

**EVALUATING
ACADEMIC READINESS
FOR APPRENTICESHIP TRAINING**
Revised for
Access To Apprenticeship

**COMMUNICATIONS SKILLS
IDENTIFICATION OF MAIN IDEA**

**AN ACADEMIC SKILLS MANUAL
for
HAIRSTYLISTS**

*Workplace Support Services Branch
Ontario Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities*

Revised 2011

In preparing these Academic Skills Manuals we have used passages, diagrams and questions similar to those an apprentice might find in a text, guide or trade manual.

This trade related material is not intended to instruct you in your trade. It is used only to demonstrate how understanding an academic skill will help you find and use the information you need.

COMMUNICATIONS SKILLS

IDENTIFICATION OF MAIN IDEA

*An academic skill required for the study of the
Hairstylist Trade*

INTRODUCTION

The *main idea* of anything is its central purpose or point. The main idea of any hair colouring project is to properly and efficiently complete it so that the finished colour is what was wanted and has not damaged the hair. Everyone who is part of the process, from shampoo to comb out, is there to contribute his or her expertise to that main idea.

As you learn your trade, you will be asked to find out how to do many tasks, often using technical books and manuals as references. Identifying the main idea as you examine written material and as you watch a technique being demonstrated will help you to sort through the information. Then you can find what you want, and focus on the exact part that contains the ideas or facts that you need. Just as combs, scissors, curling rods hair chemicals, and workplace safety are each necessary parts of any project, the ability to understand the main ideas is essential to your reading strategy toolbox.

The practical applications of this reading skill range from understanding the functions of materials, tools, and chemicals, to reading and correctly interpreting any written materials in your course of study. Note taking and study skills are enhanced by the ability to master this skill.

This manual will help you identify the main idea in technical material so that you can recognize what is important. We will look at how technical material is organized and suggest ways to find the main idea in that material. We will look at the following:

- ◆ Titles, headings and descriptions as guides to the main idea.
- ◆ Focussing on the main idea.
- ◆ Topic sentences and paragraphs.
- ◆ Supports to the main idea.
- ◆ An approach to reading

PART I

TITLES, HEADINGS AND SHORT DESCRIPTIONS

Organization of Technical Material

Technical material usually gets you to the main idea quickly in the following ways:

- ◆ Titles, headings and short descriptions indicate the main idea of each section.
- ◆ Information is grouped in a logical pattern by topic, chapter, section, and paragraph.

- ◆ The introduction to the topic usually comes near the beginning, so you get to the main idea and the purpose of the writing immediately.
- ◆ Individual chapters usually start with basic concepts and move to more detailed knowledge after the general introduction to the main idea.

Titles: Finding the Main Idea

When you need to read technical material, look at the document title or name. The title will give you a good general idea of what the material is about. Titles can also help you find necessary information quickly. Compare this to finding equipment in a well-organized drawer.

Drawers with labels

Finding the main idea is like looking for tools in a well-organized workshop. When you open a drawer labelled *Implements*, you expect to find implements. The label tells you what's inside. If the label says *scissors* then there should be nothing but scissors in it. A label doesn't give details; it doesn't describe the number or condition of what's inside. The label provides an idea of what's there - and of what's not there.

Titles, headings and sub-headings

Think of a textbook, manual, chapter, section or paragraph as a drawer. While a drawer or shelf is used to store equipment and supplies, a textbook or manual is used to store information. This information is labelled with *titles*, *headings* and *sub-headings* so you know what's inside.

Examples: Headings you might find in your trade manual.

Finger Waving
Prep for Finger Waving
Horizontal Finger Waving

Each heading tells what the reading contains. The first heading, **Finger Waving**, doesn't tell us for certain what the topic will cover. It could be any or all of the following: what finger waving is, how it works, problems and special considerations. But, we know for certain that it will be something about finger waving.

The second heading, **Prep for Finger Waving**, gives you more specific information. You know that in this section you will find information only about the preparations for finger waving; this is the main idea.

The third heading, **Horizontal Finger Waving**, tells you that you will learn about a specific type of finger wave. It could be a "how to" section or special considerations to note when finger waving.

Usually titles or headings illustrate how the material in a text is organized. It starts with general topics and moves to more specific ones. The main idea of each section becomes more focused. Here is an example:

Chemistry
Chemistry of Shampoos

The first heading gives you a huge topic. Compare it to the second heading and notice how the second is more specific. It defines and limits the topic to a specific type of chemistry, giving you a more precise idea of what you'll find.

Titles and headings are placed at the top of the reading with **bold print** or CAPITAL LETTERS so they're easy to see. Charts and diagrams also have titles, and, often, short descriptions at the bottom or top. Titles give you visual cues that are easy to see and that direct you to the main idea.

A **heading** is a form of title designed to break information into smaller divisions. A **sub-heading** breaks into even smaller divisions; a sub, sub-heading is smaller again.

Often, a new heading will signal when there is a change in main idea. It will direct you to the next main idea. Always read the titles. They won't help if you skip them.

You'll find a list of titles and section headings in the **Table of Contents** at the beginning of each text or manual. Be sure to check the Table of Contents before you start searching for information.

Here's an example of a Table of Contents you might see in a trade manual or text. Look at how information is broken into smaller and smaller topics or chunks.

COSMETOLOGY	Textbook title
Properties of Scalp and Hair	Chapter title
Disorders of the Hair	Unit heading
Cavities	Sub-heading
Hypertrichosis	Sub-heading
Treatment	Sub, sub-heading

Let's look more closely at how information is organized in this Table of Contents. The same ideas of organization will apply to all texts, manuals or diagrams. Consider these four points about titles and headings:

One

Observe how much information you get about **main ideas** from the titles.

- The textbook title tells you the kind of information you will find - up to date trade information about cosmetology.
- The chapter title **Properties of Scalp and Hair** lets you know what this chapter will cover.
- Under the chapter title, you see unit headings, sub-headings and sub, sub-headings.

Each tells you what aspect of cosmetology you will learn about.

Two

Each heading is a new main idea, but each one **stays on the main topic**

- *Cosmetology*, the title of the book, is the main topic of the text.

- *Properties of Scalp and Hair* the title of a chapter, is a new main idea but it is closely related to the main topic, which is cosmetology

Remember, all the information you read will relate to the larger main idea, cosmetology, and all the information in a chapter will relate to the main idea in that chapter, section or unit.

Three

As you read titles and headings, from the textbook title down to the sub (and sub, sub) headings, you can see that topics ***are more narrowly defined***. At each smaller heading, the topic covers a more limited or exact aspect of the main idea.

- The textbook title gives you a general, large main idea (cosmetology).
- The chapter title gives you a more specific topic (properties of scalp and hair).
- Unit headings give an even more specific topic /main idea (disorders of the hair).
- Sub-headings divide the main idea of general safety into two smaller groupings (canities and hypertrichosis).
- The sub, sub-heading divides hypertrichosis into an even smaller topic (treatment).

By reading the titles and headings, you know quite a bit about what to expect in this chapter. It should all tie together.

Four

When you read titles, you can see the ***order of the information***. When learning a trade, you need to start at the beginning and learn information step by step.

- The first chapter, the first textbook, the first manual are the foundation for the second chapter, second textbook and so on.
- The chapter headings list the order in which you will learn individual topics.

This order shows you both where you are going and the steps you will take to get there.

In Brief

1. **Titles** indicate what you will read about.
 - Everything in this book will be about the main idea – metal fabrication
2. **Chapter headings** identify the parts that form the main idea and show the order in which those parts are presented.
 - Every chapter will be about some part of metal fabrication – precision metal fabrication, general safety and so on.
3. **Headings and sub headings** will identify information contained in the chapter.
 - All of the headings in the chapter on safety will tell about the specifics of working safely.

PART II

FOCUSING ON MAIN IDEA

Assessing a job

When you have a job or task to do, you need to be clear about it. “What is the job? How big is it? How long will it take? What problems can I foresee?” These are main idea questions. You need

to do the same thing with written instructions. Ask main idea questions: “What do I have to understand? What am I expected to do at the end? How long will this take?” Then look at the main titles and headings to find out where to start reading.

When you come to a reading assignment, do the same kind of thing. Ask some main idea questions: What do I have to understand? What am I expected to do at the end? How much time will this take? Then look more closely at the main titles. Leaf through the pages and read the section headings. Check for diagrams or unusual print that stands out.

The Visual Check

The ***visual check*** is a preview of what you are going to read. Looking through a textbook before reading it will help you find information quickly. It provides an overall assessment of the reading material before you begin tackling it. If you are given a reading assignment in **Cosmetology**, look over the book first. These guides will help you identify the main idea:

- The chapter, titles, and headings show how the information is organized.
 - Next, look for the chapter heading that refers to the reading you need to do.
- When you find the heading you want, flip through the book to that section.
 - Notice how long the passage is and if it is divided into smaller divisions.
- Note the diagrams and read information around them.
 - If the information is new learning, and if it looks complicated, you might give yourself more time to spend on it.

Seeing A Pattern

Every document follows a pattern of organization. The most common pattern develops information by moving from general, large topics to more specific ones as details are added to the main idea. Watch for the pattern, so you understand where you are going and how you are getting there. When you recognize the pattern that a text or manual follows, you will have a pretty good idea of where to look for specific information in the document.

The organization of information will follow one of the following patterns:

- ◆ general to specific,
- ◆ most important to less important or vice versa,
- ◆ problem to solution, or,
- ◆ theory to application.

You will see other patterns too. You may learn why a procedure is important before you learn the steps, or you may learn the importance of each step as you go. Recognize the pattern and then focus on finding the information you need.

From main idea to details

Titles and headings give you a general idea of what you'll find. They can't give details. A drawer labelled *Tools* contains tools. This label doesn't tell us how many, how old, or what kind. There's

a lot you don't know. Open the drawer; look at the contents. Take each tool out, or dump them on the floor. Now, you are getting the details.

Keep focused on the main idea

To get the details of a section of reading material, first do a visual check. After the visual check, read the material, paying attention to what it is telling you. If the material is complicated or new, you may need to split it into smaller portions. It helps to read a difficult part several times.

While you have to pay attention to both the main ideas and all the details that explain it, don't get distracted from the main job by concentrating too much on a detail.

Example: You are organizing your tools (main job) and find a pair of thinning shears you lost six months ago. You pick it up, show it to the worker beside you, and wonder how it got here. You have been distracted by a detail from the job you are suppose to be doing.

The same thing happens with reading – you can be sidetracked.

Read Passage 1, below to find the main idea. Use the three steps below to guide you.

1. Use the title as a guide to the main idea and contents.
2. **Do a visual check** to look for headings, diagrams and length. Note anything that stands out such as large or bold print. This gives you some clues to the main idea.
3. **Read the passage.** Check the way that each sentence relates to the main idea.

❖ **Because this is a working sheet, underline or make notes that will help you. Note that we are examining main idea, not dandruff.**

Passage 1 Dandruff

Dandruff is a disorder of the scalp. It can be identified by small, white scales that usually appear on the scalp and hair. The medical term is **pityriasis**.

Excessive shedding of the surface of the scalp (*epithelial cells*) is a direct cause of dandruff. Indirect cases are sluggish condition of the scalp due to poor circulation, infection, injury, lack of nerve stimulation, improper diet, and uncleanliness. As well, strong shampoos and insufficient rinsing of the hair after a shampoo can contribute to dandruff.

There are two principal types of dandruff. *Pityriasis capitis simplex* is a dry dandruff, characterized by an itchy scalp and small white scales, usually attached to the scalp in masses or scattered loosely in the hair. *Pityriasis steatoides* (a greasy or waxy type) is a scaly condition of the epidermis. The scales stick to the scalp in patches. This may result in itchiness, potentially causing scratching which could lead to bleeding and oozing.

Before answering the questions about main idea, we'll go through the three steps.

Step 1: Use titles and headings as keys to the main idea.

- The title gives you a guide to the main idea - dandruff.
- You don't know exactly what you will learn. It could be definitions or steps for treatment.

Step 2: Do a visual check before you tackle the reading.

- The passage is three paragraphs long.
- Words that stand out are in italics: - *pityriasis, epithelial cells, pityriasis capitis simplex, and pityriasis steatoides.*
- There are no pictures or diagrams.

Step 3: Read the passage carefully.

- You see that there are eleven sentences and that each sentence refers to or describes something about the main idea - dandruff.
- Each sentence contains details that relate to the main idea.

When you reach step 3, you are looking for details that relate to the main idea. You open the drawer and study the contents.

Answer the questions below. Answers are at the end of this skill manual.

Paragraph one

Paragraph one should tell you more about the main idea than the heading does. Read each sentence again:

Questions

1. In paragraph one, what is the main idea?
2. What is the main idea in paragraph two?
3. Give details from paragraph two that support the paragraph's main idea.
4. What is the main idea in paragraph 3?

Once you have found the main idea, the details will answer *what, how, why, when* types of questions. You also expect to find out how all of this relates to you and your trade.

What's it about?

Each sentence in Passage 1 relates to the title and topic of dandruff; you have confirmed that this is the main idea. You have kept your focus on the main idea. . By going through the process of identifying the main idea of each paragraph, you could now to tell another person what this passage is about. You can also separate the main idea from the details.

Apply this method to find the main idea in anything you read, whether it's for yourself or to explain a hairstyle, colour choice or a type of skin treatment to a client.

PART III

TOPIC SENTENCES AND PARAGRAPHS

In technical material, the topic sentence (usually the first sentence) tells you what the main idea is. The other sentences add to this idea. All of the sentences should have something to do with the main idea. Once you are sure about the main idea expressed in the topic sentence, **read the passage carefully**. Then ask yourself what it's about. The *usual rule* can help you find the topic sentence, *and* the main idea.

The Usual Rule:

1. Paragraphs and passages are set up with a key sentence called a topic sentence.
2. This topic sentence is usually the first one in the paragraph.
3. Topic sentences provide you with the main idea.

In Passage 1, **Dandruff**, the first sentence of each paragraph is a topic sentence.

Paragraph one: Dandruff is a disorder of the scalp.

Paragraph two: Excessive shedding of the surface of the scalp (*epithelial cells*) is a direct cause of dandruff.

Paragraph three: There are two principal types of dandruff.

These topic sentences prepare us for information to come. They say, "This is what we are going to talk about." The remaining sentences explain or add details to the main ideas.

Below are two opening sentences that show how topic sentences work. These will be the topic sentences in passages 2 and 3, which we will see later. We can expect that anything that follows in the passages should relate to the ideas in these topic sentences.

Read the topic sentences carefully and answer the questions which follow, even though you haven't seen the rest of the paragraphs yet.

from Passage 2

The system for understanding the relationships of colour is referred to as the Law of Colour.

from Passage 3

Understanding primary colours is essential to understanding hair colour theory.

Questions

1. What is the main idea?

from Passage 2

- a) relationships of colour
- b) the Law of Colour
- c) systems of colour

from Passage 3

- a) primary colours
 - b) hair colour theory
 - c) effects of primary colours
2. What would be appropriate titles for Passage 1 and 2?
 3. Based on these opening sentences, what kinds of details would you expect to follow?

Before you check the **answers at the end of this skills manual**, read Passage 2 and 3, below. Do you need to change your answers? How close did you come?

Passage 2

The system for understanding the relationships of colour is referred to as the Law of Colour. When you combine colours, the same colours will always result from the same combination. If equal amounts of red and blue are combined, the mixture will always result in violet. Equal amounts of yellow and blue will always make green, and equal amounts of red and yellow will always create orange. This system is called the Law of Colour because these relationships have been tested repeatedly and are proven to be true.

Passage 3

Understanding primary colours is essential to understanding hair colour theory. Primary colours are pure or fundamental pigments. This means that they cannot be created by mixing colours together. In order of their dominance, the primary colours are blue, red, and yellow. All colours are created from these three primary colours. Colours with a predominance of blue are referred to as cool-toned colours. Colours with a predominance of red or yellow are warm-toned colours.

Does the *Usual Rule* apply? **Yes**, these work as topic sentences:

- They give the main idea and the other sentences build information from that idea.
- They present a logical order in which to develop information on oxides in metal.
- The usual rule applies.

***NOTE:** If you aren't sure about the main idea after reading the first sentence in a passage, go on to the second or third sentence. The main idea and direction of the passage should become clearer as you proceed. One idea or topic should emerge as the main idea.*

Topic Paragraphs

Longer passages begin with a **topic paragraph**. They act like topic sentences. They will tell you what the whole passage or section is going to be about. Watch for introductory paragraphs that prepare you for a large piece of information. They come first, are often short and give you main idea and purpose of what you are going to read.

In Brief:

1. Titles and headings give you some information about the contents. They tell you what the textbook or passage is about, in other word, what the main idea is.
2. The next step is visual; you can “see” what to expect, and where the information fits in with the rest of the material.

3. When you read each paragraph, identify the topic sentence, which gives the main idea of that paragraph.
 - The other sentences should add information or details to the main idea.
4. Identify the topic paragraph when you read a chapter or a longer section.
 - The other paragraphs should add information to the main idea.

PART IV

SUPPORTS TO THE MAIN IDEA

Supports to the main idea are the details that provide specific information. Supports may do any of the following:

- ◆ define or explain the main idea,
- ◆ describe how it works,
- ◆ illustrate how it operates,
- ◆ show the steps, or
- ◆ show the results.

Identifying Supports To The Main Idea

Read Passage 4. Read to see if the main idea is placed first - and what it is. Do the supports follow with details about the main idea?

Passage 4

Hair

Hair is mostly made up of keratin, a protein which is found in all horny growths including the nails and skin. Average hair is made of 50.65% carbon, 6.36% hydrogen, 17.14% nitrogen, 5.0% sulfur, and 20.85% oxygen. The chemical composition of hair varies with its colour: darker hair contains more carbon and less oxygen and lighter hair contains more oxygen and less carbon.

Full grown human hair is divided into two basic parts. The first is the hair root. This is the portion of the hair structure located beneath the skin surface, enclosed within the follicle. The hair shaft is the second part. It is the portion of the hair structure that extends above the skin surface.

We should find a topic sentence in the first paragraph that gives us the main idea and prepares us for the supports to the main idea to follow. The supports might define or expand the main idea. They will describe a method, illustrate with diagrams or photos, or provide examples. Let's look at paragraph one to see if it works this way:

Paragraph one

Sentence one states: Hair is mostly made up of keratin, a protein which is found in all horny growths including the nails and skin. The main idea here is **what** hair is made of.

The next sentences support this topic with related details about **what** elements make up hair and **how** the colour of hair indicates the presence of different amounts of carbon and hydrogen.

Paragraph two

The first sentence gives more information on the composition of hair. This tells us that the main idea in paragraph one is followed by details about it. This tells us that the main idea in paragraph one is followed by more specific details in paragraph two. In order, we learn the following:

- there are two main parts;
- the hair root is the first part;
- it is located beneath the skin surface within the follicle;
- the hair shaft is the second main part;
- it is the part of the hair that extends above the surface of the skin.

The passage shows you a common pattern in technical writing.

1. The **title** communicates the topic in brief.
2. The **topic sentence or paragraph** communicates the main idea in expanded form.
3. The sentences that follow add details.

Diagrams

Many reading passages will direct you to look at diagrams, illustrations or photos. These figures show you what something looks like or how something works. If a passage tells you to *See Figure 1*, you can expect a diagram, chart or table that relates to the main idea.

We'll use a simple diagram, Figure 1, below to show how diagrams support the main idea. Look at the diagram to understand the main idea (what a hair and follicle look like). Read the text for both main idea and supports.

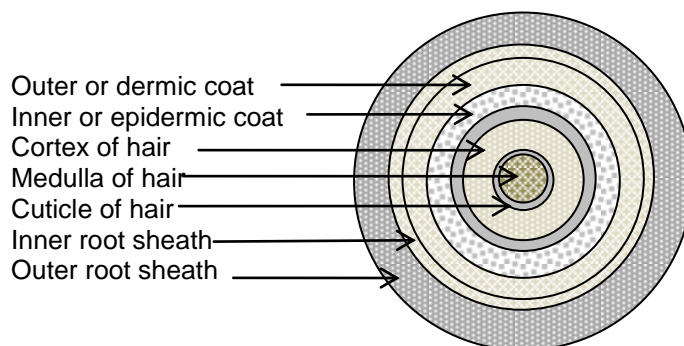


FIGURE 1: Cross Section of Hair and Follicle

The follicle is a tube like depression or pocket in the skin or scalp that encases the hair root. Each hair has its own follicle, which varies in depth depending on the thickness and location of the skin. The hair shaft which extends wholly above the skin, is composed of the cuticle, cortex, and medulla.

By reading the description below the diagram, you can see and understand more about the composition of the hair. Diagrams will often provide details which are not in the main text, They contain important information, so be sure to look at them carefully.

Steps to Supports

Narrowing in on the supports to the main idea (details) is like starting a project.

1. First, you need to ask main idea questions:
 - a. What is the task (the job or the reading)?
 - b. How long will it take?
 - c. Where is it located?
2. Next you need to look more closely at the details and ask specific questions:
 - a. **What** manuals do I use?
 - b. **What** procedures and materials do I use?
 - c. **What** order will I use for the project and **why**?
3. Proceed carefully.
 - a. Stay focused on the purpose of the task.
 - b. Make sure that each part helps to accomplish the main purpose.

Getting the information you want

Getting what you want, whether you are reading for information or doing a job, involves seeing the big picture and then narrowing in on details. In this way you become knowledgeable, and you can make informed decisions. If you use this approach when you read for your trade, you will get the information you need to understand an aspect of your trade.

In Brief: The Three Steps

Step 1: See the big picture: Look at the title

Step 2: Get a better focus: Use the visual check to preview the reading

Step 3: Look more closely: Read for details.

Passage 5 below would be found in a section of your textbook on *Trade Science*. Use it to apply the three steps.

Passage 5

Physical States of Matter

Matter exists in one of three physical forms or states: solid, liquid or gas. Substances change their physical state without changing their chemical structure. In appropriate conditions, solids melt into liquids or vaporize, liquids freeze to solid or vaporize into gases, and gases condense into liquids.

When water changes its physical states, the make-up of the molecules remains the same. Molecules of frozen water (ice) still contain two hydrogen atoms and one oxygen atom, chemically combined. Steam also contains these types of molecules. It is mostly a change in temperature that causes changes in the different physical states. Because of this, water can be made to return to a previous state by changing surrounding physical conditions.

Questions:

1. What kind of physical changes cause a change in state?
2. What is the main idea of the passage?

Let's look at how the three steps apply to the passage.

Step 1: See the big picture. In a passage with the title, **Physical States of Matter**, you expect:

- Definitions and descriptions of the physical states

Step 2: Get a better focus **by previewing** the passage.

- You see it has two paragraphs.
- One word, *ice*, is enclosed in parentheses (). Pay attention to signals such as parentheses that indicate explanation, definition or useful details.
- Find the topic sentence in paragraph one. It is the first sentence: *Matter exists in one of three physical forms or states: solid, liquid, or gas.*
- Paragraph two continues with details about changes in physical states of matter: *When water changes its physical state, the make-up of the molecules remains the same.*
- Sometimes a diagram or table will be part of a passage. Make sure you look at the text, charts, tables, and diagrams. Any details found in the diagrams will help you to follow the details in the reading. Also note if any information is highlighted.

Step 3: Read carefully for details.

- Check the supports (details) to see if they are guided by the title and the topic sentences.
- Look to understand the details which answer **what**, **how**, **how much** and **why** questions.

Identifying Types of Supports

When you recognize the type of support, it may help you find what you want quickly. Supports to the main idea include but are not limited to the following:

1. **Examples:** Examples take you from what you know to new knowledge. They give you a clearer picture of what something is or what it includes or how it works. The passage usually signals an example.

For example, the steps in chemical hair relaxing are the following:

1. Processing,
2. Neutralizing, and
3. Conditioning.

For example, sodium hydroxide is a relaxer because it straightens the natural curl in hair.

Watch for examples that do not have the word *example* as a signal. The above sentence could be re-written as follows:

A relaxer is a chemical, such as sodium hydroxide, that is applied to the hair in order to remove the natural curl.

2. **Order of Ideas:** Order of ideas (sequence) describes the relationship between the parts or steps in a piece of information or a process. It is a common type of organization used in technical materials. Usually technical information is presented first in a general introduction

and is followed by more specific details. The opening or introduction may outline the content, the application and the importance of the information.

The example below explains something about a strand test for a hair relaxer. The opening sentence introduces the topic with a general statement. It is followed by more specific instructions.

Example: Application of the relaxer to a hair strand will indicate the reaction of the relaxer on the hair. Take a small section of hair from the crown or another area where the hair is wiry and resistant. Pull it through a slit in a piece of aluminum foil, placed as close to the scalp as possible. Apply the relaxer to the strand...

Sometimes step by step instructions have no introduction.

Example: First part hair into four or five sections. Next, dry hair (if excessively hot or humid, under a cool dryer). Then, apply protective base by subdividing each of four or five major sections into ½" to 1" partings in order to permit thorough scalp coverage.

Directions and instructions usually start with the first step. Look for numbers or letters to indicate the order of steps. Also look for lists or steps. Look for words such as *to begin with, first. . . second, then / next, before . . .after, in the same way, finally*. Remember, there is a reason for the order even if you don't know what it is.

3 Definitions: If the topic introduces a new concept or a technical word, you need an explanation of what it is before you know what it does. Technical terms are defined so you can understand the new word. Take note of special print or marks that are designed to get your attention.

Definitions tell you what technical terms mean:

Example: Hair covered with a substance that interferes with and retards the action of chemicals upon the hair fibre is referred to as *coated hair*.

The definition may state what something is or what it does:

Example: A medicine or treatment that relieves or cures a condition is called a **remedy**.

The definition or the word being defined may be in italics (*italics look like this,*) written in **bold**, or surrounded by quotations (“...”).

Example: A “*fungus*” is a spongy growth of diseased tissue on or in the body.

Parentheses () may give you the correct, technical term, clarify a term or direct you to a diagram.

Example: GSR (galvanic skin response) is an electrical reaction of the skin to stimulus by a galvanometer which is used to measure the skin's responses to electrical current.

4. Comparison and Contrast: Comparisons show similarities and differences, while contrasts show differences only. Look for words such as *in contrast*, *some ... others*, *whereas*, *yet*, *on the other hand*. This is done to help explain, define and expand your knowledge of relationships.

Example: In general, the more sodium hydroxide used and the higher the pH, the quicker the chemical reaction will take place on the hair, and the greater the danger will be of hair damage. Comparison of products will show you their different qualities and applications.

Example: A soft press involves the application of the thermal pressing comb once on each side of the hair, while a hard press requires two applications on each side. A soft press will remove about 50% to 60% of the curl, while a hard press will remove 100%.

5. Cause and Effect: Cause and effect explains relationships. Why did the client's hair burn during pressing? Can I take steps to prevent it from happening next time? Look for supports which explain relationships and the reasons they exist.

Example: Under no circumstances should hair pressing be given to a client who has a scalp abrasion, contagious scalp condition, scalp injury or chemically treated hair. This could result in breakage or burnt hair during pressing.

PART V ***AN APPROACH TO READING***

Know What You Want

What you want from a reading affects how you approach it. If you know exactly what you need, you might go over the contents quickly until you come to the information you want. Then you should carefully examine the details concerning the topic.

You may need instructions on completing a scalp examination, an explanation of what curvalinear is, or the details about a certain colouring procedure. If you are reading for a specific reason, you look for information related to your aim and pay less attention to details that don't seem related. This is a logical and economical approach to reading for a purpose. Below are some suggestions for getting what you need from a reading, once you have located the relevant information:

- ◆ Make notes while you read, detailing the main points.
- ◆ Use your own words to repeat what you have read.
- ◆ Try stating the main idea.
- ◆ Give the passage a title.
- ◆ Can you tell someone else what the passage is about in a few words? If you can, you've identified the main idea.

To understand a passage, you need to know its main idea and its details. You should be able to say, “This tells me the difference between two hair relaxers” or, “This explains why the perm failed.” If you can't, you know you need to reread the passage to find the main idea. Then look again at what supports do: They relate to the main idea but they also add details to our understanding.

Troubleshooting the System (Getting lost - and found again)

You think you have a clear sense of the main idea. You know what it's about. But, as you get further into this technical material, you start feeling lost.

Check:

- *Maybe you weren't on the main trail at all.* If the sentences don't seem on topic, rethink the main idea.
- *Maybe the paragraph doesn't have a clear topic sentence.* You can still find the main idea by looking at what all the sentences are about. Try to identify one word or phrase that seems to be the theme of the paragraph and develop the main idea from this.
- *Maybe, you're on the main trail but have strayed a little bit off it.* Again, this will send you back to the beginning. As you go back through the sentences, you may find a confusing part and realize, “Here's the spot that baffles me.” You can identify the main idea, but a sentence or area of a chart contains details that you don't understand.

You have identified the problem. It may be new vocabulary or words used in unfamiliar ways, technical terminology, or a math formula. Begin to solve the problem:

- Can you look up the new words?
- Can you find a technical definition?
- Should you get extra help with the math?

Sometimes a writer assumes you know a concept or theory, and has left it out. This makes your job tough. You may need help from an instructor, a different textbook or another student. Remember, if you can find the problem, you can fix it.

Read aloud

If you are stumped by a passage, try reading it out loud. Sometimes you discover that you have been reading one word wrong the whole time. Reading aloud may help you solve the puzzle. Sometimes, you can “hear” a problem better than you can “see” where a problem exists.

Complex passages

The main idea may jump out at you in short, familiar readings. In complex paragraphs with a lot of detail, math formulas and technical information, you may find the main idea buried. Read the section in pieces, ask questions as you go, underline and make notes. You might need to read parts of the passage several times to understand how the details relate to the main idea.

Application

Your test of understanding is the ability to explain something to someone else. Imagine you have to explain to a client why you have to perform a 30 minute test on their hair, before agreeing to give her a permanent wave. Where do you start? Start with the main idea.

1. **The main idea:**
 - You explain the procedure.
 - Explain why failure to perform the test means the risk of damage to the hair
 - What you find can affect the choice of product you will make
 - It may affect the costs.
2. **The supports** may include a variety of information. The details in the explanation depend how much your client wants to know:
 - Do they need all the details?
 - Does she need to know the different products available, along with price?
 - Does she need to know about the steps to take if the hair has been previously treated?

Just as a writer chooses details to support the main idea and purpose, so do you. You might explain this – or anything else – by starting with the main idea and working through the details. You will use definitions, examples, comparison, and cause and effect details that relate to the situation. You will be practicing your skills and demonstrating your expertise.

CONCLUSION

As you read ask yourself, "What is this passage about?" If you can answer the question clearly, you understand the main idea. If you can't answer that question easily, go back and follow the steps you have learned to help identify the main idea.

Build your skills, whether in understanding what you read or in completing a project, from the base up. As you move to more difficult concepts, either in reading or in the complexity of a job, the skill of separating the main idea from the details still holds. The goal will remain the same: understanding the main task and all the details necessary to get you to a successful completion.

Work to understand how the details relate to the main idea. This may take longer, but if as a result, you get the effects you want, the time will be well spent. When you understand the purpose of a passage, you find what you need, and, most importantly, find what you are supposed to learn.

Summary

1. **Focus on the main idea before you start.** Identify the main idea through the title, the topic sentence, and find the supporting details that expand the main idea.
2. **Use the supporting details** to help you sort out the main idea. The supporting details answer questions such as how, what, why, where, when, and in what order.
3. **Notice how your trade/technical material is organized.** Do a visual check of the passage for length, for highlighted information and diagrams. Look for the patterns.
4. **Understand the types of details** found in technical writing. The supporting details give examples, order (sequence) of steps or ideas, definitions, comparisons and contrasts, and causes and effects.
5. **Use an organized approach** to reading. Understand why you are reading so that you focus on the details you need. Make sure you also find what you are required to learn.
6. **Translate what you have read into your own words** as though you were explaining it to someone else. Work from the main idea through to the details.
7. **If you get lost, stop.** Find out where you got lost and try to identify the problem: Is it main idea, technical vocabulary, a math formula?
8. **Accept that picking out supports to the main idea and listing information takes longer than just reading.** The results – identifying, finding and understanding the information you read – are essential to your trade success.

ANSWER PAGE

PART II Passage 1, Dandruff

1. The main idea of paragraph one is what dandruff is: *a disorder of the scalp*.
2. The main idea of paragraph two is the possible causes of dandruff.
3. Details about how dandruff is caused include *excessive shedding of the surface of the scalp*. Paragraph two also gives reasons why this might occur: *poor circulation, infection, injury, lack of nerve stimulation, diet, uncleanliness, strong shampoos and insufficient rinsing*.
4. The main idea of paragraph three is the two types of dandruff.

PART III Passage 2 and Passage 3, Topic Sentences

from Passage 2:

1. What is the main idea?
 - b) the Law of Colour

The first sentence is actually a definition of the Law of Colour, which is the main idea. This is made clear by reading the whole passage.

from Passage 3:

1. What is the main idea?
 - a) primary colours

The opening sentence explains that hair colour theory is based upon an understanding of primary colours, the main idea. If we read further into the paragraph, we see that it focuses on what primary colours are, and how they work.

2. Could you come up with a short title that would be appropriate to each paragraph?

Look again at the answers to question one. Each of these has the makings of a good title for each passage.

Part IV Passage 5, Physical States of Matter

1. Changes in temperature cause changes of state.
2. The main idea of the passage is that matter can exist in three different states – solid, liquid and gas.