Purpose

The fishbone organizer helps students recognize that nonfiction articles and expository writing contain a main idea and supporting details. As they isolate specific information to record on the organizer, students make decisions regarding its relevance, thereby increasing their understanding that not all text is of equal importance. Students who are writing essays or articles can use the graphic during prewriting to ensure that their work contains a main idea and to help them develop a structure for their piece.

How to Use the Organizer

After reading an article, have students determine the main idea and write it on the spine of the fish. Then encourage them to write the details that support the main idea inside the divisions made by the other bones. Students who wish to use the graphic organizer to plan their own writing can begin with the main idea or record facts first, which may lead them to the development of a main idea.
What's the Main Idea?

Date: __________________________

Name: _________________________