

Writing Centre

SUPPORTING DETAILS



Providing evidence for your case.

WHAT ARE SUPPORTING DETAILS?

Supporting details are *specific* facts, evidence, or ideas used to develop, expand, and support the more *general* main point of a paragraph. You should provide enough supporting detail in your paragraphs so the reader can easily understand what you are trying to communicate.

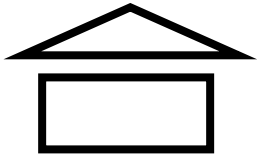
WHY ARE SUPPORTING DETAILS IMPORTANT?

Supporting details are important to develop and support the main idea of the paragraph, making your argument stronger, more interesting, and easier to understand. Supporting details will paint a clearer and more complete picture of what it is you are trying to describe or explain to the reader.

WHERE DO SUPPORTING DETAILS FIT IN?

In general, a paragraph starts with a main idea followed by supporting details that make up the body of the paragraph. Paragraphs should be structured in the following way:

Main Idea (states the main point of the paragraph)



Supporting Details (reasons/examples to support the main idea)

Closing Sentence (restates the main point of the paragraph)

Think of a paragraph as a house - the main idea is the roof, the supporting details are the walls that support the roof, and the closing sentence is the foundation of the house.

DIFFERENT TYPES OF DETAILS:

MAJOR (PRIMARY) DETAILS: These types of details directly explain or support the main idea of the paragraph.

MINOR (SECONDARY) DETAILS: These types of details explain other details in the paragraph.

Example:

Main Idea: "There are three reasons why Mexico is a popular vacation spot."

Major Detail: "First, the weather is extremely warm."

Minor Detail: "This is attractive to vacationing Canadians looking to escape the snow."

Let's look at some sample paragraphs and break things down:

The underlined sentence is the MAIN POINT of the paragraph

The **bolded** sentences are MAJOR SUPPORTING DETAILS

The *italicized* sentences are MINOR SUPPORTING DETAILS

EXAMPLE 1:

"There are many factors that contribute to student success in college. **The first factor for success is having a goal in mind before establishing a course of study.** *The goal may be as general as wanting to better educate oneself for the future. A more specific goal would be to earn a teaching credential.* **A second factor related to student success is self-motivation and commitment.** *A student who wants to succeed and works toward that desire will find success easily as a college student.* **A third factor linked to student success is using college services.** *Most beginning college students fail to realize how important it can be to see a counsellor or consult with a librarian or financial aid officer."*

EXAMPLE 2:

"There are three reasons why Canada is one of the best countries in the world. **First,**

Canada has an excellent health care system. *All Canadians have access to medical services at a reasonable price.* **Second, Canada has a high standard of education.**

Students are taught by well-trained teachers and are encouraged to continue studying at university. **Finally, Canada's cities are clean and efficiently managed.** *Canadian cities*



have many parks and lots of space for people to live. As a result, Canada is a desirable place to live."

Reference:

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