

## Find the Main Ideas in Reading

As you skim your textbook, look for the following clues that will help you identify the main idea(s) in your reading assignment:

- 1. Titles, Headings, and Sub-Headings.** By placement, size and visual prompts (any kind of decorative item which draws your attention), these announce major subjects and ideas.
- 2. Purpose Sentence.** If present, a purpose sentence will be found in the first paragraph of a book, chapter or article. The statement tells you what the rest of the text will be about.
- 3. Pre-Outline or Overview.** A sentence(s) or phrase(s) which lists the ideas to be developed in that section of the text.
- 4. Topic Sentence.** A sentence that states the subject and focus of the following material.
- 5. Italics and/or Boldface Type.** Main ideas that stand out from the rest of the text.
- 6. Repetition.** Repetition of a key word or idea throughout a text indicates that it is a major topic to be remembered.
- 7. Questions.** Questions invite you to look for answers. These answers are often a major idea that is being developed.
- 8. Numbering.** Ideas that are numbered are important. When studying these ideas, write them down as a list with a title at the top. This can become your main idea mind map.
- 9. Visuals.** Pictures, graphs, diagrams, figures, and other visual materials usually highlight and emphasize main ideas that need to be remembered.
- 10. Details.** The use of examples, statistics, and other details (illustrations, tables, charts) always signal that a main idea is being clarified, proven, or developed. The main idea may be ahead or behind these details in the text.
- 11. Patterns of Organization:** When the text is organized in a pattern, this signals a main idea. Patterns can include like topics, the comparison of two objects, cause and effect, or problem and solution discussions. When you recognize such a pattern look for the main idea(s).
- 12. Summary.** Summaries at the end of the text re-state the main idea in an abbreviated form.

*Remember, when studying your textbook, you are a detective looking for clues to 'What is Important'.*

