

This handout should be used in conjunction with the “Supporting Details” audio podcast.

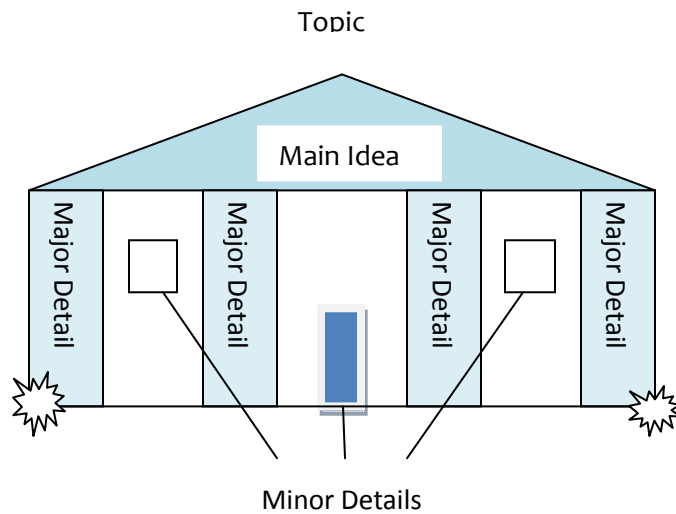
Major Details

Major Details explain, develop and support the **main idea**. Major details must support the main idea, and the main idea must cover all of the major details.

Minor Details

Minor Details explain, develop and support the **major details**. Minor details are often specific details, stories and examples which help the reader to understand the major details better but are not critical to the meaning of the writing. If you can get rid of the minor detail and it does not change the validity of the writing, it is a minor detail.

Think of the paragraph as a house.



Topic =Roof

Large enough to cover the main idea completely, but does not overextend by covering points not stated

Main Idea = frame of house

Completely covered by the topic and completely supported by the major details

Major Details = supporting walls

Completely covered by the main idea and provide support for the main idea. Without the supporting walls, the house would crumble.

Minor Details = windows and doors

Do not lend support to the main idea. Instead, minor details help to make the writing more interesting and clear. If you get rid of a minor detail, your main idea is not affected. Just as if you get rid of a window, the house is still structurally sound.

Major Detail Tips:

1. Turn your main idea into a question. The answers to that question will be the major details. (See example under tip 2.)
2. Sometimes, main ideas will actually state the major details you will read about in the remainder of the article.
 - Example: Swimming is a sport of strength and endurance. Strength allows the swimmer to pull through the water harder and faster. It also makes each kick more potent. Swimmers need to have high endurance. If a swimmer's muscles and energy level wear out, it will not matter how powerful each kick was at the beginning of the race.

Topic: Swimming

Main Idea: Swimming is a sport of strength and endurance.

Question based on main idea: Why is swimming a sport of strength and endurance?

Major Details:

- Strength – swimmer pulls harder and faster
 - Strength – kicks more potent
 - Endurance – muscles don't wear out
3. Other times, main ideas may state the *number* of major details you will read about in the remainder of the article.
 - Example: There are three important steps to follow when training your dog. First, get to know your dog's personality. Does he respond through positive reinforcement, a strong hand or treats? Second, make your commands clear to the dog. If you want your dog to sit when you pull up on the leash, you must pull up on the leash and guide your dog to the sitting position. Be sure to provide the feedback to which your dog responds. Finally, practice. Dogs need repetition to be able to successfully complete the tasks you require. If you follow these simple steps, your dog will be trained in no time.

Topic: Dog training

Main Idea: There are **three** important steps to follow when training your dog.

Question based on the main idea: What are the three important steps to follow when training your dog?

Major Details:

- (First) Know your dog's personality
 - (Second) Make commands clear
 - (Finally) Practice
4. Be sure that every detail in your main idea is supported by major details. An outline or word map may help you with this. (Future podcasts will cover these topics.)
 5. Types of Supporting details include:
 - Examples: Help to make the ideas expressed easier to understand

- Facts and Statistics: Provide evidence the points stated are accurate
 - Reasons: Explain *why* the idea stated is correct
 - Descriptions: Provides details which describe the topic and help you to create a visual
 - Steps or Procedures: If the main idea is how to do something, details would include the steps and procedures one needs to follow
6. If you can delete the detail and your main idea is still completely supported, the detail is minor.
 7. Words which often indicate a major detail are one, first, another, furthermore, also, finally. These words can also help you if you are having difficulty identifying the main idea. When you see transitional words such as first and second, try to identify what these major details are referring to. This will indicate the main idea.
 8. Words which often indicate a minor detail are for example, to illustrate, to be specific, that is, this means. These minor details are used to help the reader form a picture or have a clearer understanding of the major details.

Practice

These practice examples are discussed in order on the podcast. Try them on your own before listening to the explanation.

1. There are several steps to follow when writing a good outline. First, identify the topic. Ask what is the key idea of this passage? Second, decide what the author's point is about the topic. This is the main idea. Next are major details. What points support the main idea? Make sure the major details completely support the main idea. Also make sure the major details are completely covered by the main idea. If the outline needs to be more detailed, include the minor details. Minor details support the major details. Once all of these points are identified, the final step is to record these ideas in phrases which shows the level of importance. This can be done using indentations, bullets or even numbering. Complete an outline using these simple steps.

Topic: _____

Main Idea: _____

Question based on the main idea: _____

Major detail: _____

Minor detail: _____

Major detail: _____

Minor detail: _____

Major detail:

Minor detail:

Major detail:

Minor detail:

Major detail:

Minor detail:

2. Two weeks ago Carrie heard an unusual noise when she turned the wheel. She explained to her friend it sounded as though someone had turned on a meat grinder. Last week the RPMs slipped when she was driving through town. The gauge went from 3 RPMs to 1 RPM back to 3 in a matter of a second. Today, the car's breaks are squealing. Carrie has decided she needs a new car.

Topic: _____
Main Idea: _____
Question based on the main idea: _____

Major detail:

Minor detail:

Major detail:

Minor detail:

Major detail:

Minor detail:

3. Running red lights is not the newest traffic violation. However, Red Light Photo Enforcement (Photo Red) is one of the newest technologies available to fight this traffic violation. Photo Red takes a picture of the license plate of all vehicles that continue through an intersection during a red light. These violators' vehicles are identified and the owner of the vehicle is sent a ticket to pay a fine for running the red light. However, the National Motorist Association objects to this device. This association believes the driver of the vehicle is not accurately identified. Because the picture is of the license plate and not of the driver, it cannot be proven who actually drove through the light. Another reason the association is against Photo Red is because it discourages light synchronization. The example given is that the government who installs the cameras will not have the lights timed appropriately and more conveniently just to create more revenue from individuals who run the light. Finally, The National Motorist Association believes the Red Light Photo Enforcement will not reduce the number of accidents at intersections

because car accidents are really accidents. This means the accidents are caused through careless driving and not through the intentional running of red lights. A Los Angeles news station fact checked the police departments records recording Photo Red Enforcement and found at 20 of the 32 intersections studied, accidents actually increased instead of decreased.

Topic: _____
Main Idea: _____
Question based on the main idea: _____

Major detail:

Minor detail:

Major detail:

Minor detail:

Major detail:

Minor detail:

Answers:

Remember, your wording may be different. It is the general idea for each area for which you should be looking. Make sure your topic is included in your main idea and your main idea is completely supported by your major details.

1. Topic: Creating an outline

Main Idea: There are several steps to follow when writing a good outline.

Question based on main idea: What are the steps to follow when writing a good outline?

Major details:

- Identify topic
 - Minor - key idea
- Identify main idea
 - Minor – author’s point about the topic
- Identify major details
 - Minor – points which support the main idea
- Identify minor details
 - Minor – points which support the major details
- Record ideas in phrases by level of importance
 - Minor – use indentations, bullets, numbers, etc...

2. Topic: Carrie's car

Main Idea: Carrie has decided she needs a new car.

Question based on main idea: Why does Carrie need a new car?

Major details:

- Noise when wheel turned
 - Minor - Sounds like meat grinder
- RPMs slip
 - Minor - From 3 to 1 to 3
- Breaks squeal
 - No minor detail

3. Topic: Red Light Photo Enforcement and National Motorist Association

Main Idea: The National Motorist Association objects to Red Light Photo Enforcement.

Question based on main idea: Why does the National Motorist Association object to Red Light Photo Enforcement?

Major details:

- Driver not accurately identified
 - Minor – picture of license plate not driver
- Discourages light synchronization
 - Minor – government won't time lights to increase revenue
- Will not reduce accidents at intersections
 - Los Angeles news study found 20 of 32 intersections accidents increased