

Selecting Main Ideas

Selecting the main idea in lecture and reading materials can be a challenging task. Finding the main idea is important to understand what the instructor or author of a textbook is trying to convey. Below are some ways in which selecting main ideas can be approached.

In Class	Textbook/Reading Material
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Review your notes from readings and lectures prior to class. This will help you focus on any additional information about the topic during lecture. ❖ Listen attentively and write down the important points and topics covered. This will help you organize your notes. ❖ During lecture, listen for cues from your instructor that highlights important information such as: “This is important,” “You may see this again” or “And now let us turn to.” Also, focus on statements that are repeated or emphasized. ❖ Summarize in your own words what you have heard and write it down. ❖ Discuss the lecture with classmates. They may pick up things you missed and vice versa. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Become familiar with the topic through section headings of chapters, sub-headings, and blurbs throughout the text. ❖ Look for main ideas in the first paragraph of the reading material; it usually tells you what you will be reading about. ❖ Look for supporting details- supporting details describe the main idea and make it stronger. ❖ Use a dictionary, thesaurus or encyclopedia to help understand challenging terminology. ❖ Underline or highlight words or phrases that seem to be repetitive throughout the text. ❖ Review chapter summary and questions if they are available.