

The Important Thing

What is it?

The Important Thing strategy involves students writing summary paragraphs about a topic. The paragraph has a structure presented to the students that they must follow. This activity helps students think about the important aspects of a topic and the reasons and details that make those particular aspects so important. This strategy focuses on the word “important,” but teachers should feel free to change the word to something else on occasion (such as “The Sad Thing” or “The Exciting Thing”). The structure of The Important Thing can be used with all concepts, such as summarizing content, describing friends or peers, or introducing a new term.

Steps in the Process:

1. After a lesson or reading introduce “The Important Thing” activity. In earlier grades if students struggle use a familiar topic the first time doing “The Important Thing” activity.
2. Display the structure of their paragraph. Describe how they should use this structure for their own descriptive paragraph.
3. The first few times give the students a worksheet that has the structure outlined.
4. One possible use of the writings is to create an “Important Thing” book, notebook, or folder that the students keep. The class can develop an “Important Thing” book, or each student can create their own.

The Important Thing Structure

Teach students to look for and learn this pattern:

The important thing about _____ is _____.

Detail sentence about the topic.

Detail sentence about the topic.

Detail sentence about the topic.

But, the important thing about _____ is _____.

The paragraph always starts with “The important thing about...” It then always contains three sentences that give additional details about the topic. The last sentence is always exactly like the first sentence except it begins with the word “But” – “But, the important thing about...”

The important thing about

is _____

But, the most important thing about

is _____.

Example 1:

The important thing about a map is that it shows where things are.

It shows land and water.

It shows highways and streets.

It shows cities and towns.

It shows the rides at Six Flags.

But the important thing about a map is that it shows where things are.

Example 2:

The important thing about an element is that it cannot be broken down into other substances.

There are 109.

Some are in nature and some are man-made.

Scientists use chemical symbols made up of one or two letters to name them.

Some like curium are named for people.

But the important thing about an element is that it cannot be broken down into other substances.

Example 3:

The Most Important Thing about an equation is that it is balanced.

It has a left side and a right side

There is always an equal sign.

It may contain variables.

And you have to solve it.

But the Most Important Thing about an equation is that it is balanced.

Example 4:

The Most Important Thing about a fable is that it has a moral.

It is a very short story.

It only has a few characters.

It has animals who talk and act like humans.

And we credit many of them to Aesop.

But the Most Important Thing about a fable is that it has a moral.

Example 5:

The Most Important Think about a summary is that it gets to the gist.

It is in your own words.

It is shorter than the original.

It includes the most important ideas.

It follows the text structure of the original text.

But the Most Important Think about a summary is that it gets to the gist.