

Main Idea and Details

Name: _____

The main idea is what the whole paragraph is about. Details are the evidence underneath it.

Ravens are among the few animals that appear to plan. In one experiment, ravens were shown a tool that opened a box holding food, then had the tool taken away. When it was offered again a day later, alongside objects that were of no use, the birds chose the tool — even though the box was nowhere in sight. They also traded a token for food reliably, and would refuse a smaller immediate reward to hold out for a better one. Wild ravens hide food and then move it if another bird was watching, which suggests they understand that other ravens have a point of view of their own.

1. Write the main idea in one sentence.

2. List three details that support it.

3. Which detail is the strongest evidence of planning? Why?

Most of the sand on a tropical beach was once coral. Parrotfish scrape algae off reefs with beaked teeth, swallowing rock along with their food. What they cannot digest passes through and settles on the sea floor as fine white grains. A single large parrotfish can produce several hundred kilograms of sand in a year, and on some islands nearly the whole beach has been through a fish.

4. Write the main idea of the second passage in one sentence.

5. Give two details the writer uses to support it.

Main Idea and Details — Answer Key

1. Ravens show signs of planning ahead rather than only reacting.
2. Choosing the tool a day later with no box in sight; trading a token for food; refusing a small reward to wait for a better one; re-hiding food when watched.
3. Answers will vary. The tool choice a day later is strongest, because the reward was neither present nor visible — the bird had to hold a future use in mind.
4. Much of the sand on a tropical beach is produced by parrotfish eating coral.
5. Parrotfish swallow rock while scraping algae; one large fish can make several hundred kilograms of sand a year; on some islands nearly the whole beach has passed through a fish.