



Main Ideas vs. Supporting Details

Writing Module 2 — IGCSE Summary Writing

SUMMARY WRITING

Why This Matters



One of the biggest mistakes in summary writing is including too many details.

- ① **Think of a summary as a suitcase. You only have room for the most important items. Fill it with unnecessary details and there's no room left for what matters.**

A summary should focus on the **BIG IDEAS** only.

Key Vocabulary

Main Idea

The central point or important message.

"What is the most important thing the reader should understand?"

Supporting Detail

Examples, evidence, descriptions, or explanations.

"What information helps explain the main idea?"



Example: Spot the Main Idea

Not realising I'd be talking about life, love, and politics with welcoming locals, I had worried about loneliness.

✗ Talking about life

A detail — topic of conversation

✗ Talking about politics

A detail — topic of conversation

✓ Meeting friendly local people

The main idea — cycle touring connects you with locals

Practice 1: Find the Main Idea

Read each quotation and identify the main idea.

"We discover we're capable of so much more than we ever thought possible."

- A. Riding bicycles B. Physical exercise C. Personal growth and confidence ✓ D. Long journeys

"The boredom is far outweighed by the excitement of seeing flowers and animals you'd never notice from a car."

- A. Cars are faster B. Flowers are beautiful C. Closer connection with nature ✓ D. Animals live outdoors

"A typical cycle tour is about the small things: the tiny villages you pass through."

- A. Villages are small B. Visiting places most tourists miss ✓ C. Roads connect villages D. Tourists visit cities

"Other cyclists who help you along the way."

- A. Bicycles need repairs B. Cyclists wear helmets C. Support from other travellers ✓ D. Long-distance travel

Practice 2: Main Idea or Detail?

Label each statement: M = Main Idea | D = Supporting Detail

M — Meeting friendly local people

D — Talking about life and politics

M — Building confidence

D — Discovering hidden strengths

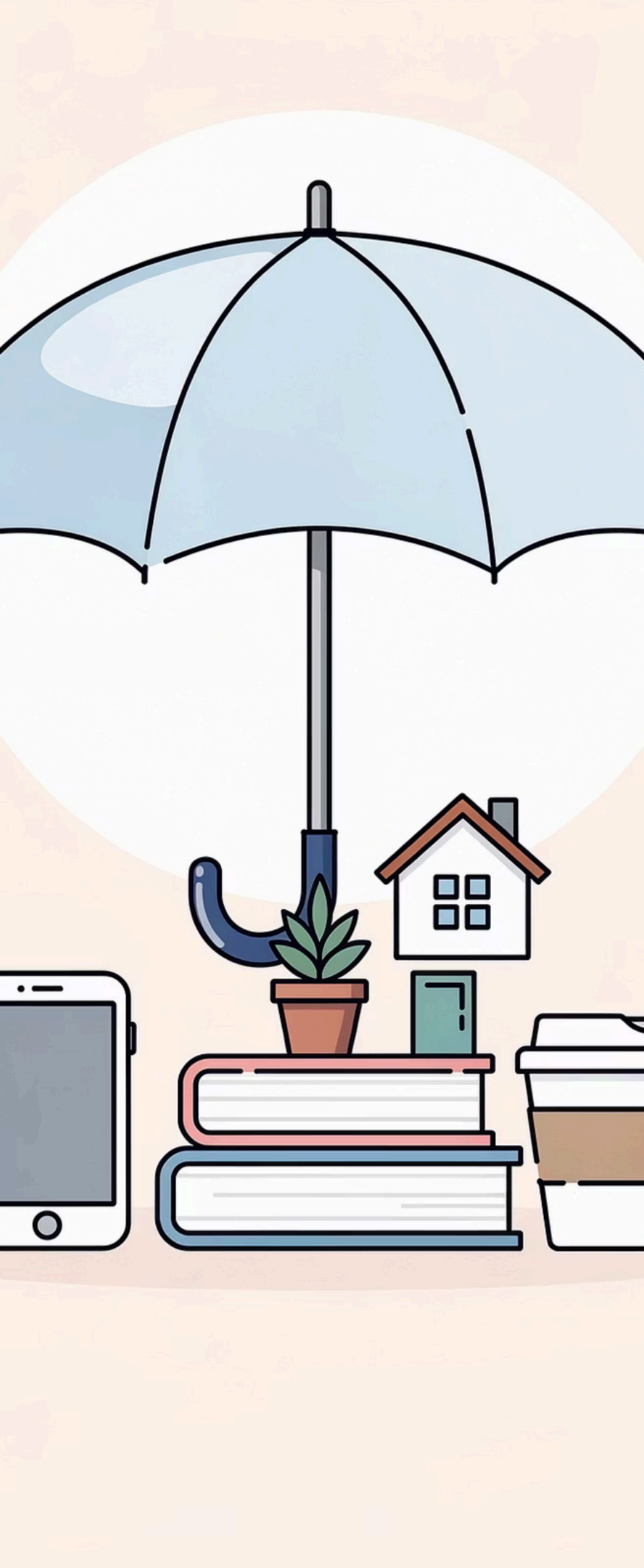
D — Seeing wildlife / flowers

M — Visiting unique places

D — Passing through tiny villages

D — Help from other cyclists

M — Excitement of each day



Practice 3: Building Umbrella Ideas

Strong summary writers combine similar details into one larger idea.



Group 1

welcoming locals · conversations · cyclists helping

→ [Connecting with people](#)



Group 2

flowers · animals · forests · beaches

→ [Enjoying nature](#)



Group 3

discovering strengths · completing long rides · achieving goals

→ [Personal achievement](#)



Group 4

villages · roadside cafés · unusual meals · off the tourist route

→ [Discovering hidden places](#)

Practice 4: Remove the Extra Detail

Cross out information that is NOT necessary in a summary.

→ Seeing flowers and animals
~~that you would never
notice from a car~~

→ Seeing wildlife

→ Passing through tiny
~~villages and eating meals in
roadside shacks~~

→ Visiting unique places

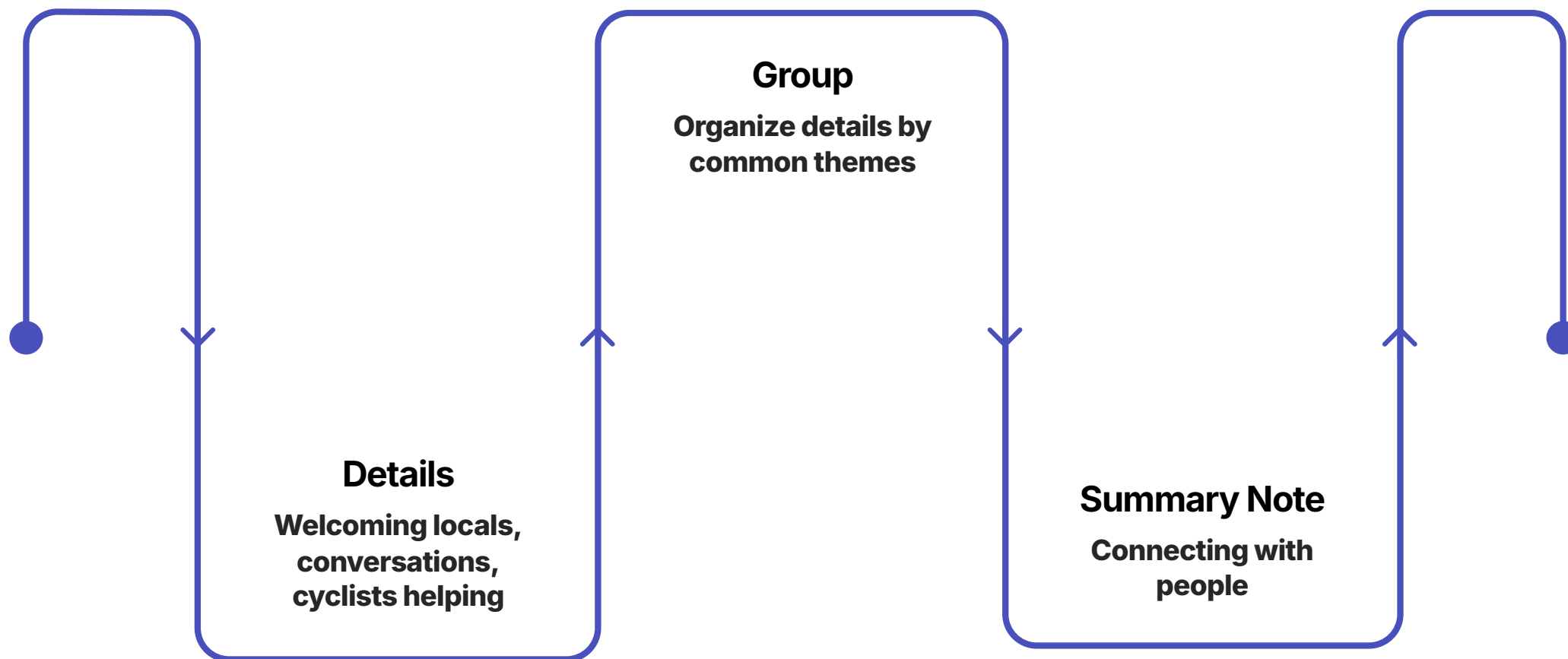
→ Discovering that you are
~~capable of more than you
ever thought possible~~

→ Building personal confidence

i Keep the umbrella idea. Drop the specific examples.

Practice 5: Creating Summary Notes

Convert groups of details into short, single summary notes.



Details → Summary Note

welcoming locals · conversations ·
cyclists helping
→ Connecting with people

Details → Summary Note

flowers · animals · forests · beaches
→ Enjoying nature

Details → Summary Note

achieving goals · overcoming
challenges · building confidence
→ Personal growth

Reflection & Exit Ticket

A good summary does not include every detail because **details explain the main idea — they are not the main idea itself.**

Exit Ticket

Choose **ONE** group: flowers · animals · forests · beaches

Write a single summary point that captures the main idea of all four details.

Example answer: *Enjoying nature*

Remember

- Focus on big ideas, not small details
- Combine similar details under one umbrella idea
- Ask: *"Is this the most important point?"*

