Selecting Main Ideas

Readings and class lectures provide a great deal of supporting details and examples. Once you can learn to identify the most important information, then you will experience more success in class.
-do you find yourself confused and overwhelmed at the end of a class lecture?

- do you ask yourself, “how am i ever going to remember all these details?”

or

- after reading a chapter for 30 minutes, do you loose focus of the main point?

- do all the details run together?

if you’ve answered “yes” to any of these questions, then you may have difficulty sorting out the main ideas from the supporting details in class lectures and readings.
This workshop will provide practical suggestions to help identify main ideas in readings and lectures.
Considerations when Reading:

**Reduce Distractions:** Pay attention if there are things around you that are distracting you.

**Lighting:** Bright lighting might help you stay awake or see better. Dim lights might make you feel sleepy.

**Background noise or silence:** How loud do you like it? Some like music played low while they read. Others need complete silence to concentrate.
Scan Your Reading

- Headings
- Subtitles
- Graphs
- Charts
- Italics

The most important concepts are often emphasized in the form of headings, subtitles, graphs, charts, and italics. Highlight or circle them, if possible.
AFTER YOU’VE SCANNED THE CHAPTER, BEGIN READING, AND WATCH FOR THE FOLLOWING:

**Topic Sentence:**
- expresses the Main Idea of a paragraph.
- is very often the first sentence of a paragraph.
- answers the question, “What is the paragraph talking about?”

**Conclusion Sentence:**
- is very often the last sentence of the paragraph.
- summarizes the main idea of the paragraph.
After reading a paragraph, ask yourself:

“What’s the Main Point?”
The Main Point May Also be Found In:

The Introductory Paragraph
And
The Summary Paragraph
Use Index Note Cards

• Use one index card per vocabulary word, person, or math fact/formula. Include page numbers for reference. Review the cards daily, for memorization!

• On the back side of the index card, write the definition or explanation in your own words. Include a real life example. You’ll gain a better understanding of the concept, if you can apply it to a real life experience.
One Section at a Time

- Speed reading and cramming in your reading the night before are not effective methods for completing your college reading assignments.

- Instead, break down your assignment into smaller segments, with breaks in between.

- Be sure to reflect between section headings or chapters.

Allow for time to process the material. Interact with the material. What struck you as most interesting or that provoked a reaction from you? Review the concepts that were confusing. What concept can you apply to real life?
Selecting the Main Idea
From Lectures

• Listen closely and write down lecture topics or talking points the instructor says he will discuss.

• Write down all notes instructor places on the board. These notes can be added to the notes you already have from your readings.
Main Ideas can often be identified when:

- The instructor says things like: “The main point is...” and “Remember this...”

- Have discussions with your classmates about the lecture. Main ideas will become more clear.

- Summarize in your own words what you have heard and write it down.

- Meet with your instructor to further discuss concepts you still aren’t sure about.
Get Prepared

- Don’t wait till you are in a fog with multiple reading assignments that are jumbled in your head.

- Make a plan to stay on top of your reading assignments and reviewing lecture notes.

- Follow the steps outlined in this workshop to assist you in gaining more from your readings.

- Before you know it, you’ll be finding the main ideas of your readings and experiencing higher test scores!
Resources available at WCCC:

College Learning Center, Founders Hall room 565, 724-925-4135
• Offers tutoring sessions to review course material, answer questions on course content, learn test-taking strategies, and provide study skills & writing assistance

Disability Services, Founders Hall room 130, 724-925-4189
• Provides services and/or academic accommodations to support students with disabilities

Counseling Services, Founders Hall room 130, 724-925-4121
• Provides academic advising, career testing, and personal counseling, as well as referrals to outside agencies

Student Services Support Assistants, Founders Hall room 555, 724-925-6893
• Offers assistance and referrals to first-semester students
References

Mastery Quiz

True or False:

1). Distractions, including the lighting in a room, music, t.v., crowds, etc., might interfere with one’s ability to focus on selecting main ideas from their readings.

2). The main idea is often found in the introduction and/or summary of a reading.

3). Writing down notes from the board will only be a distraction to learning.

4). List all of the vocabulary on one index card for review.

5). Speed reading just before class helps in reviewing the main ideas of a reading.
Evaluation

Please take a moment to complete our brief survey. You may print this slide (Ctrl-P in the design view) and return it to the College Learning Center, Founders Hall Room 565

Name of workshop: ___________________________ Date taken: ___________

Using the following scale, please rate each item below.
(1) Not very much (2) Somewhat not (3) Somewhat (4) Very much

❖ After completing this workshop, my knowledge has increased on this subject: ______
❖ I found the information in this workshop to be helpful to me: ______
❖ I am likely to use the information in this workshop in my life: ______
❖ Other comments: ____________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________
Thank You!