

Most Valuable Point (MVP)

What is it?

A tool that provides immediate feedback about students' understanding of a lesson, activity, or reading assignment by having them identify and elaborate on the most valuable point

What are the benefits of using this tool?

We know what we *want* students to get from the learning experiences that we plan for them. What they actually take away from those experiences, however, can sometimes be a mystery. This tool solves that mystery by asking students to identify the most important point from a lesson, activity, or reading assignment and then elaborate on that point in writing. It also targets a number of skills from the Common Core State Standards—skills like identifying main ideas, citing textual evidence, and writing explanatory paragraphs.

What are the basic steps?

1. Have students complete an activity that requires taking notes or listing key points. (“Take notes as you read this chapter” or “List the key ideas from yesterday’s lecture.”)
2. Instruct students to review their notes and identify the most valuable point (MVP).
Tip: To avoid confusion, clarify what an MVP *is* (the most important big idea or message to remember) and what it *isn't* (the name of the topic, one basic fact, etc.) before students begin.
3. Invite students to share their MVPs as a class. (“What did you pick as your MVP and why?”) List students' MVPs on the board. Use questions like these to help students narrow down their list:
 - Can we combine any of these ideas together to get an even bigger, more valuable point?
 - How can we tell the difference between a really important point and a less important detail?
 - Do any of these ideas feel more like details and less like big ideas? If so, can we eliminate them?
4. Ask students to write a paragraph about one of the MVPs on the list (choose or let them choose). Have them use the MVP as their topic sentence and provide evidence or examples to support it.
5. Use students' completed paragraphs to gauge their understanding of the relevant content and their ability to develop/support their main point. Work with students as needed to address any deficiencies in content knowledge or writing skills.

Variation: Quick-Check MVP

Use this tool to check for understanding throughout a lesson or activity instead of at the end. To do this, divide the lesson/activity into chunks, stop after each chunk to have students generate MVPs, and decide whether to move forward or back up based on their responses. *Think:* Did students get the most important points and concepts? If so, move forward. If not, back up and clarify.

How is this tool used in the classroom?

- ✓ To assess students' understanding of the key points from a lesson or reading assignment
- ✓ To develop and test explanatory or persuasive writing skills

EXAMPLE 1: A high school biology teacher used MVP at the end of a lecture to see whether his students had gotten the main point (that living things share many common characteristics) or gotten bogged down in the details. To his relief, the MVPs that students generated during class and the MVP summary paragraphs that they wrote for homework (see below for one example) confirmed that they had not only grasped the big idea, but the key details as well.

MVP: Living things share many common characteristics.

You might not guess it by looking at looking at them, but living things like polar bears, plants, and people are actually very similar on the inside. In fact, all living things share several important characteristics. At the most basic level, all living things are made up of one or more cells. And no matter what kind of organism you are, your cells actually contain the same basic ingredients—things like water, minerals, proteins, and DNA. Speaking of DNA, all living things have DNA as their...

EXAMPLE 2: Because her students weren't ready to identify main ideas on their own, a second-grade teacher had them work through the MVP process as a class. After reading them the book *Fish Do the Strangest Things*, she used guiding questions to help them generate and refine a list of important ideas. ("What are some things that you learned from this book? Which seem to be the biggest, most important ideas?") She helped students choose one of these ideas as their MVP ("Fish can do a lot of strange things") and asked them to help her support it by giving her specific examples from the book. The list of important ideas that she and her students generated, and the paragraph that they wrote as a class (MVP/topic sentence, supporting examples, conclusion), are shown below.

IMPORTANT IDEAS

There are many different kinds of fish.

~~Some fish spit. (detail, not main idea)~~

Fish are more interesting than you think.

Fish can do a lot of strange things.

PARAGRAPH = Topic sentence/MVP + 4 examples + conclusion

Fish can do a lot of strange things.

- Some fish can spit.
- Other fish can fly and climb trees.
- One kind of fish can blow up like a balloon.
- Another kind of fish lives in water, but sleeps on land.

Fish are more interesting than you might think.

Teacher Talk

- ➔ The first few times that you use this tool (or when using it with very young students), you may want to complete the process as a class as shown in Example 2.
- ➔ If students aren't ready to identify main ideas on their own, use questions and prompts to help them—or give them a list of points to choose from and ask them to justify their selections.