

Key Idea Showdown

Grades 3 to 8

Purpose

Students identify the main idea of a passage by distinguishing key details from interesting and extra details. They explain how details support a message and show how removing an extra detail can leave the meaning intact.

TEKS Addressed

TEKS 6(G), Grades 3 to 8 (3.6G, 4.6G, 5.6G, 6.5G, 7.5G, 8.5G): evaluate details read to determine key ideas.



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Teacher Directions

Materials

- Student directions page and five passage pages, one set per student
- Pencils

How to Play / Steps

1. Give each student the Student Directions page and Passages 1 to 5.
2. Read the student goal and the five student directions with the class. Students use those directions on every passage.
3. On each passage page, students sort details into the three boxes and answer the three questions.

Student goal: Not all details matter equally. Your job is to separate the important from the extra and prove you understand the main idea of a text.

Student Directions:

Read the passage carefully.

- Think about what the text is mostly about, not just small details.

Sort the details.

- Place each detail into one category:
 - Key: supports the main idea
 - Interesting but not key: related, but not essential
 - Extra: can be removed without changing the message

Write the key idea.

- Use one strong sentence that explains what the passage is mostly about.

Explain one detail.

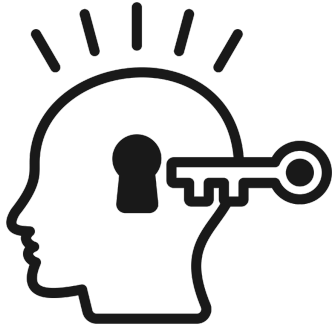
- Choose one detail that does not belong in the key section and explain why.

Complete the challenge.

- Remove one detail from the passage and explain why the meaning of the text stays the same.

Teacher Tips

- Have students point to the passage evidence that supports the main idea.
- More than one detail may fit a category when the student can justify the choice with the passage.
- Listen for a clear difference between a supporting detail and a detail that can be removed without changing the message.



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Passage 1: The New Homework Club

Last month, a group of teachers started a Homework Club after school. At first, only a few students showed up, mostly because they were curious. Over time, more students began coming when they realized they could get help from teachers and work alongside friends.

Some students like Homework Club because it gives them a quiet place to focus. Others enjoy the snacks that are sometimes provided, especially on long days. Teachers noticed that students who attend regularly often turn in assignments more consistently and seem less stressed about homework.

Because of these results, the school plans to continue Homework Club next semester and may even add more days.

Read the passage again. Sort the details below.

Key Details	Interesting but not key	Extra detail (one detail that could be removed without changing the message)

1. What is the passage mostly about?

2. Choose one detail that you did not place in the key category. Explain why it does not belong.

3. Explain how the extra detail you choose did not change the message of the passage.

Passage 2: Why the Playground Rules Changed

This year, the school added new rules for recess. Some games were moved to different areas of the playground to prevent crowding. Teachers also introduced rotating game days so everyone would get a chance to play.

At first, many students complained about the changes and missed playing wherever they wanted. However, teachers noticed fewer arguments and fewer trips to the nurse after the rules were put in place. Students also spent less time waiting their turn during popular games.

Even though the new rules took time to adjust to, the changes were meant to keep recess safer and more enjoyable for everyone.

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3. Explain how the extra detail you choose did not change the message of the passage.

Passage 3: The Rise of Reusable Water Bottles

More students have started bringing reusable water bottles to school instead of plastic ones. Some like the designs and stickers they can add to personalize them. Others say it's easier to refill a bottle than ask for a new cup.

Teachers have noticed fewer empty plastic bottles left behind in classrooms and hallways. The school has also installed more water refill stations, making it quicker for students to get a drink between classes.

While not everyone remembers to bring their bottle every day, the shift has helped reduce waste and keep the school cleaner.

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1. What is the passage mostly about?

2. Choose one detail that you did not place in the key category. Explain why it does not belong.

3. Explain how the extra detail you choose did not change the message of the passage.

Passage 4: Why Morning Announcements Matter

Every morning, the announcements play over the intercom just before first period. They include reminders about events, birthdays, and schedule changes. Some students admit they don't always listen closely, especially when they're still waking up.

However, when announcements are skipped or cut short, confusion often follows. Students miss club meetings, forget special schedules, or show up late to events. Teachers rely on announcements to make sure everyone receives the same information at the same time.

Even if they seem boring, morning announcements help keep the school organized and running smoothly.

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Key Details	Interesting but not key	Extra detail (one detail that could be removed without changing the message)

1. What is the passage mostly about?

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3. Explain how the extra detail you choose did not change the message of the passage.

Passage 5: The School Garden Project

Last spring, a group of students helped start a small garden near the science wing. They planted vegetables, herbs, and flowers, taking turns watering and weeding during lunch periods. Some students joined because they liked being outside, while others were curious about how food grows.

As the garden grew, teachers used it during lessons to talk about plant life cycles and responsibility. Students also felt proud when they harvested vegetables they had grown themselves. A few vegetables were even used in a cooking demonstration after school.

The garden project gave students hands-on learning while also improving the school environment.

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1. What is the passage mostly about?

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