1

GLOBAL HEALTH

SKILLS AND STRATEGIES

- Identifying Main Ideas
- Cause and Effect
- Managing Unknown Vocabulary

SKILLS AND STRATEGIES 1

Identifying Main Ideas

The main idea is the most important idea that a writer expresses in a paragraph. The writer supports this idea with details, such as examples, facts, numbers, and reasons. Although the main idea can appear anywhere in a paragraph, it most often appears in the opening one or two sentences. Sometimes, it is not stated directly; instead, the reader must infer the main idea by reading the whole paragraph. To emphasize the main idea, a writer may repeat it at the end of the paragraph. The writer may also refer to the main idea at the beginning of the next paragraph to provide a smooth transition between the paragraphs. Identifying the main ideas of each paragraph will help you better understand academic texts.

Examples & Explanations

①Medicine can transform a serious disease from a death sentence to a treatable condition. ②Yet this medicine often becomes available many years after a disease is discovered. ③This is because it takes years to carefully develop and test a new drug. ④Basic research begins in the lab, where scientists search for compounds that will fight the disease but not harm the patient. ⑤If a promising compound is found, it is further tested until the scientists believe it is safe to test on human volunteers in a clinical trial. ⑥If the new drug successfully completes this stage, the developing company applies to the government for permission to market it. ⑦Independent scientists review the research and approve the drug, which can now be sold. ⑧The total process is time consuming but necessary.

①Because of this long and careful process, antiretroviral drugs that treat HIV / AIDS became available years after that disease was discovered.

A main idea has two parts: a topic and a claim. Good readers ask two questions to find main ideas as they read a paragraph.

- What is the topic, or general subject?
- What claim does the writer make about the topic?

Sentence 1 introduces *medicine* as a possible topic.

The reader then looks for the claim the writer makes about this topic. Sentence 2 gives more information about a new drug, but it is too general to be the claim. It provides background information to the topic of medicine.

Sentence 3 explains that new drugs require careful development and testing. Together, these two sentences could be the claim – *that new drugs take a long time to become available*. The reader now looks for supporting details.

Sentences 4–7 provide reasons why it takes a long time for a new drug to be available. These reasons support the main idea in sentences 3 and 4.

Sentence 8 summarizes and comments on the main idea.

Sentence 1 of the next paragraph refers back to the main idea of the previous paragraph. This helps the reader remember the most important ideas and make connections between the two paragraphs.

Strategies

These strategies will help you identify main ideas.

- As you begin each paragraph, ask yourself: *What is the topic? What claim does the writer make about that topic?*
- Writers sometimes introduce background information in the first two or three sentences. This information is helpful to understand the paragraph, but it is not the main idea.
- Remember that the main idea is not always stated directly. You may need to infer it from the whole paragraph.
- As you read the other sentences in the paragraph, ask yourself if the information in the sentences supports the main idea.
- Writers often repeat the main idea in the last sentence of the paragraph.
- Pay attention to the first sentence of the next paragraph, which may refer back to the main idea of the previous paragraph.

Skill Practice 1

Read the following paragraphs. As you read, highlight the topic and underline the claim. Then read the four possible main ideas below. Circle the one you think best expresses the main idea of the paragraph.

1   When people think about illnesses, they usually think of physical illnesses. However, mental illnesses are on the rise in many developed countries. A 2011 study in the United States, for example, found that the number of Americans who could not perform ordinary, daily routines because of a mental illness nearly doubled between 1987 and 2007. This huge growth has raised many important questions about mental health. Some health experts believe that the increase in mental illnesses is due to better diagnosis of this disease. They argue that doctors today are trained to recognize mental illnesses such as depression. These experts also believe that people are more comfortable talking about their problems today, whereas in the past, a mental illness was seen as a weakness. Other researchers, however, think that life is becoming more stressful and that this stress leads to more people suffering from this type of illness. With 1 in 10 Americans taking drugs to fight mental illnesses, it is clear that more research needs to take place before these important questions are answered.

a The number of people suffering from mental illness is increasing in developed countries.
b The increase in mental illness is raising serious questions among mental health experts.
c Ten percent of Americans take a drug to fight some type of mental illness.
d Many health experts believe that better diagnosis of mental illness explains the increase in numbers.

2   There are several possible treatments for heart disease. If the disease is caught early, a change of diet and lifestyle is sometimes enough. When the condition is serious, medication may be needed. In the most critical cases, surgery becomes a possible solution. In many cases, heart surgery is lifesaving. However, this practice also raises important medical issues. First, focusing on research involved in heart surgery may move attention away from preventing the disease. Next, this research attracts money that could be used for programs to educate the public about the factors that contribute to heart disease – smoking, lack of exercise, and the fat in our diet. Finally, the emphasis on surgical treatment of heart disease may lead to doctors performing unnecessary surgeries. In a hospital that has the equipment and the medical expertise needed for this kind of surgery, the presence of that equipment and expertise creates a lot of pressure to perform heart surgeries.

a Heart disease is one of the most serious problems faced by the western world.
b There are several ways doctors can treat heart disease.
c The use of heart surgery has raised several significant medical issues.
d Research clearly shows that smoking, lack of exercise, and a high fat content in our diet contribute to heart disease.

3   Annually, millions of children in developing countries die before the age of five from infectious diseases such as measles, whooping cough, and simple diarrhea. Emphasizing the prevention rather than the treatment of these diseases could reduce the number of deaths. Some of these diseases can be prevented by vaccines, which are simple yet effective to use. A child usually needs only several doses of a vaccine. After the vaccination, the child has a natural protection against the disease. On the other hand, treating the diseases after they occur is often not effective; it is expensive and requires drugs, hospitals, and medical expertise, which are not available in all areas of developing countries.

a Diseases like diarrhea are more common in developing countries than in developed countries.
b In developing countries, millions of children die before their fifth birthday because of measles, whooping cough, and diarrhea.
c Vaccines are an effective yet simple method to prevent many serious diseases.
d If the health systems of developing countries emphasized disease prevention, they could reduce the number of deaths in young children.

Skill Practice 2

Read the following paragraphs. The main ideas are given to you. Find the supporting details in the paragraph, and write them on the blank lines.

1   What can be done to fight cardiovascular disease (CVD)? The surgical treatment of heart disease continues to benefit patients in countries where the necessary expertise, equipment, and resources are available. However, this surgical approach to CVD is not enough to win the fight against the disease. One reason is that surgery is very expensive, even for rich nations. Many countries simply do not have the resources to provide this type of treatment. In addition, even where resources for surgical treatment are available, this type of treatment is not always successful for all patients. A 2011 study in the United States showed, for example, that 10 percent of CVD patients suffer complications from heart surgery.

Main idea: A surgical approach is not enough to defeat CVD.

Supporting detail: _____

Supporting detail: _____

2   A number of developing countries have shown that low-cost health-care programs can be successful. The disease polio provides an example of the effectiveness of these programs. In 1985, the World Health Organization (WHO) worked to end this disease in North, South, and Central America. In 1991, nearly 2 million children in Peru were vaccinated just one week after polio was diagnosed in a two-year-old boy. The boy recovered and proved to be the last case of polio in the Americas. This disease was also common in India, with 150,000 cases in 1985. The government there partnered with WHO and began regular National Vaccination Days that aimed to vaccinate 170 million children under the age of five. The effort has been so successful that the last case of polio in India was reported in January 2011.

Main idea: The treatment of polio illustrates the effectiveness of low-cost health care programs.

Supporting detail: _____

Supporting detail: _____

Supporting detail: _____

Before You Read

Connecting to the Topic

Discuss the following questions with a partner.

1 What does it mean to be healthy?

2 What are some things you can do to be healthy?

3 It is the responsibility of an individual to stay healthy. Is it also the responsibility of a government to try to make sure its citizens are healthy?

4 What steps can a government take to improve the health of its citizens?

Previewing and Predicting

> You will understand a reading more easily if you can get an idea of its organization and content before you start reading. A quick way to do this is to read the first sentence in each paragraph. This can help you predict what the reading will be about.

A **Read the first sentence of each paragraph in Reading 1, and think of a question that you expect each paragraph to answer. Then choose the question below that is most like your question. Write the number of the paragraph next to that question. The first one has been done for you.**

PARAGRAPH	QUESTION
5	How does the way you live affect your life expectancy?
	What is meant by the term *life expectancy*?
	How healthy is the world today?
	Why is it important for all people to think carefully about their health?
	What are some of the causes of premature death?
	What is the connection between mortality rates and world health?

B **Compare your answers with a partner's.**

While You Read

As you read, stop at the end of each sentence that contains words in bold. Then follow the instructions in the box in the margin.

READING 1

The State of the World's Health

1   Individuals regularly make decisions about their physical and mental health. They do this partly because a serious illness can have a devastating effect on a person and on his or her family. Similarly, just as the health of a family is connected to individuals within that family, the health of a nation is clearly connected to the health of its people. A country's economic strength depends on a healthy, productive workforce. Therefore, it is in the interest of governments to monitor the health of their populations and to examine the connections between such factors as health and lifestyle. Using statistics from governments, international organizations such as the World Health Organization (WHO) then try to answer an important question: How healthy is the world?

2   The WHO uses two indicators – life expectancy and mortality rates – to assess the health of large **populations**. Life expectancy is the average age a person is expected to live. Since the beginning of the twentieth century, most countries have seen a significant increase in life expectancy. Today, the average global citizen can expect to live 27 years longer than his relatives in the 1900s. Some nations have experienced even more dramatic increases; the average Japanese person, for example, lives 38 years longer than his or her counterpart lived 100 years ago. As Figure 1.1 indicates, even the

> **WHILE YOU READ** 1
>
> As you read this paragraph, highlight the topic.

Figure 1.1 Life Expectancies 1970–2015

COUNTRY	LIFE EXPECTANCY 1970–1975	LIFE EXPECTANCY 2010–2015
The World	58.3	68.5
Australia	71.7	82.0
Bangladesh	45.3	66.2
Brazil	59.5	74.7
Canada	73.2	81.4
China	63.2	74.0
Egypt	51.1	72.6
India	50.7	66.7
Saudi Arabia	53.9	73.8
United Kingdom	72.0	80.1
United States	71.5	78.9

Source: Earthtrends.org

Children's health is an important indicator of a country's health.

last 40 years has seen considerable increases worldwide. Therefore, using this indicator of life expectancy, the world at the start of the twenty-first century is significantly healthier than at the start of the previous **century**.

3   The second indicator of world health is mortality rates, defined as the number of deaths within a specific geographic **region**. Mortality data is connected to life expectancy, with experts focusing on the number of premature deaths; in other words, the number of people who die before the average life expectancy within that area. In order to measure the health of a specific region, the WHO focuses on child mortality, since this accounts for more than 20 percent of all premature deaths. Unlike statistics for life expectancy, mortality rates provide a less optimistic picture of world health. Globally, child mortality is down by 30 percent since 1990, which is particularly encouraging since rates have fallen in all world regions. However, beneath this promising trend lie serious disparities between nations and between individuals living within a nation. Mortality rates are falling much more rapidly in wealthier countries, and within a wealthy country, mortality rates are falling more rapidly for those with higher incomes. Therefore, although there are reasons to be hopeful about mortality rates worldwide, there are still areas of concern.

4   The goal of most governments is, of course, to reduce mortality rates, and to do this, experts target the many causes of premature death. While there has been significant progress in the way medicine treats and even eradicates infectious diseases, these diseases are still responsible for millions of deaths every year, particularly in developing countries. For example, HIV / AIDS, virtually unknown until 30 years ago, has killed approximately 30 million people worldwide. At first, many nations were slow to deal with HIV / AIDS because of the social stigma surrounding the disease. In fact, some governments did not want to accept that HIV / AIDS was a health problem in their countries. Today, however, most countries are working toward HIV / AIDS prevention. As a result of these efforts, new infections are declining – 16 percent globally between 2000 and 2008. The development of new drugs, and particularly combinations of drugs, has also led to a decline in the number of HIV / AIDS deaths associated with this disease.

WHILE YOU READ 2

Quickly reread paragraph 2. What claim does the writer make about the topic? Highlight the claim.

WHILE YOU READ 3

As you read this paragraph, highlight the sentence that contains the main idea.

5   One factor that clearly affects both life expectancy and mortality rates is **lifestyle**. For instance, just as eating too little is unhealthy, so is eating too much. Severe obesity can reduce life expectancy by as much as 20 years. It can also lead to diabetes, one of the fastest growing diseases today. Smoking is another lifestyle choice that has serious health consequences. Although the number of smokers is decreasing in developed nations, it is growing in developing ones. The Center for Disease Control (CDC), an organization based in the United States, estimates that there are a billion smokers worldwide and that 80 percent of them live in developing countries. Every year, six million people die from tobacco-related products, including those who contract diseases from second-hand smoke, that is, smoke inhaled by nonsmokers. Such lifestyle choices lead to poor health, both for individuals and countries.

6   Information about life expectancy, mortality rates, and lifestyle can begin to address the question: What is the state of the world's health today? The answer is a mixed one. Because life expectancy is increasing globally, most people can expect to live a longer life. However, infectious diseases and poor lifestyle choices still lead to millions of deaths, especially in developing countries. This clearly demonstrates the need for nations to continue to work on improving health worldwide. Providing jobs and increasing incomes is an important part of this effort since there is a direct correlation between income level and health. There is also a strong connection between education and health. People who are better educated are less likely to contract serious diseases and are more likely to recover when they get sick. Knowledge allows people to make healthy lifestyle choices, get better jobs, eat healthier food, and pass these advantages to their children. With increasing access to good education as well as the ability for people to support themselves, the world's health will no doubt improve.

> **WHILE YOU READ** 4
>
> As you read, highlight details that support the main idea of this paragraph.

Healthy lifestyle choices are important.

READING 1 • **9**

Reading Skill Development

Main Idea Check

Here are the main ideas of paragraphs 2–6 in Reading 1. Match each paragraph to its main idea. Write the number of the paragraph on the blank line.

_____ **A** There is a clear connection between lifestyle and health.

_____ **B** Life expectancy has been increasing in the last 100 years.

_____ **C** Infectious diseases are still responsible for millions of deaths, especially in developing countries.

_____ **D** Research shows both good and bad news about mortality rates.

_____ **E** Nations need to continue to improve the overall health of their citizens.

A Closer Look

Look back at Reading 1 to answer the following questions.

1 Why is it important for governments to monitor the health of their populations?
   a The WHO needs this information in order to assess global health.
   b Ill health can have a serious effect on a person and a family.
   c There is a clear connection between the health of a country's workers and the strength of its economy.
   d There is a direct relationship between a healthy lifestyle and good health.

2 Which statement is true according to Paragraph 2 and Figure 1.1?
   a One hundred years ago, an average Japanese man lived to almost the same age as he does today.
   b Life expectancy in Bangladesh changed from being one of the lowest in 1970 to being one of the highest 30 years later.
   c Between 1970 and 2010, China and Saudi Arabia saw almost the same increases in life expectancy.
   d An average Egyptian lived approximately 21 years longer in 2010 than an average Egyptian lived 30 years earlier.

3 Which statement is *not* true according to the reading?
   a Children account for one fifth of all premature deaths.
   b Mortality rates show that health is improving for everyone in the world.
   c The number of people dying from premature deaths is decreasing worldwide.
   d There is a connection between national and individual wealth and mortality rates.

4 What does the reading suggest about the early attitude of some countries to HIV/AIDS?
   a Some governments did not realize the seriousness of this disease.
   b Not all countries had the necessary resources to deal with this disease.
   c Some countries did not immediately address HIV/AIDS because they did not want to admit this disease was in their country.
   d Many countries were slow to deal with HIV/AIDS because they did not know how to prevent it.