

SECTION

13

MAIN IDEAS,
SUBSIDIARY IDEAS,
SUMMARY WRITING
AND PREPOSITIONS



MAIN IDEAS

SUMMARY WRITING

SUMMARY WRITING

SUBSIDIARY IDEAS

LISTENING COMPREHENSION, SUMMARISING and GRAMMAR USAGE

INTRODUCTION

In this section, the focus will shift to language as it is spoken, and the emphasis will be on the many strategies which can be employed to aid clarity in communication.

One important function of the study of Grammar is to understand how words fit together to create meaningful communication in speech or in writing. Every day, we speak or discuss issues with our peers and the people around us. The speeches or discussions are not just made without any idea or substance. Some of the speeches may be long while others may be short. Someone who may hear our conversation from afar might have interest in what is being discussed. The person may not need the details of your conversation but just the main issue under discussion.

We will learn about summary and how important it is to us in our daily life. We will also learn to distinguish between important ideas and unimportant ideas in a text or oral conversation.

Have you ever been lost or had trouble finding something because you did not understand the directions? Directions are given using words such as next to, beside, in, under, on and between. Understanding these words is key to getting to your destination. Such words that are used to show the relationship between nouns/pronouns and other objects are called prepositions.

In this section, prepositions will be discussed in detail to enable you to express yourself clearly and accurately in speaking and writing.

By the end of this section, you should be able to

- Differentiate between important ideas and unimportant ideas in level appropriate oral texts.
- Apply innovative strategies in summarising short but familiar stories.
- use minor word classes in speaking and writing

Key Ideas

- *Paralinguistic features* are the aspects of communication that accompany spoken language but are not part of the specific verbal message itself.
- *Gestures* are a type of non-verbal communication that involve physical movements of the body, often used to convey emotions, ideas, or emphasis.
- *Facial expressions* refer to the various emotions and feelings that are conveyed through the movement and appearance of the face.

- *Tone of voice* refers to the emotional inflection and attitude conveyed through the sound and pitch of a person's voice when speaking.
- *Main idea* is the central or primary idea, point, or message that a text, speech, or conversation aims to convey.
- *Subsidiary idea* is a supporting idea that helps to develop, explain, or elaborate on the main idea.
- *Main word signals* are words that serve as cues to help readers or listeners to identify main ideas.
- *Subsidiary word signals* are words that serve as cues to help readers or listeners to identify subsidiary ideas.
- *Summary writing* is the act of reducing a text or speech to a simple form.

MAIN IDEAS AND SUBSIDIARY IDEAS

MAIN IDEAS

The main idea is the central point or the most important message that a writer or speaker wants to convey. It's the primary focus or the proposition around which the rest of the content is organised. Main ideas provide a clear direction and help the audience understand the overall message or argument.

Examples:

1. In a news article, the main idea might be the key event or issue being reported.
2. In an essay, the main idea is often expressed in the topic sentence, thereby summarising the argument or perspective of the writer.

SUBSIDIARY IDEAS

Subsidiary ideas are the supporting points or details that explain, expand upon, or provide evidence for the main idea. They are secondary to the main idea but are essential for fully understanding the message. Subsidiary ideas help to clarify and reinforce the main idea by providing additional information, examples, or explanations.

Examples:

1. In a news article, subsidiary ideas might include background information, quotes from experts, or specific examples related to the main event.
2. In an essay, subsidiary ideas are often found in the body paragraphs, where the writer presents arguments, evidence, or examples that support the thesis.

RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN MAIN AND SUBSIDIARY IDEAS

1. The main idea acts as the foundation of a piece of writing or speech, while subsidiary ideas build upon that foundation to give depth and support.
2. In well-structured communication, every subsidiary idea should be clearly linked to the main idea, contributing to a better understanding of the overall message.

The understanding of the distinction and relationship between these two types of ideas helps in both creating and interpreting effective communication.

Extracting Main ideas from Subsidiary Ideas

Extracting main ideas from subsidiary ideas involves identifying the core message or central point and distinguishing it from the supporting details or secondary information. Here's a step-by-step process to help you do this:

1. **Identify the Topic:** You start this by reading the text thoroughly to understand the overall topic or subject matter. Find out what the general theme being discussed is.
2. Then, ask yourself, what is the text about? The answer usually points toward the main idea.
3. **Look for the Topic Sentence:**
 - a. In essays or articles, the main idea is often explicitly stated in the topic sentence, usually found in the introduction or conclusion.
 - b. In paragraphs, the main idea is often encapsulated in the topic sentence, which is on most occasions, the first sentence of the paragraph.

Distinguish Between General and Specific Information

General Information (Main Ideas): These are broad statements or claims that summarise the overall message. They are often abstract and can stand alone as a summary of the content.

Specific Information (Subsidiary Ideas): These are detailed, concrete examples, explanations, evidence, or descriptions that support the general statements. They tend to be more specific and focused on particular aspects. There might be lists in subsidiary sentences of support.

1. **Identify Repeated Themes or Concepts:** If a certain concept or idea is repeated throughout the text, it's likely to be central to the main idea. After reading a section, try to summarise it in one sentence. The summary will usually highlight the main idea, with subsidiary ideas left out.
2. **Look for Signal Words or Phrases:** Words like 'most importantly', 'in summary', 'overall', or 'the main point' often introduce the main idea. Words like 'for example', 'such as', 'in addition', 'because', or 'specifically' usually indicate subsidiary ideas.

3. **Consider the Purpose of the Text:** Reflect on why the author might have written the text to clarify the purpose of the writing. What message or argument might the writer be trying to convey? The purpose often aligns with the main idea.
4. **Check the Conclusion:** Authors often restate the main idea in the conclusion or closing sentences. Review these sections to confirm your understanding of the main idea.
5. **Outline or Summarise:** Break down the text into its main points and supporting details. The headings in your outline should represent the main ideas, with bullet points underneath them showing the subsidiary ideas. Write a brief summary of the text in your own words. The main ideas should naturally emerge, with the subsidiary ideas providing additional context.

PARALINGUISTIC FEATURES

Paralinguistic features refer to the non-verbal elements of communication that accompany spoken language, helping to convey meaning and emotion beyond the actual words used. These features are critical in interpreting a speaker's purpose, emotions, and the distinctions of the message. They include facial expressions, tone of voice, and gestures.

Facial expressions, tone of voice, and gestures play a significant role in identifying the main and subsidiary ideas in communication, particularly in spoken or face-to-face interactions.

1. **Facial Expressions:** Facial expressions like raised eyebrows, widened eyes, or a serious look can indicate the importance of certain ideas, helping to distinguish between main and subsidiary points. The emotion conveyed through facial expressions can highlight the speaker's attitude towards an idea, signalling whether it's a primary concern or a supporting detail.
2. **Tone of Voice:** Changes in pitch, volume, and pace can emphasise key ideas. For instance, a higher pitch or slower pace might indicate a main idea, while a more neutral or faster pace might suggest a subsidiary point. The contrast between methods of communicating different ideas in terms of high or low pitch can help listeners distinguish between what is more important and what is secondary.
3. **Gestures:** These are motions of the limbs or body, especially one made to emphasise speech. Types of gestures may include:
 - a. **Illustrating Ideas:** Gestures can physically illustrate a point, drawing attention to the main idea. For example, a speaker might use larger or more pronounced gestures when discussing key concepts.
 - b. **Pacing and Pausing:** Gestures often accompany changes in pacing or pauses in speech, signalling transitions between main and subsidiary ideas.
 - c. **Integration in Communication:** These non-verbal cues work together with verbal content to reinforce the structure of a message. By paying attention to facial expressions, tone, and gestures, listeners can better understand the hierarchy of

ideas and the speaker's intent, making it easier to identify the main points and supporting details.

It has to be noted that gestures are not universal in different countries and cultures. The same gesture can mean different things in different areas. For further information, the YouTube clips below provide insights - sometimes surprising and often amusing. In visiting a different country or culture it is important to check this matter carefully.

Ghanaian hand gestures : <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Zo-ch9x5ros>

Handgesturesaroundtheworld:<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JCwyRn40fvk>

You will find a number of videos on this topic online, and certain 'shorts' are excellent and memorable. If you are visiting another country, check out its gestures before you go.

In summary, take care as you gesture.

READING TECHNIQUES

With the aid of Reading techniques, we are going to summarise short stories bringing out the important ideas and unimportant ideas in a text. Reading techniques are strategies and methods used to enhance comprehension, speed, and retention when reading. Some common reading techniques:

1. **Skimming:** This type of reading is done when you want to get the general idea of the content. You quickly move your eyes over the text focusing on headings, sub-headings, and keywords. You don't read everything but pick up enough to understand the main points.
2. **Scanning:** The purpose is to find specific information in a text. It is used when you want to search for particular words, phrases, or figures without reading everything. This is useful for finding dates, names, or facts.
3. **Active Reading:** This type of reading is done to engage deeply with the text for better understanding and retention. It is used when you want to annotate a text, highlight key points, ask questions, summarise sections, and take notes. This method is useful for studying or reading complex material.

We also have Critical Reading, Speed Reading, Intensive and Extensive Reading and other types of reading techniques as you have learnt in some of your Reading Comprehension lessons.

ACTIVITY 13.1

1. Call two of your friends and form a group with them. Taking turns, narrate a story to your friends. Your other group members should pay attention to the speaking cues you will use while you tell your story. Observe the beginning

and end, facial expressions, tone of voice and gestures. Again, observe the signal words for the main ideas and the subsidiary ideas.

2. From the story you just listened to and still with your friends, agree about the Topic sentence that makes up the story.
3. With the help of your friends, write down the important ideas in the story on a sheet of paper and write down the unimportant ideas on another sheet of paper.
4. Discuss with your friends why you think some ideas are considered as main ideas and why some ideas are not important based on the story you listened to.

Activity 13.2

1. Think about the term 'summary' and its definition in your own words.
2. Write down your answer.

Look at the following typical piece of writing about a football match:

The crowd was standing quietly and detached from the game. Suddenly, as if from nothing and nowhere, the speedy left-winger broke down his wing to the corner and from near the corner-flag sent in a high ball to the goalmouth. The striker, having accelerated his run down the middle, leapt high above the defenders and headed the ball neatly past the despairing goalkeeper. The crowd immediately was roused and joyously roared in celebration of this clever and successful passage of play. (81 words)

Now consider the short summary below:

The once silent crowd roared its approval of the striker's headed goal from the left-winger's cross. (15 words)

The facts of the match are succinctly conveyed in the short version. The word choice is clear. The words used in the very short summary here are our own as far as possible/necessary.

SUMMARY WRITING

Summary writing is the act of reducing a text or speech to a simple form. In other words, when we are given a task or opportunity to summarise a text/story, we are to put it in the shortest possible form. This does not mean that when we are summarising a text/story we are required to cut part of the text (a sentence or a paragraph) away because the summarised version has to be in the shortest possible form. The idea here is that the summary has to be brief/short but should contain the important information.

There may be a lot of words, sentences or paragraphs in a text that you are dealing with. Not all of these items are so important when it comes to summary writing. Most of these items serve as explanations or give further information to the main ideas in the text. So,

when summarising, it is only the main ideas/points that are needed. Before we are able to summarise a text very well, we need to read carefully, paying attention to important areas that give hints to the main messages in the text. These hints could be words, phrases, clauses or sentences. The main points can be captured at the beginning, in the middle or at the end of a paragraph. For this reason, it is important that we pay much attention to what we read to be able to bring out the main points.

In academic summary, as part of assessment by examining bodies, one may choose to read a given text, read the questions on the text, and go back and read the text or passage again. With the second reading, we now have what is demanded of us about the text in our minds, since we have read the questions. This would help to identify the salient parts of the text that we can get our main points from. These main points are contained in what is known as topic sentences. (the sentences that contain the main points/ideas of a paragraph or passage). Some of the words in the topic sentence may not be necessary, and so, you can omit them because the meaning of the message would not be affected without them. There may also be examples that seek to clarify the main point. Those examples are not also needed. Also, it is important to note that we are sometimes required by the question to write our summary using our own words as far as possible. This one is applicable if there are words in the topic sentence where we can find words to replace them without the meaning of the sentence being affected or changed. This avoids lifting and writing the entire sentence as a summary. Also, it shows the level of our understanding of the text or sentence.

Also, one could apply some innovative techniques or strategies to summarise a story or a narrative. These include but are not limited to SWBST and 5Ws.

Note: SWBST means:

1. **Somebody:** *Who is the main character of the narrative?*
2. **Wanted:** *What does the main character want or want to do?*
3. **But:** *What is the problem? Why can't the main character get what she or he wants?*
4. **So:** *How does the main character solve the problem?*
5. **Then:** *What was the resolution?*

The '5Ws' means:

1. **Who** is driving the story? Who is it about? Who is affected? Who benefits? Who loses?
2. **What** has happened? What are the consequences? What does this mean for the reader?
3. **Where** is this taking place (building, neighbourhood, city, country)? Where should readers go to learn more?
4. **When** did it happen (time of day, day, month, year)? When was the last update? When can you expect to learn more? When will the effects be felt?
5. **Why** did this event take place? Why is this important in the big picture? Why should readers care?

With all the procedures and techniques discussed, one should be able to summarise a text or narrative very well if followed properly.

It is important to note that summary plays an important role in our lives. Apart from helping us to save time in our conversations, it also paves a way for us to develop critical thinking skills. This is because it enables us to know what is important or not important to us in our daily analysis of issues around us.

Activity 13.3

1. Compare the definition of summary that you wrote down with what you have been given. Is it in line? If yes, well done. If not, then study carefully what you have been given.
2. Invite three of your colleagues and form a group. Now, summarise what you do every day at home in turns.
3. Change the friends with whom you performed Activity 2 and perform this new activity with them. One tells a story, then the others listen to the story told to the group and summarise it. Do this also in turns.

PREPOSITION

What is a preposition?

A preposition is a word used to connect nouns, pronouns or phrases to other words in a sentence. It often indicates the relationship of location, direction, time, cause, and place.

How to identify prepositions

A preposition is normally followed by:

- a. a noun
E.g. The tourist drove to Ho
We will meet at noon.
- b. a noun phrase
E.g. They jumped into the pool.
The children walked towards the park.
- c. a pronoun
E.g. The rock fell on them.
He sat next to her
- d. a gerund
E.g. Adjetey Sowah is known for dancing.
The workers are used to working late.

Types of Prepositions

1. **Simple Prepositions:** They are made up of just one-word. Examples include *beside, of, across, without, into, after* and *behind*.

2. **Complex Prepositions:** These prepositions are made up of more than one word. Examples include *as a result of*, *in accordance with*, *in front of*, *in spite of*, *with regard to*, *in spite of* and *by means of*.

Functions of Prepositions

Prepositions perform various roles in sentences. They are used to show time, place and instrument. Because prepositions are such important features of grammar, their correct usage is vital in English communication. The following list seems complex, but it will act as a useful reference check if you are in doubt about the correct employment of English prepositions.

1. Prepositions of Time

They answer the questions *when* or *how long* to indicate time or duration.

Examples:

- a. I was born in May.
- b. Christmas is always during Harmattan.
- c. The meeting ends at 5pm.

2. Prepositions of Place

They show the location or position of something. Thus, they answer the question *where*.

Examples:

- a. The dog is under the chair.
- b. The school is behind the library.
- c. The books are next to me.

3. Prepositions of Direction

They are used to show movement or direction.

Examples:

- a. We walked through the tunnel.
- b. The students ran across the field.
- c. The child jumped on the bed.

4. Prepositions of Cause, Reason or Purpose

These prepositions explain why something happens.

Examples:

- a. The learners are studying for their exams.
- b. The event was cancelled because of the rain.
- c. The project was delayed owing to a shortage of funds.
- d. His lateness was due to sudden illness.

5. Prepositions of Manner

They describe the way something occurs.

Examples:

- a. Abu opened the door with a key

- b. Love completed the task in a hurry.
- c. Selasie sings like a professional.
6. **Prepositions of Instrument**
They indicate the means by which an action is performed.
Examples:
- a. The letter was written with a pen.
- b. They travelled to Oguaa by car.
- c. I heard the news from Ato.
7. **Prepositions of Concession**
They express concessive relations. In other words, these prepositions are used to indicate that one fact does not prevent another fact from being true. They show contrast and unexpectedness, emphasising that something happened, or something is true even if it did not seem likely.
Examples:
- a. The team won the game notwithstanding their injuries.
- b. The twins love reading even though they don't have enough time.
- c. The farmer harvested good crops despite the drought.

Activity 13.4

- a. Join a friend or two to undertake the following activities. Get 7 bottle covers and 7 pebbles or small coins. Use them to depict these words – **on, beside, inside, under** and **in front of**.
- b. Based on the activity above, you and your friend(s) should attempt to explain the concept of prepositions in turns.
- c. Still with the same peers for Activity 1 and 2, read the extract below and underline all the prepositions you see:

Yesterday, I visited my friend who lives near the Kwame Nkrumah Circle in Accra. We walked along the beach at Labadi, enjoying the sunset over the sea. Afterwards, we went to a nearby restaurant situated under a large baobab tree, to eat some delicious Fufu with light soup. The restaurant was surrounded by colourful stalls selling beautiful Kente cloth and wooden carvings.

Clue: Prepositions are followed by pronouns, nouns, noun phrases or gerunds (a verb ending in '-ing' which functions as a noun - see Glossary).

- d. What do you observe about the prepositions you have identified? Are they all made up of a single word?

Activity 13.5

1. In this activity, you are expected to give answers to some questions using given prepositions. The answers you give to these questions will help you understand the use of prepositions. Here is an example:

Question 1: How do you commute to school? Use prepositions like *from*, *to*, *through* and *across*.

Expected answer: I walk from my house to the main road. Then, I take ‘*trotro*’ through the traffic to get to school.

Apply the same process for ‘Question 1’ to the questions below:

- a. Give directions to a popular spot in your community. Use prepositions like *up*, *down*, *left* and *right*.
 - b. Describe your daily routine. Use prepositions like *at*, *during* and *until*.
 - c. Describe how you perform your favourite activity. Use prepositions like *with*, *in* and *by*.
2. Join a friend to identify your answers as indicating *time*, *location*, *place*, *direction* and *movement*. Here is an example:
 - I walk from my house to the main road. Then, I take *trotro* through the traffic to get to school. (Direction)

Extended Reading

1. Organised English Grammar (Second Edition), Prof. Wiredu pg. 103 – 107
2. New Gateway to English for Senior High School book 1, ABK Dadzie and N Grant, pg. 140 – 141
3. Ghana Senior Secondary School English Book 1, Naa Afarley Sackeyfio et al, pg. 19 – 21
4. Selected Passages from Subjects across the Curriculum such Social Studies, Agriculture, Geography.

Glossary

Gerund	It is a verb with the -ing form and functions like a noun. E.g. Azumah Nelson is known for <u>boxing</u> .
Noun phrase	it is a group of words without a finite verb that functions as a noun. E.g. The plane flew over <u>the town</u> .
Trotro	A shuttle system, or a passenger or commercial vehicle.

References

- New Gateway to English for Senior High School book 1, ABK Dadzie and N Grant, pg. 140
- Ghana Senior Secondary School English Book 1, Naa Afarley Sackeyfio et al, pg. 17 – 21
- Warriner’s English Grammar and Composition, fifth course, Franklin Edition pg. 18 – 19
- Organised English Grammar (Second Edition), Prof. Wiredu pg. 103 – 106

Review Questions

1. *Read the text below and identify the main ideas.*

Ghana is a country rich in cultural heritage and natural resources. One of the most important cultural symbols is the traditional Kente cloth, which is handwoven with vibrant colours and patterns, each with its own meaning. The country is also known for its natural wealth, particularly gold, which has earned it the nickname 'The Gold Coast.' Additionally, Ghana's cocoa industry plays a crucial role in the global chocolate market, making the country one of the world's top cocoa producers. However, while these resources are valuable, it is essential for Ghana to manage them sustainably to ensure long-term economic growth and environmental protection.

2. *Read the text below and identify the main idea and the subsidiary ideas.*

Regular exercise is crucial for maintaining good health. It helps in reducing the risk of chronic diseases such as heart disease and diabetes. Additionally, exercise improves mental health by reducing symptoms of depression and anxiety. Therefore, incorporating physical activity into your daily routine is essential for overall well-being.

3. *Read the passage/text below and carry out the activities on it.*

In Tatindo, a small community in the Northern Region of Ghana where farming was the mainstay of the indigenes, there lived a man and his only daughter. This man was a hardworking farmer. So, he trained his daughter so well that she also became hardworking. During one of the farming seasons, the workload was too much for the man. So, he decided to seek the support of his daughter to help him weed throughout the farm.

Thinking that his daughter had not had enough training to work, the man decided that his daughter weeds the half lines in the farm while he weeds the full ones. This decision was challenged by his daughter, insisting that she could weed even harder than her father. The man had to give in to his daughter's continuous insistence, and made both of them work together. This became a competition between them. Having in mind that she was going to prove herself, the girl worked harder and harder. Getting to three hours' time, her father became tired but the girl continued, jumping from one line to another, until her father gave up on her totally.

Back at home in the evening, the man could not sit upright and eat his dinner. He became a laughingstock to his daughter. She, since then, always made funny remarks about her father concerning their competition in the farm. She would even do it in the presence of her peers so they together would make fun of him. The man then vowed never to underrate anybody, especially women, in terms of their work.

During that year's yam festival celebration, the man, in appreciating the efforts of his only daughter, slaughtered a turkey for her. The girl prepared a very delicious meal with it and brought it to her father so they might eat together. At the dinner table, the girl prevented her father from eating the meat until she selected the best parts before allowing her father to eat. They enjoyed a lovely time together in the festivities.

- a. In a sentence, summarise the general point/idea of the passage.
- b. In three sentences, one for each, summarise in your own words as far as possible, three things that happened, according to the passage.

Fill in the blanks with the most appropriate prepositions from the options given in brackets.

4. She walked the park to get some fresh air. (through/over/under)
5. They arrived the airport early in the morning. (at/in/on)
6. We drove the bridge to reach the other side. (beside/over/under)
7. He jumped the pool with excitement. (on to/in/into)
8. They sat me during the concert. (across/under/beside)

Provide the correct prepositions to fill in the blanks in the following sentences.

9. He ran the finish line determination.
10. She lives the school.
11. The movie will start 7pm.
12. The dog is hiding the sofa.
13. The concert was cancelled the rain.

Each sentence below contains one incorrect preposition. Identify and correct it.

14. She drove from her house in the office without stopping.
15. The meeting will be held on 9am sharp.
16. He received a gift by his friend.
17. The flowers were placed under the vase on the table.
18. My friend has been good at playing the piano with a young age.
19. Use the following prepositions in sentences of your own: *between, during, along, in spite of, adjacent to*

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List of Contributors

Name	Institution
Beatrice Antwiwaa Boateng	Oti Boateng SHS, Koforidua
Jennifer Afua Kyei-Baffour	Sakafia Islamic SHS, Kumasi
Isabella Sika Keh	Achimota School
N-yalamba Jerry Njomoun	Tatale E.P. Agric SHS