



How to Teach Students to Get the Gist (Main Idea)

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San Angelo ISD

About

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Objectives for Today's Session

- Learn a new practice for improving reading comprehension
- Prepare to use this practice in your classroom.
- Provide feedback on this PD session so we can improve it for teachers in other schools next year.
- Understand your role in the *Middle School Matters* project this year.

Agenda: Lincoln

Time	Topic
1:00-1:15	Welcome, brief review of MSM, objective for today's session
1:15-2:00	Learn about the Get the Gist strategy (and gist to summarization)
2:00-2:30	Planning time
2:30-3:00	Putting it all together: Implementation goals
3:00-3:15	Wrap-up paperwork and feedback
3:15-3:30	Consent form and assessment procedures (ELAR teachers)

A few things before we begin...

- Sit with teachers from your content-area (ELA/Reading, SS, Science)
- **Materials you'll need for today:**
 - Brief content-area text (we brought extra texts in case you forgot!)
 - Your calendar
 - Training folder
 - Strategy Guide
 - Paper for notes
 - Gist log (one for you, one to use today)
 - Copy of "What are Clouds?" (if you're an ELA or SS teacher)
 - Get the Gist cue card
 - Teacher information packet (consent form, PD survey, demographic form)

A Common Challenge

Think about the following questions and discuss with your partner or table:

1. What specific difficulties do students have when they read text in your class?
2. What reading skills do you wish they had or were better at?

One Research-based Solution

Get the Gist

Students stop to write a brief main idea statement, or gist, at predetermined stopping points (i.e., after paragraphs or sections of text)



What do students do?



STEPS	DESCRIPTION
Step 1	Who or what is this section about?
Step 2	What is the most important information about the “ who ” or “ what ”?
Step 3	Write a gist statement that combines the information from steps 1 and 2 . (The gist statement should be in students’ own words, rather than a sentence copied from the text.)

(Refer to pg. 1 Strategy Guide)

Example 1



Benjamin Franklin thought that working to help people was the best work to do. One way he helped people was by opening a public library. In the 1730s, only wealthy people owned books. However, Franklin and a few other people asked 50 friends to give them a small amount of money. They used this money to buy books. Then they started a library where people could borrow books to read at home. Today, almost every town in the United States has a public library.

Example 1



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- Step 1: **Who** or **what** is this section about?
 - Benjamin Franklin
- Step 2: What is the most important information about the "**who**" or "**what**"?
 - Started a library so people could borrow books
- Step 3: Write your gist in about 10 words.
 - Benjamin Franklin started a library so people could borrow books.

Example 2



In nature, species become extinct when they reach the end of their evolutionary period on Earth. The length of this period depends on how well a species adjusts to changes in climate, habitat, predators, and food sources. Natural events, such as volcanic eruptions, tsunamis, and sudden climate change, can cause mass extinctions if the event is on a large enough scale.

Example 2



In nature, species become extinct when they reach the end of their evolutionary period on Earth. The length of this period depends on how well a species adjusts to changes in climate, habitat, predators, and food sources. Natural events, such as volcanic eruptions, tsunamis, and sudden climate change, can cause mass extinctions if the event is on a large enough scale.

- Step 1: **Who** or **what** is this section about?
 - Species
- Step 2: What is the most important information about the "**who**" or "**what**"?
 - Become extinct when they stop evolving
- Step 3: Write your gist in about 10 words.
 - Species become extinct when they stop evolving (adjusting to changes in nature).

Example 3



William Shakespeare's days in London abounded with theater life. Initially, he took to the stage as an actor for The Lord Chamberlain's Men, but he soon received praise not for his acting but for the magnificent plays he was writing. His ability to capture the interests and imaginations of playgoers of that time testifies to his talent, as many theatergoers paid more attention to the rowdy scenes occurring within the audience than they did to the play itself.

Example 3



William Shakespeare's days in London abounded with theater life. Initially, he took to the stage as an actor for The Lord Chamberlain's Men, but he soon received praise not for his acting but for the magnificent plays he was writing. His ability to capture the interests and imaginations of playgoers of that time testifies to his talent, as many theatergoers paid more attention to the rowdy scenes occurring within the audience than they did to the play itself.

- Step 1: **Who** or **what** is this section about?
 - William Shakespeare
- Step 2: What is the most important information about the "**who**" or "**what**"?
 - Was an actor and received praise for the plays he wrote
- Step 3: Write your gist in about 10 words.
 - Shakespeare acted but received most recognition for the plays he wrote.

**Questions so far before we talk about
how to teach students to use this
strategy?**

What does the teacher do?

- Step 1: PREPARE an introductory lesson
- Step 2: TEACH students to use Get the Gist
- Step 3: PROMPT & SUPPORT students to use the strategy regularly

Step 1: PREPARE

We'll come back to this later!

○ What You'll Need:

○ A short passage (5 paragraphs or sections) at students' independent reading level and on a familiar or interesting topic

○ Get the Gist Log

○ How You'll Prepare:

○ Divide your text into sections or chunks.

○ Prepare a gist statement for each section or chunk using the 3-step strategy and Get the Gist Log.

(Refer to pgs. 2-3 Strategy Guide)


Step 2: TEACH/INTRODUCE/MODEL

- **Time:** One full 50-minute class period OR two 25-minute “doses” over two class periods
- **Materials:**
 - PowerPoint (available for download)
 - Your model text and prepared gist statements
 - Blank Get the Gist Log (one for you and one for each student)
 - Get the Gist cue card (one per student)
 - Computer, projector and document camera

Let me show you what this might look like in your classroom

- Follow along with the steps for introducing the process on page 3 of your strategy guide
- Use the sample passage “What Are Clouds?” and the Get the Gist log

Set a Purpose for Learning



Sometimes when we read a text we don't read carefully enough or we read too fast, but there are several strategies that can help us. Today we are going to learn a new reading strategy called Get the Gist. A "gist" is another word for "main idea." This strategy will help us identify the main ideas of what we read so when we finish reading we understand and remember the important information.

★ TEACHING TIPS ★

Set the purpose for learning by pointing out some reasons to use the Get the Gist strategy.

- Writing gist statements helps you think about what you're reading.
- Gist statements focus on important information rather than minor details.
- This strategy helps you remember what you read.

Introduce the Strategy

Step 1: Who or what is this section about?

Step 2: What is the most important information about the “who” or “what?”

Step 3: Write your main idea statement by combining Steps 1 and 2.

When writing a gist, remember to:

- Include only the most important information.
- The gist should be brief (about 10 words).
- Use a complete sentence.
- Write the gist in your own words.

Model and Think Aloud



“Now that I’ve described the Get the Gist strategy, I will show you how to use it. Look at your passage, called ‘What Are Clouds.’ I will read this aloud and stop where it says I should write a gist statement, or the main idea. I’ll use the three steps in the Get the Gist strategy to help me. Follow along and watch as I show you how to do this.”

What Are Clouds?

By NASA
2014

Spotting a cloud floating overhead is a common sight on our planet, but what are clouds made of? Why do they look like they do? This informational text explains the formation of different clouds and how they contribute to different types of weather on Earth. As you read, take notes on how clouds can affect weather on Earth.

- [1] A cloud is made of water drops or ice crystals floating in the sky. There are many kinds of clouds. Clouds are an important part of Earth's weather.

How Do Clouds Form?

The sky can be full of water. But most of the time you can't see the water. The drops of water are too small to see. They have turned into a gas called water vapor. As the water vapor goes higher in the sky, the air gets cooler. The cooler air causes the water droplets to start to stick to things like bits of dust, ice, or sea salt.



"Untitled" by Pero Kalimero is licensed under CC0.

STOP AND GET THE GIST OF SECTION 1

Modeling

Section	Step 1: Who or what is this section about?	Step 2: What is the most important information about the "who" or "what"?	Step 3: Write gist statement (about 10 words).
2	clouds	form from water vapor that rises, cools, and sticks to particles in the air	Clouds form when water vapor rises, cools, and sticks to particles in the air.

What Are Some Types of Clouds?

Clouds get their names in two ways. One way is by where they are found in the sky. Some clouds are high up in the sky. Low clouds form closer to Earth's surface. In fact, low clouds can even touch the ground. These clouds are called fog. Middle clouds are found between low and high clouds.

Another way clouds are named is by their shape. Cirrus clouds are high clouds. They look like feathers. Cumulus clouds are middle clouds. These clouds look like giant cotton balls in the sky. Stratus clouds are low clouds. They cover the sky like bed sheets.

STOP AND GET THE GIST OF SECTION 2

Modeling

Section	Step 1: Who or what is this section about?	Step 2: What is the most important information about the "who" or "what"?	Step 3: Write gist statement (about 10 words).
2	clouds	named based on their location and shape	Clouds are named based on their location in the sky and their shape.

What Causes Rain?

- [5] Most of the water in clouds is in very small droplets. The droplets are so light they float in the air. Sometimes those droplets join with other droplets. Then they turn into larger drops. When that happens, gravity causes them to fall to Earth. We call the falling water drops "rain." When the air is colder, the water may form snowflakes instead. Freezing rain, sleet, or even hail can fall from clouds.

STOP AND GET THE GIST OF SECTION 3

Modeling

Section	Step 1: Who or what is this section about?	Step 2: What is the most important information about the "who" or "what"?	Step 3: Write gist statement (about 10 words).
3	rain	caused by water droplets joining together, getting heavy, and falling	Rain is caused by water droplets joining together, getting heavy, and falling to Earth.

After initial modeling, facilitate:

- Whole-class guided practice with feedback
- Guided practice in small groups or pairs with feedback
- Independent practice with feedback



FAQ

Why can't students just read?

- Teaching Get the Gist takes a little while, but consider it an investment!
 - Comprehension of information will increase.
 - Spend less time reteaching the information they read.
 - Deeper understanding of what they read.
 - Retain/remember information longer.

A Note About Narrative Texts



- Get the Gist helps students identify main plot points.
- Get the Gist is NOT necessarily helpful for making inferences or identifying themes.
- SUGGESTION: Use Get the Gist for a first, close read of the text. Then help students gain a deeper meaning through discussion, questioning, or other activities.

Common Challenges and Solutions

- #1: Students have trouble finding the most important “who” or “what.”
- Make sure students know to use headings and subheadings to help them.
 - Consider adding them yourself as a scaffold for struggling students if the text does not have them.

(Refer to pg. 4 Strategy Guide)

Common Challenges and Solutions

#2: Gist statements are too long!

- At first, focus your feedback on the **accuracy** of the gist statements rather than the length.
- Let students start with longer gist statements and gradually work down to *around* 10 words.
- Consolidate proper nouns (Mrs. Luella Bates Washington Jones = Mrs. Jones)
- Avoid sentence starters (In this section...; This is about...)

(Refer to pg. 4 Strategy Guide)

Common Challenges and Solutions

#3: Students are repeating/copying from the passage

- This is common, so expect it! Provide students with feedback and help them paraphrase the information.
- Continue guiding students through the three steps for writing gist statements.
- Continue modeling how to put information into their own words.

(Refer to pg. 4 Strategy Guide)

Moving from Gist to Summary

How to Write a Brief Summary

After reading an entire passage and writing gist statements for each section, students **combine their gist statements** to write a brief summary.

- One paragraph, 3 – 4 sentences long
- Contains the most important information about the entire passage

TIP: A brief summary could be written at the end of a passage OR at the end of a lesson to summarize what was learned.

What does the teacher do?

- Step 1: PREPARE an introductory lesson
- Step 2: TEACH students to write a brief summary
- Step 3: PROMPT & SUPPORT students to use the strategy regularly

Cue Card for Students

After reading the entire passage, write a brief summary by **combining the gist statements you've already written** into **one paragraph** that is **three to four sentences** long.

- Remember, your summary should include:
 - Only the most important main ideas from your gist list.
 - Ideas presented in a logical order.
 - Correct grammar and punctuation.

Six Steps to Summary Writing

ONE WAY TO SCAFFOLD!

STEPS	DESCRIPTION
Step 1	RE READ the main ideas for each paragraph in the passage.
Step 2	UNDERLINE the most important main ideas.
Step 3	COMBINE main idea statements that could go together.
Step 4	NUMBER the ideas in a logical order.
Step 5	WRITE your brief summary in one paragraph (about three to four sentences)
Step 6	EDIT your summary to correct punctuation and grammar.

NOTE: Students are ready to begin writing summaries when they can write gist statements independently. This is a great way to differentiate and extend instruction.

Example 1



Gists from "What Are Clouds?"

- **Gist 1:** Clouds form when water vapor rises, cools, and sticks to particles in the air.
- **Gist 2:** Clouds are named based on their location in the sky and their shape.
- **Gist 3:** Rain is caused when water droplets join together, get heavy, and fall to Earth.
- **Gist 4:** NASA studies clouds to help understand Earth's weather.

Brief Summary:

- Clouds are important because they help us understand Earth's weather. They are named based on their location in the sky and their shape. Clouds form when water vapor rises, cools, and sticks to particles in the air. When the water droplets join together they get heavy and fall to Earth as rain.

Example 2



Gists from "Thank You, M'am:"

- **Gist 1:** A woman fought back when a boy tried to steal her purse.
- **Gist 2:** Mrs. Jones won't release the boy so she can teach him right from wrong.
- **Gist 3:** Mrs. Jones takes Roger home and does kind things for him instead of punishing him.
- **Gist 4:** Mrs. Jones gives Roger money and tells him to behave.

Brief Summary:

- A woman, Mrs. Jones, fought back when a boy named Roger tried to steal her purse. Mrs. Jones wouldn't let Roger go because she wanted to teach him right from wrong. She took him to her home and did kind things for him instead of punishing him. Finally, Mrs. Jones gave Roger money and told him to behave.

Example 3



Gists from "Lewis and Clark:"

- **Gist 1:** Lewis and Clark made the first maps of the Missouri River.
- **Gist 2:** Lewis and Clark traveled to unknown territory, so they brought their own supplies.
- **Gist 3:** Travel was slow due to river travel and winter weather.
- **Gist 4:** Native Americans helped Lewis and Clark get food and navigate the land.
- **Gist 5:** Sacajawea helped Lewis and Clark find their way to the West.
- **Gist 6:** Lewis and Clark made maps showing the where the river went.
- **Gist 7:** Lewis and Clark returned home with maps that would help many people.
- **Gist 8:** Lewis and Clark's maps helped people settle in the West.

Brief Summary:

- Lewis and Clark were explorers that made the first maps of the Missouri River. They were traveling to an unknown territory so they took supplies with them. Their travel was slow due to traveling by river and harsh winter weather. However, Native Americans, like Sacajawea, helped Lewis and Clark get food, navigate the land, and find their way to the West. As they traveled, Lewis and Clark made maps showing where the river went. They returned home with maps that would help many people settle in the West.

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This practice is also included in The Middle School Matters Field Guide: Reading Throughout the Content Areas (see Principle 4, Practice 2).

Planning Time!
**(Then we'll talk about how to integrate
this strategy into your regular
instruction.)**

PREPARE YOUR INTRODUCTORY LESSON

○ How You'll Prepare:

- Identify a short text (5 paragraphs or sections) at students' independent reading level and on a familiar or interesting topic.
- Divide your text into sections or chunks.
- Prepare a gist statement for each section or chunk using the 3-step strategy and Get the Gist Log.

Discussion

- How did it go?
- Do you have additional thoughts or questions before your teach Get the Gist to your students?

Putting it All Together: Implementation Goals and Calendar

Implementation Goals

- How often do you think students need to use the Get the Gist strategy in order to really learn how to use it and improve their comprehension?
- How will we know if students are getting better at using the strategy?

Proposed Timeline

Week	Activity
Week of Sept. 4	Pretest students on the SUM (25 minutes)
Week of Sept. 10	Begin teaching/using Get the Gist/Summarization
Week of Dec. 10	Post-test students on the SUM (25 minutes)

Decisions we need to make:

- When should you shift from introducing and modeling the strategy to having students USE the strategy more independently?
- What other support do you need to be successful?

Our Implementation Goal

All English language arts, social studies, and science teachers will use the Get the Gist strategy with students at least twice a week during the fall semester.

1. Use Get the Gist and summarization with one important text each week.
2. Use Get the Gist at the end of one of your lessons (exit ticket) each week.

Support Opportunities

- Diane Stegall, MSM Coach
- In-class modeling of the strategy with your students
- PLC discussions
- Coaching
- Reminders and prompts

Final Thoughts

- We appreciate being able to collaborate with you.
- You are helping us figure out the best way to teach this strategy in the REAL WORLD.

Next Steps

1. Prepare your introductory lessons to Get the Gist and summarization.
2. Plan to deliver this lesson (and any follow-up modeling/think alouds) during the week of September 10 (and the following week?).
3. Look ahead to important texts your classes will read and select ONE PER WEEK to use with the Get the Gist/summarization strategy.

Get the Gist/Giant Gist Materials

Everything you need is located at:

greatmiddleschools.org/gist

NOTE: This is a hidden link and must be typed out



E.g., PPT Template for Intro Lesson

How to Use These Slides

- These slides are offered to teachers as a way to introduce students to the strategies:
 - **Get the Gist strategy (slides 2 – 11)**
 - **Gist to Summary (slides 12 – 17)**
- Teachers: Feel free to add, edit, or rearrange these slides! They are offered as a “starting point” for your instruction.
- We will be asking your feedback on the use of these slides at the end of the fall semester so we can improve them for other teachers.

How to Get the Gist in English/Language Arts



Teacher Name

Paperwork

- Consent forms for teacher participants
- Teacher demographics form
- PD feedback form (anonymous)

- RETURN YOUR ENTIRE PACKET TO US BEFORE LEAVING SO YOU CAN PICK UP YOUR CPE CERTIFICATE

- **ELA/Reading Teachers**, please stay for Consent Form/SUM procedures