

### **RULE**

The main idea expresses the most important point or points. The supporting details—facts or examples—explain and elaborate upon the main idea.

### **EXAMPLE**

As you read the article below, look for the main idea and supporting details.

It's no secret that most Americans do not get enough exercise. That is true of all age groups, not just older adults. To lead healthier, happier lives, all Americans, the young and the elderly, need to make regular, vigorous exercise part of their daily routine. Exercise does not need to be complicated or time-consuming to be beneficial. In fact, studies show that a brisk daily walk—one in which a mile is covered in 20 minutes—can provide excellent health benefits.

If you walk a 20-minute mile every day starting today, in about one month you will look trimmer and slimmer. That is because walking builds muscle and displaces fat, toning and slimming the body. Though you may not lose pounds,

you probably will lose inches. Your clothes will fit more loosely, and you will look fit.

Even more important, you will improve your overall health. Brisk daily walking strengthens your heart, helps your circulatory system, and lowers the level of fats in your bloodstream. Those improvements, in turn, can add years to your life—and make those years productive ones.

In addition, brisk walking reduces stress and is a natural sleep enhancer. If you're feeling overwhelmed, walking can clear your mind and ease jangled nerves. It can also help you sleep restfully at night so that you awaken feeling refreshed and ready for the day.

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You can keep track of main ideas and details on a diagram like the one below. Notice that the main idea is in the rectangle at the top of the diagram. The key supporting details are in the "pillars" that support the rectangle.

### HSPA TIP

To identify the main idea, think, *What is the central message—the most important point or points that I should understand and remember?*

