

MAIN POINTS, IDEAS AND KEY DETAILS

Functional Skills English Level 1 Reading Handout

Big idea: In the Reading exam, learners must find the important message of a text and pick out the details that prove or support it. Do not copy too much. Choose what answers the question exactly.

1. Key definitions

Main point	The most important message of the whole text or section. It is what the writer is mainly telling the reader.
Main idea	A key idea or message in the text. A text may have more than one idea, but one is usually most important.
Key detail	Important information that supports the main point, such as a name, date, time, place, reason, example, number or step.
Evidence	The exact words or information in the text that prove your answer is correct.

2. The Level 1 reading strategy

Step 1: Skim	Read quickly to understand the general meaning. Look at the title, headings, first sentence and repeated words.
Step 2: Scan	Search for key words from the question. Look for similar words, names, numbers, dates and places.
Step 3: Select	Choose only the information needed. Check that your answer matches the question exactly.
Step 4: Prove	Point to the part of the text that supports your answer. If you cannot prove it, check again.

3. How to recognise the main point

Ask yourself:

- What is this whole text mainly about?
- What message appears in the title, heading or opening sentence?
- Which idea is repeated or developed?
- Can I say the main point in one short sentence?

Important: A main point is not usually a small detail. For example, the time of an event may be a key detail, but it is not normally the main idea of the whole text.

4. How to find key details

Key details often answer these questions:

Who?	people, organisations, groups, roles
What?	event, problem, service, action or change
Where?	place, location, building, website
When?	date, time, day, deadline, opening hours
Why?	reason, purpose, benefit, problem
How?	method, step, instruction, journey, process

5. Common Level 1 question wording

You may see questions like:

- What is the main point of Text A?
- Give two details about the course.
- Which three statements are correct?
- According to the text, why should people book early?
- Give one quotation that shows the event is free.
- What do Text A and Text B both say about travel?

6. Worked example

The community garden is open every Saturday from 10:00 am to 1:00 pm. Local volunteers grow fruit and vegetables, and learners can join free gardening sessions. The project helps people learn new skills because experienced gardeners give advice each week. It also reduces waste by using donated tools and recycled pots. New members should wear comfortable clothes and bring water.

Main point	The community garden offers free gardening sessions and helps local people learn useful skills.
Key details	It is open every Saturday from 10:00 am to 1:00 pm. Volunteers grow fruit and vegetables. Experienced gardeners give advice each week. It uses donated tools and recycled pots.
Evidence	The text says learners can join free gardening sessions and that experienced gardeners give advice each week.

7. Exam checklist

Before you move on, check:

- Have I answered the exact question?
- Is my answer short and clear?
- Did I use information from the correct text?
- Did I avoid copying too much?
- Can I prove my answer from the text?