

# Target Reading Skill: Identify Supporting Details

## Identifying the Supporting Details

When you read, it's important to be able to identify the main idea. Identifying all of the supporting details can help you identify the main idea, especially when the main idea is unstated. Look at the examples below.



**Eliminating Excess Body Heat**

Temperature balance in the body often depends on the ability of the body to transfer heat to the outside environment. This can challenge the body on a hot day. Specialized nerve cells in the brain detect excess heat in the blood flowing past them and respond by sending messages to the cells in the skin. The blood vessels in the skin then dilate (get larger), increasing the amount of blood that is flowing just under the surface of the skin. This increase in blood flow allows heat to be exchanged from blood vessel to skin surface to the air. The same nerve messages trigger sweat glands to produce sweat. Heat is lost to the air as sweat evaporates.

Main idea

Supporting details

**What Makes Snake Venom Dangerous?**

Of the 2,300 snake species found on Earth, only 300 species are venomous. Although this is a small percentage of the total snake population, between 30,000 and 40,000 people worldwide die each year from snake bites. The greatest number of deaths occurs in Southeast Asia. Fewer than 100 people in the United States die each year from snake bites.

Snake venom is actually toxic saliva. Venom, which immobilizes a snake's prey, can be one of two types. Neurotoxic venoms attack a victim's central nervous system. Hemotoxic venoms attack the circulatory system and the muscle tissue.

Main idea

Supporting details

## Target Reading Skill: Identify Supporting Details, Cont.

### Identify Supporting Details *(continued)*

#### TRY THIS

Now it's your turn. Work with a partner. Read each text below. Underline the main idea, and then underline the supporting details. Label the main idea and supporting details in the margin.

1.

#### How a Camera Captures Light

Although cameras vary greatly in complexity, they all work on the same fundamental principles of optics. In a film camera, the lens or group of lenses focuses light onto film. The film is coated with light-sensitive chemicals, primarily silver salts. When light strikes the chemicals, it causes a reaction that leaves dark areas on the film. The more light striking the film, the darker the area becomes. This reversal of dark and light is why the film is called a negative.

In a digital camera, the film is replaced by a light-sensitive screen. Optically, digital cameras function like film cameras, focusing light onto a screen. The screen converts the image to digital data, and stores the data in memory.

2.

#### Bacteria in the Body

Bacteria are part of the normal flora of humans. Found on the skin and in the mouth, intestines, and other sites, these bacteria are part of the mixture of microorganisms that regularly live in the body without causing harm. The normal flora of humans consists of more than 200 species of bacteria. In normal health, the interaction between the bacteria and the human host is thought to be mutually beneficial. That is, the host provides the bacteria with a stable shelter and temperature and a supply of nutrients. In return, the bacteria provide the host with benefits including aid in digestion, production of certain vitamins, and stimulation of the immune system.