

Tips to Finding the Main Idea:

While Listening:

1. Listen for main ideas which the professors may highlight by using:
 - little phrases such as "And now let us turn to . . .;"
 - statements such as "The main point is . . ." or "Remember this . . .;"
 - statements that they repeat or emphasize;
 - a change in their tone of voice or rate of speaking.
2. Summarize in your own words what you have heard and write it down. Organize and review your notes after class. Add main headings as needed.
3. Talk with classmates and tutors
4. Make notes using a symbol such as? of areas you are unclear on

While Reading:

1. The first paragraph of a reading will usually tell you what you are going to be reading about. Look for main ideas there.
2. Usually the topic sentence is the first sentence of the paragraph. Sometimes it can be the second sentence or the last sentence of the first paragraph. If it appears at the end of the paragraph, the previous sentences build up to the main idea. If it is within the paragraph, it is preceded by one or more introductory sentences.
3. Examine the table of contents, section headings of chapters, chapter summaries and chapter quizzes for main ideas.
4. Pick out key terms and concepts and make a "quiz sheet" outlining the bare bones of the course.
5. Sometimes there is an implied main idea. Read over the details of a section and ask yourself, "What's the point?"
6. Read standing up and outload to yourself smaller chunks of material and then summarize to yourself answering, "what was that all about"?

Cited Sources:

https://www.ccri.edu/advising/success_links/mainideas.html