FREE SAMPLE

ParaPro and ParaPathways Study Guide 2026-2027

For the ParaPro Assessment and the ParaPathways tests, first try or retake.

In this sample

- The contents of the full book.
- The first two pages of Chapter 1, as printed in the book.
- The first drill questions of Chapter 1, as printed in the book, and the answer pages that follow them, with each answer's reason and the chapter to reread.

These pages are taken unchanged from the book. The practice tests and their answer keys are not in this sample.

The full book

421 pages: 20 teaching chapters in reading, writing and math, 403 drill questions with their answers at the end of each section, 4 practice tests of 90, 90, 51 and 36 questions with answer keys, and a 14-day study plan. Every answer is explained and traced to a public source. PDF and EPUB at sourcedprep.com.

Independent study aid. Not affiliated with or endorsed by any exam provider or government agency. The questions are original; they are not questions from the exam.

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Chapter 1: Main idea, purpose and supporting details

What a passage is mostly about

On the test you will read a short passage and choose what it is mostly about. That is its main idea: the point most of its sentences are built around. The main idea and the gist mean the same thing, so you can use either word when you talk about a paragraph.

Finding the main idea starts with one plain question: who or what is this passage about? Once you can name that person, place, or thing, look at what the writer keeps returning to. A name or subject that comes up again and again is a strong clue. If most of the sentences in a paragraph name the same person, place, or thing, or give information about it, the paragraph is about that subject.

> **Worked example:** find the main idea of this short paragraph. “Our school library opens at 7:30 now. Students can return books before class, use the computers for homework, and read in the quiet corner until the first bell.”
>
> 1. Ask who or what the paragraph is about. The library comes up in every sentence.
> 2. Ask what the writer keeps saying about it. Each sentence names something students can do there before school.
> 3. Put the two together in one sentence: the library now opens early so students can use it before class.
> 4. Check the choices on a test against that sentence. A choice about only the computers is a detail, not the main idea.

A main idea is not a list of every fact in the text. It is a short statement of the central point. You do not need the author’s exact words to state it, and it is usually helpful to use your own words, because that makes the idea easier to remember.

Summarizing is a closely related skill. To summarize is to describe the main points of a text briefly, either out loud or in writing. A summary is brief and covers the main points.

Why the writer wrote it

Informational text is writing that explains facts about the world. Explanations, arguments for one position, directions, and documents all belong to this group.

Textbooks used in science and social studies tend to be informational, and so are biographies and autobiographies. When you read this kind of text, you are usually reading for facts, explanations, or the steps of a process.

Narrative text works differently. It tells a series of events, and the events may be invented or real. A novel, a short story, a play, or a poem that tells a story is narrative.

A story map is a picture-style organizer that helps a reader find the key parts of a story. A simple one is a plot summary. A fuller one names the characters, setting, problem, events, and main idea.

Predicting is a reading strategy. A reader guesses what will happen next, or what the author will say next, and then checks the guess while reading. Pausing every two pages to check earlier predictions and make new ones is one way to practice.

Halfway through a story, a teacher can ask students to predict how it will end and to explain how they decided. That explanation pushes the student to make inferences about what is being read.

Informational text explains facts about the world, while narrative text tells a series of events.

Writers also write for different purposes, such as conveying information, telling a story, or persuading the reader to hold a view or take a specific action. To name the purpose, ask what the writer wants the reader to know, feel, or do.

Text structure is how a text is organized so the reader can follow its meaning. It covers the order of the ideas, such as a sequence of events, a comparison, or cause and effect, and the words the writer picks to show how the ideas connect.

A cause and effect structure explains how one thing led to or caused another thing. When you see this pattern, ask what happened and what caused it.

Main idea, purpose and supporting details

Chapter 1 · 20 questions · Answers at the end of this section

> **PASSAGE**
>
> Room 12 started a small vegetable garden behind the gym this spring. Students planted beans, carrots, and peppers in neat rows. Every Tuesday a volunteer helped the class water the plants and pull weeds. Some students wanted flowers instead, but the teacher explained that the garden was meant to show how plants grow from seed to harvest. By June the beans had climbed the fence, and the carrots were ready to pick. The class held a small tasting day where everyone tried a carrot they had grown. Several students said it was the first time they had eaten a vegetable straight from the ground, and a few asked whether they could start a garden at home.

1. Which sentence best states the main idea of the passage?

A. By June the beans had climbed the fence, and the carrots were ready to pick by the end of that month.

B. Students who asked for flowers instead of vegetables were wrong to speak up.

C. A volunteer should be paid for helping the class water and weed every Tuesday, no matter how many hours it takes.

D. A school garden gave students hands-on lessons about how plants grow, from planting to tasting.

> **PASSAGE**
>
> The public library on Elm Street opened a summer reading club this year. Children who finished ten books earned a small paper badge. Some families worried the club would be too much work, but most parents said their children looked forward to reading time. The librarian noted that children who kept reading over the break tended to start the new school year with fewer gaps. Every Thursday a storyteller visited the children's room and read aloud. The club ran for eight weeks and ended with a picnic in the park.

2. Which detail best supports the main idea that the summer reading club encouraged children to keep reading?

A. The library has a copy machine near the front desk and a water fountain by the main door, which are open all day.

B. The club ran for eight weeks and ended with a picnic in the park to close the summer.

C. The children's room is on the second floor of the library, near the main stairs and the elevator, past the front desk.

D. Children who finished ten books earned a badge, and readers who kept going started school with fewer gaps.

> **PASSAGE**
>
> The fifth grade wanted to visit the science center in May, but the trip cost more than the school budget allowed. Students planned a bake sale to raise the money. Parents donated cookies, muffins, and lemonade. The sale took place after school on a Friday and brought in enough money to pay for two busloads of students. Some students worried the sale would be a lot of work, so the class made a chart to divide tasks like setting up tables and counting change. Every student had a job. Next year the students hope to plan a second sale for a trip to the planetarium.

3. Which gist statement best captures the passage?

A. A fifth-grade class ran a bake sale to pay for a trip, and every student had a job.

B. Students will never plan another sale after this one, because the trip costs too much money.

C. The science center is in May, and buses were needed.

D. Parents donated cookies, muffins, and lemonade.

> **PASSAGE**
>
> On Saturday, volunteers met at the river bridge with gloves and bags. They pulled plastic bottles, old tires, and a bicycle wheel out of the shallow water. One volunteer found a bag of cans half buried in the mud. The group sorted everything into piles for recycling and trash. By noon they had filled eleven bags. Several families brought their own snacks and water bottles, and the organizers said the next cleanup will be in April. At the end of the morning, the mayor thanked everyone for coming.

4. A student says the main idea of this paragraph is the bicycle wheel. Which response from the paraprofessional best helps the student?

A. Ask the student to read the paragraph again without any help.

B. Ask who or what the paragraph is about, then have the student list the details the paragraph keeps returning to.

C. Tell the student that a main idea can never be a single object.

D. Tell the student the answer is the mayor's thanks, then move on without checking the text again at all.

> **PASSAGE**
>
> Last week the third-grade class visited the natural history museum. Students first examined a case of ancient fossils, then walked through a hall with a huge whale skeleton. The guide explained how scientists use bones to learn about animals that lived long ago. Students drew sketches in their notebooks and asked many questions. On the bus home, several students said the skeleton was their favorite part. The class also received a small booklet about fossils. Next month the teacher will ask each student to write about one exhibit they saw.

5. Which is the best brief summary of the passage?

A. The whale skeleton was the favorite exhibit on the bus ride home of nearly every student in the class.

B. The guide was a scientist who lived near the museum.

C. The bus ride home was loud, and the students were tired.

D. The class went to a museum, studied fossils and a whale skeleton, and will write about one exhibit next month.

> **PASSAGE**
>
> The fourth-grade classroom has a new reading corner this year. A rug, beanbag chairs, and a shelf of library books fill the space by the window. Students may sit there during quiet time as long as they follow the corner rules. The class built the corner with help from two parent volunteers. The rules are posted near the shelf so everyone can read them. Several students say the corner is the place they like to read best, and a few have started bringing books from home to share.

6. A student says every sentence in this paragraph describes a different detail and cannot find one idea. What should the paraprofessional do first?

A. Skip to the last sentence and copy it as the main idea.

B. Ask the student who or what the paragraph is about, and have the student count how often that subject comes up.

C. Tell the student that the paragraph has no main idea and move on.

D. Read the paragraph aloud and ask the student to write whatever comes to mind, then circle the longest sentence as the main idea.

> **PASSAGE**
>
> Attention families! The Fall Harvest Fair takes place on a Saturday in October from 10:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. at Riverside Park. Enjoy pumpkin painting, a corn maze, and warm apple cider for everyone. Tickets are free for children under five and only three dollars for adults. Please bring a folding chair if you would like to sit for the music performance. Volunteers are also needed at the cider table, and you can sign up at the front office. We hope to see your whole family there.

7. Which kind of text is this passage?

A. An informational document that gives facts about an event

B. A play with characters speaking lines

C. A novel chapter that tells a made-up story about people and places

D. A poem that tells a story about a fair

> **PASSAGE**
>
> Starting in September, the number 14 bus will take a new route through the east side of town. Instead of turning onto Clay Street, the bus will travel down Hill Avenue, where a new bakery opened last spring. Riders who used to walk to Clay Street will have a stop two blocks closer to school. The transit office says the change will cut about four minutes from each trip. Some riders worry about the longer wait at the Hill Avenue stop, so the office will add a bench there. Riders can check the new schedule online or at the library.

20. A student has used the routine with support on three paragraphs. On a fourth paragraph the student reads alone but asks for help twice. What is the best next step for the paraprofessional?

A. Give the student a list of finished gist sentences to copy for the fourth paragraph, and check only that the handwriting is neat.

B. Do the whole routine for the student from now on, so the student never has to struggle, and ask for no effort in return.

C. Step back a little, let the student try the routine first, and offer help only where the student gets stuck.

D. Stop all support immediately and grade the gist without any comment or feedback.

Your score: _____ / 20. Missed 5 or more? Reread the chapter named in the answers, then try the questions you missed again in two days.

Answers: Main idea, purpose and supporting details

Question 1. Answer: D. The right option names the subject (the class garden) and the point the whole passage builds toward (hands-on learning from planting to tasting). The beans option is a true detail, but it is too narrow to carry the main idea. The paid volunteers option is not in the passage, so it is an invented claim. The flowers option judges students, which the passage never does. A common learner error is choosing one vivid sentence instead of the sentence that the rest of the passage supports. Source: WWC-RI R3C p56.2; WWC-RI R3C p57.4. Review: Chapter 1.

Question 2. Answer: D. The right option gives two facts that back the claim: a reward for finishing books, and a reported result for children who kept reading. The picnic is a closing event, not evidence about reading habits, so it is weak support. The second floor and the copy machine do not connect to the club at all. A common learner error is choosing the most memorable event instead of the detail that proves the main idea. Source: WWC-RI R3C p56.6; WWC-RI R3C p57.2. Review: Chapter 1.

Question 3. Answer: A. The right option names the subject (the class), the goal (paying for a trip), and a key outcome (every student had a job) in one complete sentence. The parents option is a single detail. The science center option strings together true facts without saying what the passage is about. The never-again option contradicts the last sentence, which says the class hopes to hold a second sale. Learners often stack facts into a list when they should write one sentence. Source: WWC-RI R3C p56.2; WWC-RI R3C p56.3; WWC-RC G p48.6. Review: Chapter 1.

Question 4. Answer: B. The right option follows the routine: name the subject, then gather the important and repeated details before writing the gist. The mayor option gives the answer away and teaches nothing the student can reuse. The reread option leaves the student without a method. The single-object rule is false, because one object can be the subject of a passage; here the wheel is only one detail of a cleanup. The helper models the routine first and then steps back as the student gains independence. Source: WWC-RI R3C p56.2; WWC-RI R3C p56.6; WWC-RC G p46.8. Review: Chapter 1.

Question 5. Answer: D. The right option briefly states the main points in order: the visit, what students saw and learned, and the follow-up assignment. The whale option is one detail, not a summary. The bus option invents a claim the passage does not make. The guide option invents a fact about the guide. A common learner error is choosing the most interesting detail rather than the points that cover the whole text. Source: WWC-RC G p48.6; WWC-RI R3C p56.3. Review: Chapter 1.

Question 6. Answer: B. The question about the subject starts the routine with the subject and a simple check: how often it comes up. Writing whatever comes to mind produces a list, not a gist. Copying the last sentence teaches copying, and that sentence is only one detail. The no-main-idea option ends the lesson before the routine can help, and a learner who gives up skips the practice that builds the skill. Source: WWC-RI R3C p56.5; WWC-RI R3C p56.6. Review: Chapter 1.

Question 7. Answer: A. The passage is a flyer that gives the date, place, activities and prices of an event, so it is an informational document that supplies facts. A novel chapter and a play tell a story with characters, which is narrative, and the flyer has no characters or plot. A poem that tells a story is also narrative, and the flyer is not a poem. A common learner error is choosing a story form because the flyer mentions fun activities. Source: WWC-RC G p47.2; WWC-RC G p47.4; WWC-RC G p47.5. Review: Chapter 1.

Question 8. Answer: B. The right option names the change (a new route), its effect (shorter trips and a closer stop), and the subject of the passage. The bakery option is a detail about the street, not the change. The bench option answers one concern, so it is a supporting detail. The library option is a practical tip at the end. Learners often pick the last or most specific sentence rather than the one that holds the whole passage together. Source: WWC-RI R3C p56.2; WWC-RI R3C p56.6. Review: Chapter 1.