

SUPPORTING DETAILS

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

recognize the difference between major and minor details.



Not all details are the same.

Learn the difference between

Major & Minor details.

MAJOR AND MINOR DETAILS AND TRANSITIONS

Supporting details provide information that tells us more about the author's main idea.

If a friend called you and said, "I just had the most amazing thing happen to me!" you would probably want to know more details. What kinds of details would you expect? You might hear, "I was called into one of my professor's offices and he told me I have been nominated to receive a full scholarship to a four-year college," or "I was walking down the street and I found two \$100 bills lying on the ground." Supporting details should explain, prove, or illustrate your main idea. Try creating a few supporting details for these topic sentences with your team:

1. Here are several important things to consider when choosing a college.
2. Here are four good reasons to get a college degree.
3. Here are several factors to consider when choosing a major in college.

When Details Do Not Support

In college, you will have to write several papers. Good writing is concise, which means that it does not have a lot of irrelevant details that do not support the author's main idea. In your team, look at the list of details under each of the following topic sentences, and cross out the ones that do not support the main idea.

EXAMPLE:

Topic sentence: Learning a foreign language has many advantages.

- a. Knowing another language can make you more valuable as an employee.
- b. ~~Learning another language can be difficult.~~
- c. Being able to speak another language enables you to learn more about other people's cultures.
- d. Speaking a foreign language will make it easier to communicate when you travel.

To find out whether a sentence supports the main idea, ask yourself, "Does this sentence tell me more about the main idea?" If it doesn't, then it is not a supporting detail and should be crossed out.

Practice

Cross out or circle the detail that does NOT support the topic sentence.

1. Topic sentence: The hospitality industry is an exciting and challenging field in which to work.
 - a. Some hotels feature luxurious working environments.
 - b. Managers often work 10 hours a day.
 - c. Many travelers enjoy vacation cruises.
 - d. Large hotel and airline companies offer employees free travel and discounts.

2. Topic sentence: The most famous railway transportation system in Europe is the TVG train system in France.
 - a. The TVG serves more than 150 cities in France and Europe.
 - b. The United States does not have a national unified rail system.
 - c. The trains in the TVG travel at about 186 mph.
 - d. The ride on the TVG is amazingly smooth.

3. Topic sentence: The rental car business is a large part of the travel industry in the United States.
 - a. Some agencies charge more than others for daily rentals.
 - b. More than 5,000 car rental companies operate in the United States.
 - c. About 75 percent of the car rental business is situated around airports.
 - d. The top four rental agencies maintain about 625,000 rental cars.

4. Topic sentence: Air travel has become an important factor in the tourism industry.
 - a. Many airlines offer vacation packages that include hotel and rental cars.
 - b. During any time of the day, about 4,500 airplanes are flying over the United States.
 - c. Jet aircraft have made it possible to visit places that were not accessible before.
 - d. Low airfares help to boost hotel occupancy and increase tourism.

5. Topic sentence: Cruise ships have become a popular vacation choice.
 - a. Many ships feature nonstop entertainment for their passengers.
 - b. Some ships offer casinos and live entertainment.
 - c. The Diamond Princess is longer than two football fields and carries up to 2,670 passengers.
 - d. The market for cruise ship vacations has increased dramatically in recent years.

Major details give us more information about the main idea.

Major and Minor Details

There are two types of details in all writing: major details and minor details.

Major Supporting Details

perishability (pair-ish-a-BIL-i-tee): In this context, it means not producing an income.

In the following example, the topic is highlighted, the topic sentence is underlined, and the major details are numbered and italicized.

¹ The **hospitality industry** is one that is open for business 365 days a year. For this reason, it depends heavily on shift work. ² The industry is also dependent upon good customer service that will encourage guests to come back again and again. ³ Another characteristic of the hospitality industry is the perishability of its products, for instance, hotel rooms. Rooms that are vacant for the night are a financial loss to the hotel owner. These are some of the characteristics of the **hospitality industry** that make it a challenging industry in which to work.

Here is another way to see the information in this paragraph:

Topic: the hospitality industry

Topic sentence: These are some of the characteristics of the hospitality industry that make it a challenging industry in which to work.

Major supporting details:

- the hospitality industry is one that is open for business 365 days a year.
- the industry is also dependent upon good customer service that will encourage guests to come back again and again.
- Another characteristic of the hospitality industry is the perishability of its products, for instance, hotel rooms.

As mentioned earlier, you can make sure that a sentence is a major supporting detail by asking yourself, “Does this sentence tell me more about the main idea or topic sentence?” If it does, then it is a major detail. Another way to find the major details of a paragraph is to turn the main idea into a question. Answers to the question will be the major details.

For example:

Main idea:

There are many benefits to getting regular exercise. (What are the benefits of getting regular exercise?)

Main Idea:

The events that led to the American Revolution can be traced back to more than a decade before it began. (What are the events that led to the American Revolution?)

Minor Supporting Details

Minor details tell us more information about the major details. They usually follow the major detail they explain.

Authors also use minor details to tell us more information about the major details.

Notice in the earlier example how the first major detail is followed by a minor detail, which explains the first major detail:

Major detail:

The hospitality industry is one that is open for business 365 days a year.

Minor detail:

For this reason, it depends heavily on shift work.

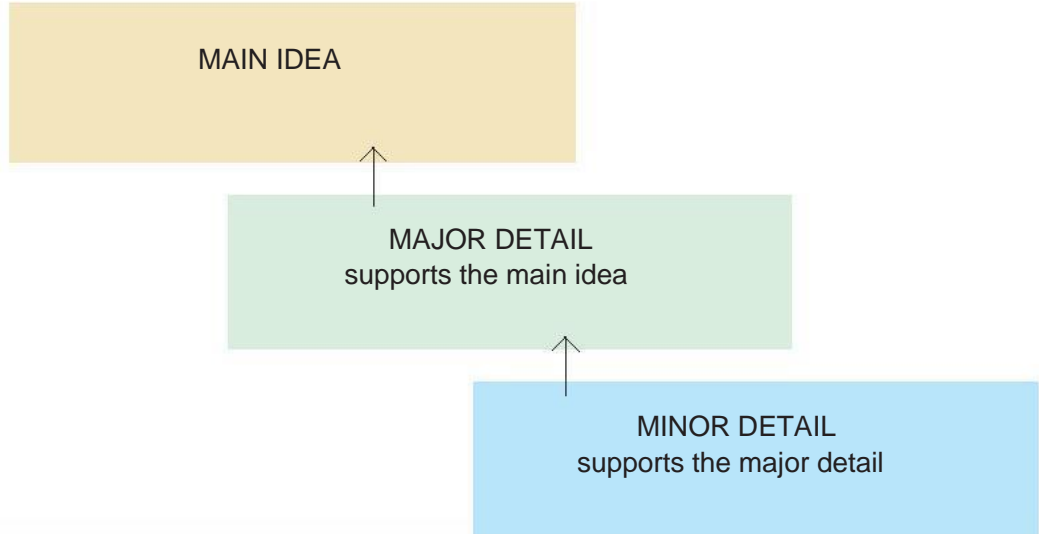
Major detail:

Another characteristic of the hospitality industry is the perishability of its products, for instance, hotel rooms.

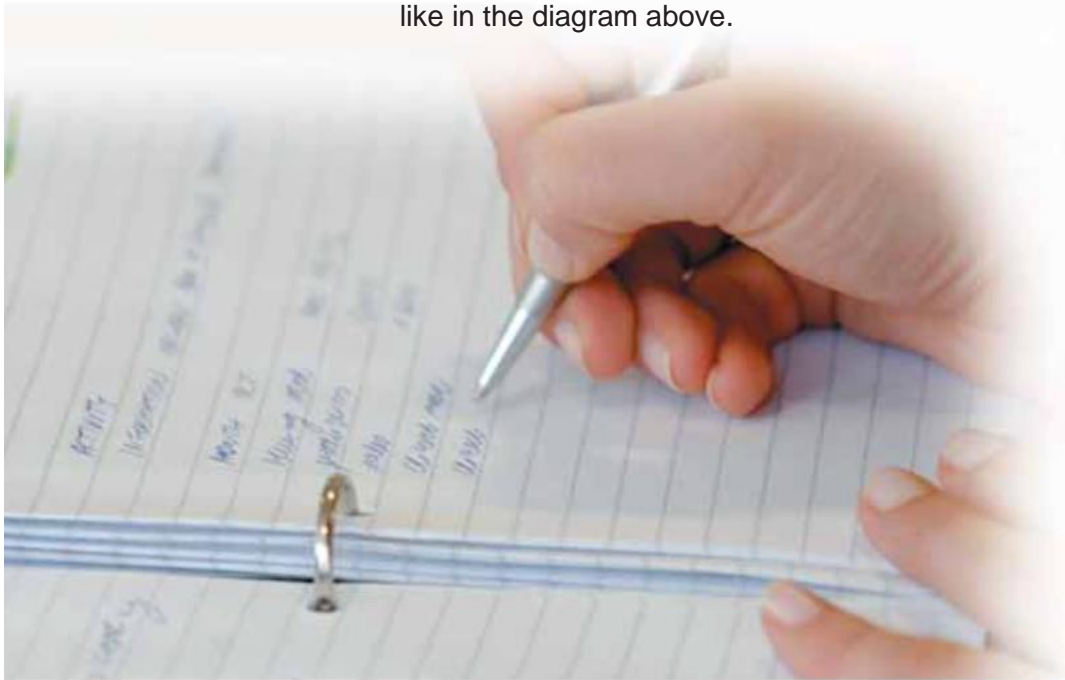
Minor detail:

Rooms that are vacant for the night are a financial loss to the hotel owner.

How Supporting Details Work



All good writing follows a certain structure. In college you will have to write many papers. Your professors will expect you to organize your thoughts in a logical manner, like in the diagram above.



Transitions

Transitions, or “signal words,” are words or phrases that help show relationships between ideas.

Transitions, or “signal words,” are words or phrases that help show relationships between ideas and can introduce supporting details. There are hundreds of transitions in the English language, and each one of them serves a different function. You will learn more about transitions in future chapters. For this chapter, focus on the transitions that introduce supporting details. Most of these are called “listing transitions” (because they list details). Here are some of the most common listing transitions:

first	one	too	for one thing	and
second	another	in addition	moreover	besides
third	also	additionally	furthermore	final(ly)

In the following example, the topic sentence is underlined and the transitions are highlighted and italicized.

Bianca wants to own her own travel agency for several reasons. *First*, she would like to be independent and not have to worry about relying on an employer for her income. If things slow down in the travel industry, she could be laid off. *Second*, she would like to have the opportunity to make as much money as she wants and not be limited to an hourly wage. Instead of making just a weekly salary, she wants to get commissions from every booking she makes. *Third*, she wants flexible hours that let her decide when she wants to work. With a child at home and another one on the way, she would like to work at her home computer and on the phone.

Notice how the minor details tell us more about each major detail:

Major supporting detail #1:

She would like to be independent and not have to worry about relying on an employer for her income.

Minor supporting detail:

If things slow down in the travel industry, she could be laid off.

Major supporting detail #2:

She would like to have the opportunity to make as much money as she wants and not be limited to an hourly wage.

Minor supporting detail:

Instead of making just a weekly salary, she wants to get commissions from every booking she makes.

Major supporting detail #3:

She wants flexible hours that let her decide when she wants to work.

Minor supporting detail:

With a child at home and another one on the way, she would like to work at her home computer and on the phone.

More on Supporting Details - Tutor Hints

Supporting Details provide information to clarify, prove, or explain the main idea. These details demonstrate the validity of the main idea. They often list parts, aspects, steps, or examples of the main idea. Or sometimes they may list the causes of it, effects from it, or ways in which it shows itself to be true.

There are two types of supporting details: major and minor

- Major Details
 - o explain the main idea.
 - o are more specific than the main idea.
 - o provide the examples, reasons, statistics and studies that help make the main idea clear and convincing.
 - o answer readers' questions about the main idea.
- Minor Details
 - o explain a major detail.
 - o are even more specific than major details.
 - o repeat key points and add colorful detail.
 - o may or may not be important enough to include in reading notes.

Example:

I really like apples. They are sweet, crisp, and juicy and just filling enough to take the edge off my appetite. When I eat apples, I also think of the vitamins and minerals they contain, and the fiber they supply to keep me healthy.

Main Idea: I like apples (for the following reasons).

Major Detail: They are crisp, juicy, and filling.

Major Detail: They provide healthy vitamins, minerals, and fiber.

Some extra Hints - The supporting details in a sentence or a paragraph **MIGHT** begin with some of the following words:

for example, for instance, in addition, another, in fact, furthermore, moreover, therefore, as a result, consequently, first, second, third, next, then, last, finally, etc...

Example:

Neighborhood watch programs are good for everyone. One reason for this is that neighborhood watches unite neighbors in a common goal. Neighbors work together to protect each other. One family's security becomes everyone's concern. Another reason is that neighborhood watches reduce crime in a couple of ways. Posted signs act as deterrents to criminals. Neighbors in these areas are more likely to report any suspicious persons or activities. And finally, watch programs keep neighbors alert. Because neighbors meet regularly, everyone is more aware of events, rules, or changes in the community.

Main Idea: Neighborhood watch programs are good for everyone (in the following ways).

Major: Neighborhood watches unite neighbors in a common goal.

Minor: Neighbors work together to Protect each other.

Minor: One family's security becomes everyone's concern.

Major: Neighborhood watches reduce crime.

Minor: Posted signs act as deterrents to criminals.

Minor: Neighbors are more likely to report suspicious persons or activities.

Major: Watch programs keep neighbors alert.

Minor: Because neighbors meet regularly, they are more aware of events, rules, or changes in the community.