TOPICS AND MAIN IDEAS

A topic is a word or phrase that everything in a text refers to. The topic is usually expressed in a few words. It is the general subject of a paragraph or essay.

Example:

“Some people say that music helps them to relax and focus when they are studying or working.”

The topic of this statement is music.

To find the topic in a paragraph or essay:

Ask yourself: Who/what is the paragraph/article about?
What is the author teaching me about?

Once you find the topic of the paragraph, you can find the main idea of the paragraph.

The main idea includes the topic and what the author wants to say about that topic. The main idea is the most important point that is being made by the author. Often times, the main idea needs a full sentence to be completely identified and defined.

The main idea is the key concept.

Example:

“Some people say that music helps them to relax and focus when they are studying or working.”

The main idea of this statement is music helps them relax and focus.

To find the main idea in a paragraph or essay:

Ask yourself: What does the author want me to know about the topic?
What is the author teaching me?

Look for a sentence that states the main idea.
Your main idea will include the topic and the central point the author expresses.