

Main Idea Strategy - House Method: Informing Future Doctors MCAT Program

Link to test taking strategy video:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=d1XU6IEbVEQ&t=282s>

Step 2: House Method (Weeks 11-20)

In the House Method, we will try to infuse the author's tone and motivations/intentions into the Main Idea. We are still paying attention to all 4 CARS Competencies, but we are condensing and combining 3 (Immature Main Idea, Tone, Motivation) into a more mature main idea and then also writing down big-ticket arguments. The idea behind this is that you can easily look at CARS passages as a simple roof supported by columns. When you see a thick column, you know that it offers a lot of structural support to the roof. And when you see a very thin column, you're aware that it may support some of the weight of the roof, but it's likely there as decorations. Meaning, this argument could be removed, and the mature main idea will still stand.

For the sake of the analogy and the House Method, let's look at the Main Idea as the roof and the columns as big-ticket arguments. The more important the argument is to the Main Idea, the thicker the column. Looking at CARS passages in this light is helpful because you will often be asked which argument is LEAST supported. Many students waste a ton of time on these questions by attempting to go back in the passage to find and compare the support for each answer choice. However, if you understand the House Method, then you realize that those questions are actually just asking, "which of these arguments, if I take out of the passage, least impacts my Main Idea".

Therefore, during the House Method period, we will focus on writing just 2 things.

1. Mature Main Idea
2. Big Ticket Arguments

Example: Pay attention to which of these columns is the most important to supporting the "Roof's" weight

Formalist criticism correctly grades work objectively by emphasizing the work rather than the author or the reader.

Ideal Reader must be assumed

Emphasize the thoughts the author chose to include in the passage

Ignore good rhetoric/fancy word play