last sentence, or anywhere in between!

TEAS Cheatsheet: Reading Question Types



Topic: what is this text about?

Main idea: what big point is the author making?

Topic sentence: which sentence in the text best expresses that big point?

Author's purpose: why did the author decide to make this big point? What reaction do they want from people reading it?

Author's perspective: what opinions/background/biases did the author have about this big point before they started writing?