
Instructional Strategies

— 75 Tools to Improve
Student Learning —

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1, 2, or 3 Minute Writing

Overview

Give students 1, 2, or 3 minutes to summarize their learning, in writing, from the day/week.



3-2-1

Overview

Have students identify the following. This could be used in the middle or end of instruction.

3 Three things you learned

2 Two interesting things

1 One question you still have

[For more information](#)

5-3-1

Overview

1. Alone

Pose a question or topic related to the lesson that has many possible responses. Then have students individually brainstorm five possible answers or things they know about the topic.

2. Pair

Ask students to work in pairs to come up to share their lists and then decide on the three best answers or ideas from their two lists.

3. Group

Instruct the pair to join with another pair to choose the one response they think is best or most significant.

The 411

Overview

Ask students to summarize the author's purpose or key ideas from a text, or give you the 4-1-1.



Accountable Talk

Overview

1. Introduce

Conduct a class discussion by defining accountable talk. Explain that in a learning discussion, each contributor to the conversation is held accountable to give reasons and evidence for opinions.

2. Practice

Call on some student volunteers to read accountable discussion cards about a concept you have just studied. Prepare these cards in advance to contain the accountable sentence stems (see templates provided), such as “*I believe _____ because _____*” and “*I agree with _____ because _____.*” Afterwards, ask the students, “What evidence of accountable talk were we good at? How could we improve?” Pass out the list of accountable talk sentence stems.

3. Ask

Pose an open-ended question and guide students in an accountable talk discussion. After letting students discuss, highlight some positive ways they used accountable talk along with areas to improve.

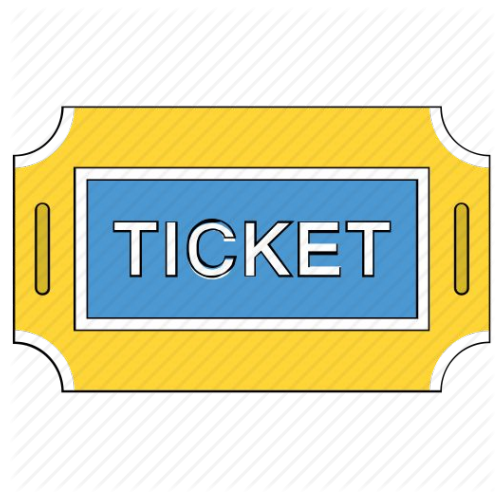
[Templates](#)

[For more information](#)

Source: The Teacher Toolkit,

<http://www.theteachertoolkit.com/index.php/tool/accountable-discussions>

Admit/Entry Ticket



Overview

1. Set up

Familiarize students with their routine for entering the classroom. Be sure to place the Entry Ticket in the same position each day.

2. Create

Decide what you'd like the students to review or learn based on the current unit of instruction. Write the question or statement on the Entry Ticket or post it for students to see.

3. Time

Set a specific amount of time for students to answer the Entry Ticket question. Reconvene the class when time is up and discuss the answers.

Affinity Mapping

Overview

Give students a broad question or problem that is likely to result in lots of different ideas, such as “What were the impacts of the Great Depression?” or “What literary works should every person read?” Have students generate responses by writing ideas on post-it notes (one idea per note) and placing them in no particular arrangement on a wall, whiteboard, or chart paper. Once lots of ideas have been generated, have students begin grouping them into similar categories, then label the categories and discuss why the ideas fit within them, how the categories relate to one another, and so on.



Source: Cult of Pedagogy

https://www.cultofpedagogy.com/speaking-listening-techniques/?utm_source=pinterest&utm_medium=smartloop&utm_campaign=landingpage4&utm_content=1&utm_term=35497496

Agreement Circles

Overview

Students determine whether they agree or disagree with a statement and indicate their opinion by standing on an agreement circle in the appropriate area and then debate their stances in small groups with members of both opinions. After discussing the statement, students return to the agreement circle to indicate whether their opinion changed or not.

- Have students form a large circle.
- Read the statement, then give students 5-10 seconds of think time to decide whether they agree or disagree with the statement.
- Ask students to move to the center of the agreement circle if they agree with the statement and stay on the outside if they disagree.
- Arrange students in small groups, maintaining the proportion of agree to disagree (as much as possible) that the last step indicated.
- Give them a few minutes to defend their opinions. Call time, read the question again, and have students re-position themselves on the agreement circle according to their current opinion.
- Note any changes, then repeat the exercise using a new statement. This can be repeated as many times as needed.

Source: K20 Learn

<https://learn.k20center.ou.edu/strategy/d9908066f654727934df7bf4f50704ce>

Analyzing Images

Overview

In social studies, the ability to analyze images is key. There are several strategies for analyzing images. A few resources include:

[Facing History and Ourselves](#)

[Library of Congress](#)

[National Archives](#)

[Quartering strategy](#)

[Primarily teaching](#)



Annotating Text

Overview

Begin by giving students a piece of text to read. Before reading, students preview the text to predict what the text might be about. Students are then given a clear purpose for annotating. Students might identify difficult or confusing words or phrases and explain them, or look for information that refers to a character or setting. Students create and write annotations to explain and expand their understanding of the text.

1. Pass out the text selection to all students.
2. As a class, students discuss the title, subtitles, and pictures within the text. Ask students to predict what the text might be about.
3. Explain that one purpose for annotating text is so that readers unfamiliar with certain words or phrases can gain a clearer understanding.
4. As a class, read the selection and determine which parts of the text might be confusing or difficult. Highlight or number those words or passages.
5. Place students in pairs. Ask pairs to discuss and write a short explanation for each highlighted or numbered passage. Pairs might need to use a textbook, glossary, dictionary, internet research, or other resources to compose their explanations.
6. Pairs write their explanations for each annotated passage at the bottom or side of the text. See further information in the source link below.

[For more information](#)



Anticipation Guides

Overview

1. Construct

Write four to six short, declarative, thought-provoking statements about the new concept, some true and some false. Include two sets of columns before and after the statement. One column should be labeled “Agree” and the other “Disagree” (see template).

2. Display

Read or display the statements to the class. Allow students time to respond to each statement, either individually, with a partner, or as a class. They should use the columns to the left of each statement to mark whether they agree or disagree.

3. Discuss

Conduct a short class discussion about the statements before presenting the new material. Ask students to explain why they agree or disagree.

4. Revisit

Revisit the guide after presenting the new material and have students use the columns to the right of each statement to mark whether they now agree or disagree based on what they’ve learned. Have students compare their changes with a partner. If their responses are not the same, ask them to see if they can convince their partner to change.

Template

For more information

Source: The Teacher Toolkit

<http://www.theteachertoolkit.com/index.php/tool/anticipation-guide>

Back and Forth

Overview

1. Explain

Partner A explains to his or her partner a problem, process, concept, etc. assigned by the teacher.

2. Write

Partner B writes down his or her partner's explanation.

3. Check

Partner A checks Partner B's writing for accuracy, making sure Partner B has captured his or her explanation correctly and that they both agree on the response.

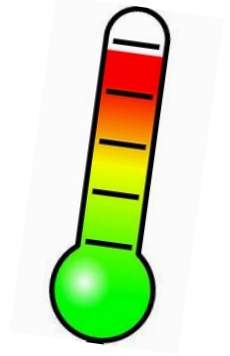
4. Repeat

Students reverse roles with another problem, process, concept, etc. so that Partner B has the opportunity to explain verbally. Partner A records the explanation and Partner B checks for accuracy.

Template

For more information

Barometer



Overview

In this strategy students line up along a continuum based on their position on an issue.

1. **Prepare the Space:** Identify where students can stand in a line. Place “Strongly Agree” and “Strongly Disagree” signs at opposite ends of the continuum.
2. **Prepare Students:** Remind students of class rules of civility and respect for one another. You may consider setting ground rules for the specific activity.
3. **Students Formulate Opinions:** Give students a few minutes to reflect on a prompt or prompts that call for agreement or disagreement with a particular statement. You might have students first respond to the prompt in writing.
4. **Students “Take a Stand”:** Ask students to stand on the spot along the line that represents their opinion, telling them that if they stand at either extreme, they are absolute in their agreement or disagreement. They may stand anywhere between the two extremes, depending on how much they do or do not agree with the statement.
5. **Students Explain Positions:** Once students have lined themselves up, ask them in turn to explain why they have chosen to stand where they are standing. Encourage students to refer to evidence and examples when defending their stance. It is probably best to alternate from one end to the middle to the other end, rather than allowing too many voices from one stance to dominate. After about three or four viewpoints are heard, ask if anyone wishes to move. Encourage students to keep an open mind; they are allowed to move if someone presents an argument that alters where they want to stand on the line. Run the activity until you think that most or all voices have been heard, making sure that no one person dominates.
6. **Debrief:** There are many ways you can debrief this exercise. You can have students reflect in their journals about how the activity changed or reinforced their original opinion. Or you can chart the main “for” and “against” arguments on the board as a whole-class activity.

Source: Facing History and Ourselves

<https://www.facinghistory.org/resource-library/teaching-strategies>

Carousel Brainstorming

Overview

The Carousel Brainstorming Technique or Rotating Review is a strategy used to help students learn new information or review existing information through movement and reflection. This strategy facilitates the development of group skills (brainstorming, discussion, communicating information) and also promotes active learning within the classroom.

1. Divide students into different groups.
2. Ask students to walk around the room to different stations set up in the classroom in order to brainstorm and reflect on certain questions for a specific amount of time.
3. Students rotate in a carousel until they have visited each station.



Source: K12 Teacher Staff Development

<https://k12teacherstaffdevelopment.com/tlb/what-is-carousel-brainstorming-technique/>

Card Sort

1. Select

Decide which concepts or terms you want students to learn from the current unit of study and prepare cards with the name of each concept or term. Make enough sets of cards for pairs or trios to use.

2. Sort

Have the students sort the cards into meaningful groups or matches. Model the conversation students will have with one another to determine how to sort their cards or how to match them.

3. Discuss

Discuss the categories or matches. Ask groups to explain how they decided to sort their cards.

[For more information](#)



Source: The Teacher Toolkit <http://www.theteachertoolkit.com>

Image Credit:

<https://blog.strategyzer.com/posts/2015/7/16/how-card-sorting-can-help-you-understand-user-priorities>

Big Paper/Chalk Talk

Overview

1. Select a Stimulus for Discussion This could be a question, an image, a piece of text, etc. Group students into pairs or groups of three. Give each group a large sheet of poster paper. Tape the stimulus in the middle of the paper.

2. Prepare Students Tell students that this activity should be completed in silence. Everything in the activity is done through writing. Students will have time to speak in pairs and with the large groups later. Go over all instructions at the beginning so students aren't asking questions during the activity.

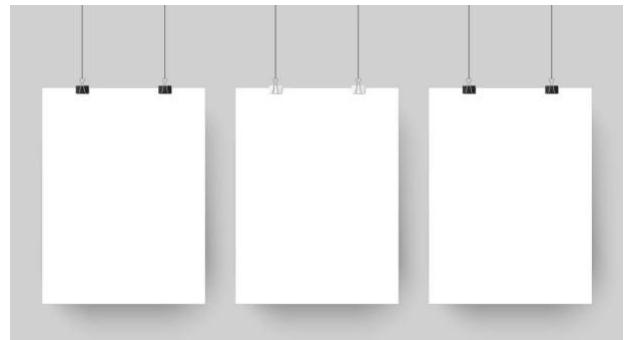
3. Students Comment on Their Group's Big Paper Give each group a large sheet of poster paper and give each student something to write with. The groups examine the stimulus and then comment on it, ask questions of each other on the poster paper. The "conversation" can stay on the stimulus or meander to address questions or comments posed within the group.

4. Students Comment on Other Groups' Big Papers Working in silence, students leave their groups and walk around reading, and commenting on, the poster papers from other groups.

5. Students Return to Their Group's Paper and Silence is Broken Group examines what has been written on their paper and freely discusses what has been written.

6. Discuss as a Class Debrief as a large group.

[For more information](#)



Source: Facing History and Ourselves

<https://www.facinghistory.org/resource-library/teaching-strategies/big-paper-silent-conversation>

Chain Notes

Overview

1. Start with a question printed at the top of a piece of paper. This could be generated by the teacher or a student(s).
2. Circulate the paper from student to student. Each student should respond with one or two sentences related to the question and pass it on to the next student.
3. Each student adds a new thought or builds upon a prior statement or collection of statements made.



Claim, Evidence, Reasoning

Overview

This critical thinking strategy allows students to use evidence to substantiate claims from a posed question. Students will write a conclusion that justifies their claim and supported evidence.

1. Present students with a question that allows them to create a claim. The claim will answer the question and will usually be one sentence.
2. Then students will look for evidence to support their claim in materials and online research provided. The more relevant the evidence, the better the claim will be supported.
3. Students will write their reasoning, which acts as a conclusion, providing explanations for why the data they chose counts as evidence and supports their claim. This should be a few sentences in length.

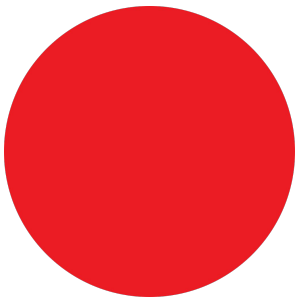
[For more information](#)

Source: K20 Learn

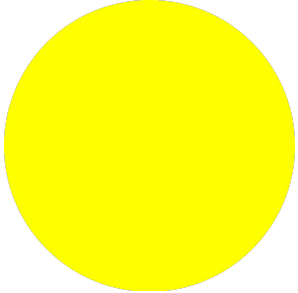
<https://learn.k20center.ou.edu/strategy/d9908066f654727934df7bf4f506fc09>

Color Cards/Traffic Light

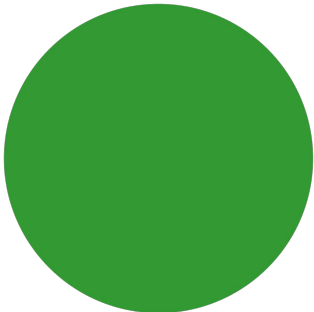
Overview



Red = "Stop, I need help."



Yellow = "I'm a little confused."



Green = "Keep going, I understand."

Commit and Toss

Overview

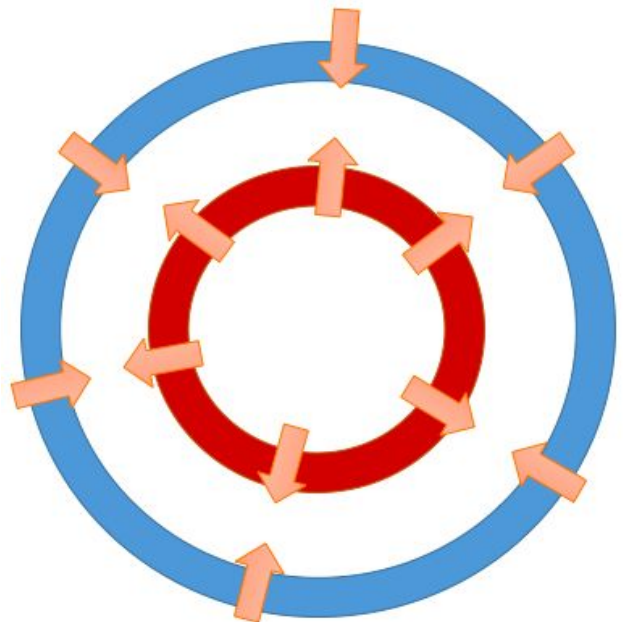
This is an anonymous technique in order to gather quick feedback on different student ideas. This helps not single out students for incorrect answers.

1. Give students a question and ask them to write an answer to the question on a piece of paper.
2. After students complete the question, ask them to crumple the paper into a ball.
3. When the teacher signals, students should toss the balls around the room until the teacher tell them to stop.
4. The teacher then asks students to pick up one of the paper balls and share one of the ideas on the paper ball they caught. Students should not share their own ideas.
5. The teacher should ask students to share out some of the ideas as a whole class to get an idea of the ideas from the room.
6. Addition: The teacher can ask students to provide feedback to the answer on their “caught” ball if it would be helpful for the kind of question posed.

Concentric Circles

Overview

Students form two circles, one inside circle and one outside circle. Each student on the inside is paired with a student on the outside; they face each other. The teacher poses a question to the whole group and pairs discuss their responses with each other. Then the teacher signals students to rotate: Students on the outside circle move one space to the right so they are standing in front of a new person. Now the teacher poses a new question, and the process is repeated.



Source: Cult of Pedagogy

https://www.cultofpedagogy.com/speaking-listening-techniques/?utm_source=pinterest&utm_medium=smartloop&utm_campaign=landingpage4&utm_content=1&utm_term=35497496

Image Source:

<http://techsavvyenglish.blogspot.com/2015/10/concentric-circles-ice-breaker-andor.html>

Concept Map

Overview

1. Brainstorm

Have students brainstorm main ideas and terms related to an assigned topic.

2. Organize

Organize these ideas from general to specific. Cluster ideas or terms that are similar to one another.

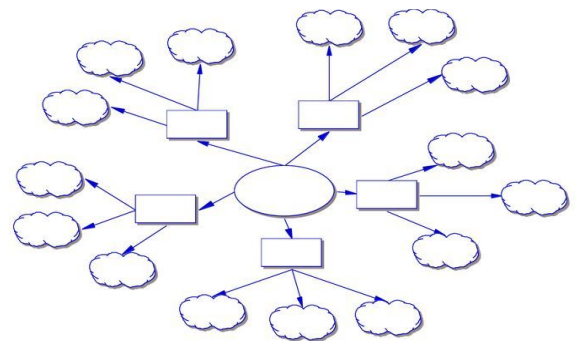
3. Map

Students should write the terms in the appropriate cells of the concept map. Arrange and add cells as needed.

4. Connect

Draw arrows or lines to connect the cells that contain words that are related. Words or phrases can be written along these lines to explain the relationship between the cells.

[For more information](#)



Conver-Stations

Overview

This is a small-group discussion strategy that gives students exposure to more of their peers' ideas and prevents the stagnation that can happen when a group doesn't happen to have the right chemistry. Students are placed into a few groups of 4-6 students each and are given a discussion question to talk about. After sufficient time has passed for the discussion to develop, one or two students from each group rotate to a different group, while the other group members remain where they are. Once in their new group, they will discuss a different, but related question, and they may also share some of the key points from their last group's conversation. For the next rotation, students who have not rotated before may be chosen to move, resulting in groups that are continually evolving.

[For more information](#)

Source: Cult of Pedagogy

https://www.cultofpedagogy.com/speaking-listening-techniques/?utm_source=pinterest&utm_medium=smartloop&utm_campaign=landingpage4&utm_content=1&utm_term=35497496²⁴

Cornell Notes

Overview

This note-taking strategy has students take notes as they read or listen to new information. Main ideas or essential questions are identified in the left column, then students create notes to support or summarize the main ideas. Finally, the content of the columns is reviewed and ideas are synthesized into a simple statement in the bottom row.

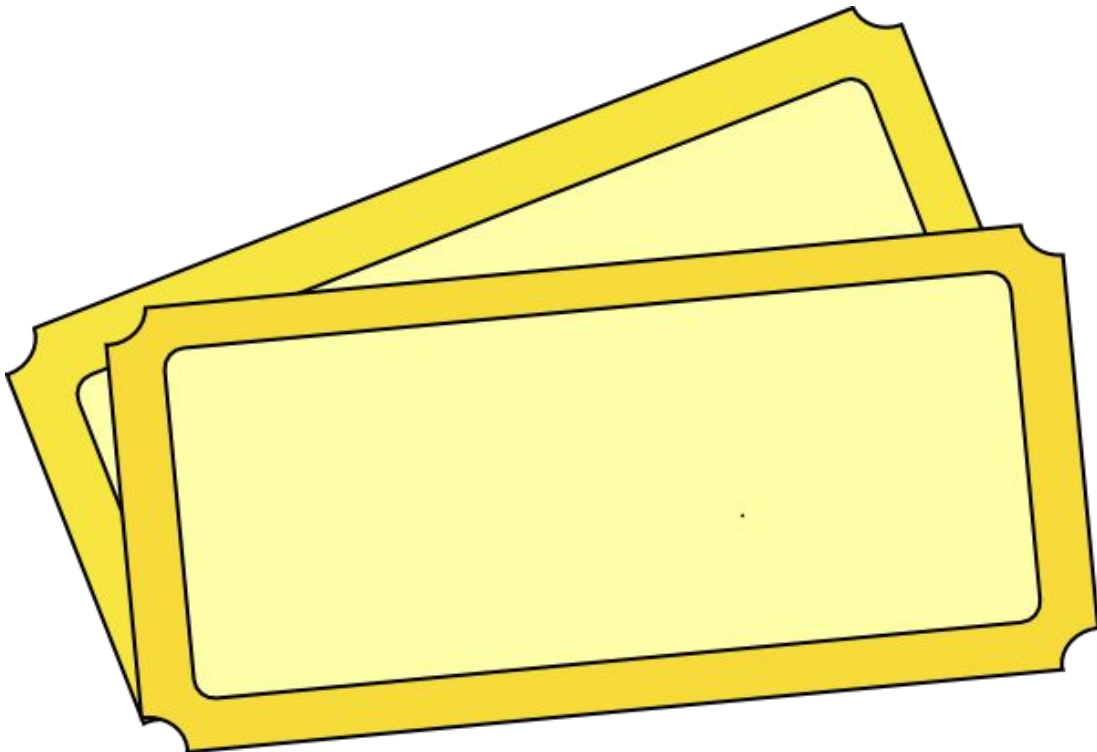
1. Have students draw a page-size, upside-down T about 1/3 of the page from the left their paper, leaving some space at the bottom of the page. This makes a simple table with two columns (the left one smaller than the right) and an undivided bottom row.
2. While going through a reading or lecture, students should first look for the big idea of each section of text and write this in the right-hand column. The teacher often supplies the main ideas as a guide to the text.
3. After the reading or lecture, have students review their notes, pull out key concepts, and write them in the left-hand column. Traditionally, these are written in question form, but whatever works for the students is best.
4. Finally, students should review their notes and summarize their ideas into a sentence or two to write in the remaining empty row. This serves as a summary area. If done as an assignment or as a way of teaching note taking, this summary can be filled out in class after students have finished taking notes.

For more information

Draw Two Names

Overview

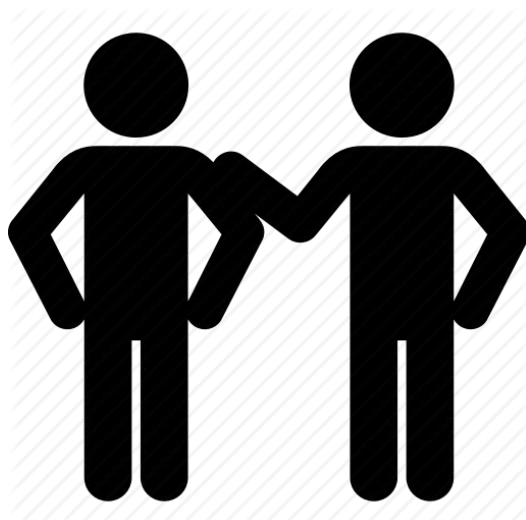
Students summarize their learning in one minute. Teacher collects cards and two names are drawn. Those two students stand and give a thirty second summary of the key points of the learning.



Elbow/Shoulder Partner

Overview

Have students discuss a question with an elbow or shoulder partner. Encourage them to clarify how they agree or disagree or how their thinking is similar or dissimilar. As students share their answers to questions, have them clarify their partner's thinking or idea.



Exit Ticket

Overview

An exit ticket or “ticket out the door” is a way to check if students have achieved success around the lesson standards/ learning targets.

Exit tickets can be open-ended or pose specific questions.

[Example](#)

[For more information](#)



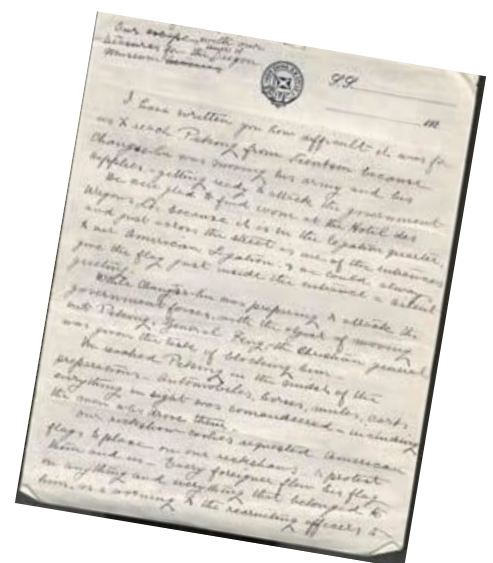
First Lines

Overview

First Lines is a strategy in which students read the beginning sentences from assigned readings and make predictions about the content of what they're about to read. This pre-reading technique helps students focus their attention on what they can tell from the first lines of a text. As students read the text in its entirety they discuss, revisit and/or revise their original predictions.

[For more information](http://www.adlit.org/strategies/23330/)

Source: AdLit <http://www.adlit.org/strategies/23330/>

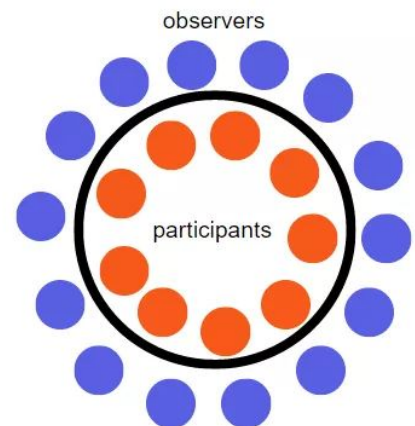


Fishbowl Think Aloud

Overview

This is a technique in order to listen in on the thinking of students in the class.

1. Select four or five students to be in the “fishbowl.”
2. The rest of the class should plan to listen in on the conversation of the “fishbowl.”
3. Students in the “fishbowl” respond to a prompt or stimulus, discussing and defending their ideas as the teacher and other students listen in and reconcile their own thinking.



Fist of Five

Overview

Students show, with their fingers, their level of understanding about an aspect of the lesson. This can be used at any time throughout a lesson.

I don't understand at all.



I understand a little bit.



I need to go over this again.



I think I get it, but am not completely comfortable.



I get it.



I can explain it to someone else.



Four As

Overview

This is a strategy for analyzing text.

What assumptions does the author of the text hold?	What do you agree with in the text?
What do you want to argue with in the text?	What parts of the text do you want to aspire to?

Source: National School Reform Faculty

https://www.nsrffharmony.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/10/4_a_text_0.pdf

Four Corners

Overview

Step 1: Create a statement about a contentious or controversial issue.

Step 2: Create four posters labeled:

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Strongly Disagree
- Disagree

Step 3: Hang posters in the four corners of a room.

Step 4: Pose statement to students and ask them to move to the corner they most agree with.

Step 5: Ask individual students to share their reasoning and then process as a whole group.

[For more information](#)



Frayer Model

Overview

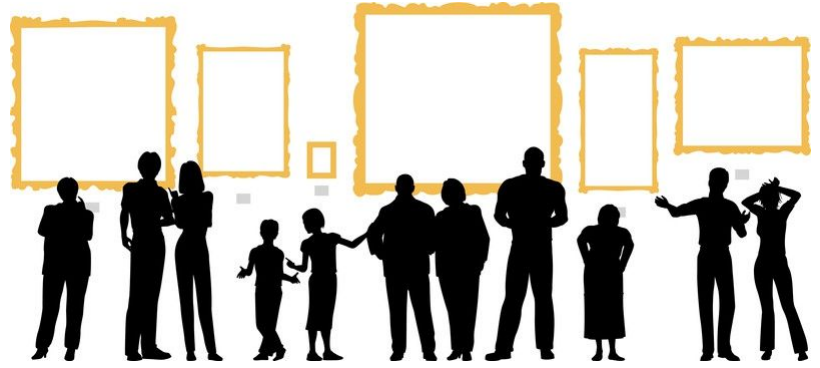
The purpose of the Frayer Model is to identify and define unfamiliar concepts and vocabulary. Students define a concept/word/term, describe its essential characteristics, provide examples of the idea and suggest non examples of the idea.

Template

[For more information](#)

Frayer Model	
Definition	Characteristics / Draw
Examples	Non-Examples

Gallery Walk



Overview

1. Write

Create six questions or prompts about the current topic of study, and write each one on a piece of chart paper or on a white board. Hang or place the questions or prompts in various places around the classroom to create six stations. Images, documents, problems, or quotes may also be used.

2. Group

Group students into teams of three to five students, depending on the size of the class. Each group should start at a different station.

3. Begin

At their first station, groups will read what is posted and one recorder should write the group's responses, thoughts, and comments on the chart paper or white board. For individual student accountability, you may also have the students record their own responses on a worksheet (see template below), or put their initials below what they wrote. Having different colored markers for each student is also an option.

4. Rotate

After three to five minutes, have the groups rotate to the next station. Students read and discuss the previous group's response and add content of their own. Repeat until all groups have visited each station. To involve all group members, you can have groups switch recorders at each station.

5. Monitor

As the teacher, it is important to monitor the stations while the students participate. You may also need to clarify or provide hints if students don't understand or misinterpret what is posted at their station.

6. Reflect

Have students go back to their first station to read all that was added to their first response. Bring the class back together to discuss what was learned and make final conclusions about what they saw and discussed.

Source: The Teacher Toolkit, <http://www.theteachertoolkit.com/index.php/tool/gallery-walk> 35

Give One, Get One

Overview

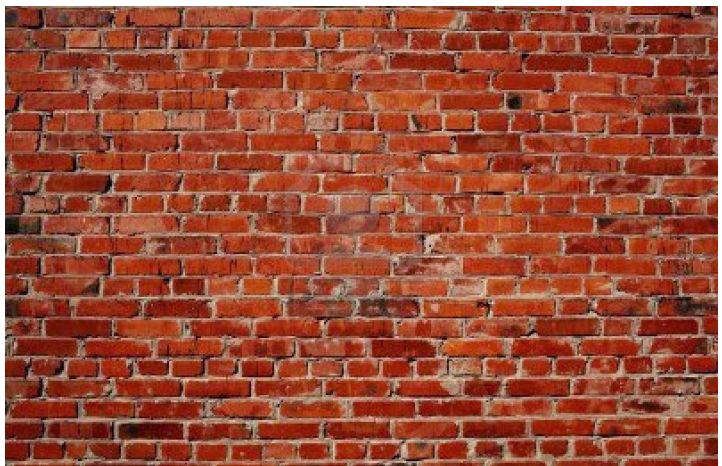
Use this strategy to stimulate students' thinking as they investigate an question or search for evidence in response to an prompt over the course of a unit of study. In this strategy, students formulate initial positions and arguments in response to a question or prompt and then share them with each other through a structured procedure. That way they can test, refine, and strengthen their ideas as they share their ideas and hear the ideas of others.

1. **Students Prepare** Ask students to divide a sheet of paper into two vertical columns. Label the left side "Give One" and the right side "Get One."
2. **Students Respond to a Question** Ask students to respond to a question such as "Do you agree that laws are the most important factor in overcoming discrimination? Why or why not?" Students should write their ideas on the left-hand column on their paper. They do not need to write complete sentences; responses can be in list form.
3. **Give One, Get One** Tell students to walk around and find a partner. Each partner "gives," or shares, items from his or her list. For example, Partner A shares his/her responses until Partner B hears something that is not already on his/her list. Partner B writes the new response in the right-hand column on the paper, along with Partner A's name. Once Partner B has "gotten" one, the roles switch. Students repeat this process with other peers until time runs out.
4. **Debrief** After this strategy, you will want to debrief in a class discussion and/or a journal writing session. Prompts for journal writing include:
 - How might you respond to the prompt or essential question now?
 - What did you learn today? How does this information relate to the prompt or essential question?
 - What else do you want to know?

Graffiti Wall

Overview

Using a piece of poster paper, a white board, etc. the teacher invites students to write or draw what they know about a given topic. The teacher can ask students to “sign” their graffiti to provide feedback about where students are in the learning process. The teacher can pose a specific question, prompt, or keep the graffiti wall concept very open.



Graphic Organizers

Overview

Graphic organizers can be used for multiple instructional purposes. This includes:

- When taking notes about new information in a lesson to organize ideas
- After reading text in order to organize information
- When comparing and contrasting two concepts
- As a way to help students classify new information into meaningful categories
- To help students find similarities and differences by creating analogies
- As a brainstorming tool to generate ideas before students begin an assignment, such as a writing task, a set of word problems, or a lab, to gather ideas or formalize procedures.

For more information

Source: The Teacher Toolkit

<http://www.theteachertoolkit.com/index.php/tool/graphic-organizers>

Hexagonal Thinking

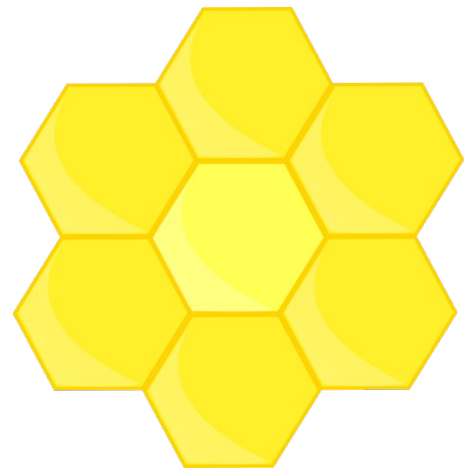
Overview

This activity requires a digital or printed set of hexagons with vocabulary and/or concepts on each hexagon. The goal of this activity is for students to analyze each concept and show its relationship to the other concepts by placing related hexagons together to create a honeycomb. Then, they must justify why they believe the linked words/concepts are related.

- Create hexagons with selected vocabulary, phrases, concepts or just leave them blank. Print them for a hands-on manipulative or create a digital version.
- Students work in groups to identify each of the words/concepts and start to organize and interpret their relationships.
- Students arrange the hexagons so the sides of related hexagons are touching. They must be able to justify their decisions on placement.

[For more information](#)

[Hexagon generator](#)



Human Timeline

Overview

A Human Timeline activity requires students to learn about a particular event and then line up with peers according to their events' chronology. This strategy uses movement to help students understand and remember the order of events.

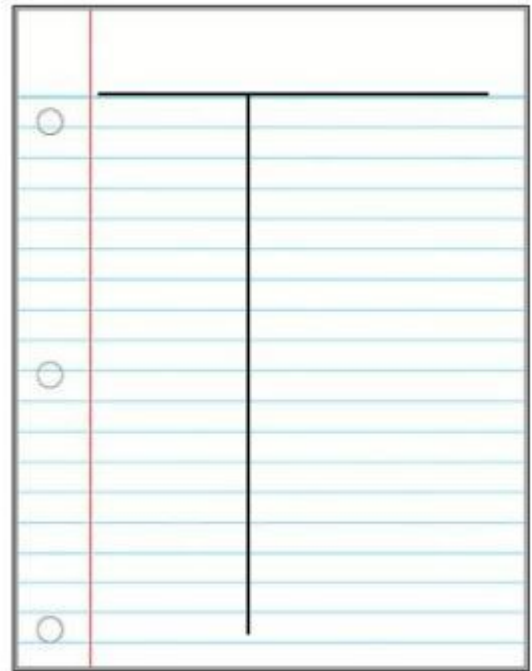
- **Select Timeline's Content** Establish a context for the chronology you want students to focus on. You want students to be aware of key events that led up to this moment. Sometimes you also want students to know what occurred after the focal event. You should aim to include enough events on the timeline so that each student, or pairs of students, can be assigned at least one event.
- **Prepare Materials** In preparation for this activity, place each of the events on an index card or a standard-size sheet of paper, along with the date when it occurred. When students present their timeline events, it is best if they are sitting or standing so that they are able to see and hear each other. This activity often works best if students stand or sit in a U-shaped line rather than in a straight-line formation.
- **Students Prepare for Presentations** Assign each student at least one event from the period that you are highlighting. Each event should be described along with the date it occurred. Whether students work individually or in pairs, here is an example of instructions you can provide.
 - Read over your timeline event once or twice.
 - Rewrite the timeline item in your own words. If you are having trouble writing the statement in your own words, ask for help.
 - An extension of this activity asks students to create or find an image that corresponds with their event.
- **Build Your Human Timeline** Invite students to line up in the order of their events. Then, have students present their events. After each event is presented, students can suggest possible causes of the event and can pose questions about what happened and why. These questions can be posted on the board for students to answer later.

I Think, We Think

Overview

Students create a two-column sheet of paper to record their individual ideas (I Think) before starting a discussion. Then once a discussion begins, they record comments from other group members in the other column (We Think)

Two-Column Notes



I Used to Think.. But Now I Know

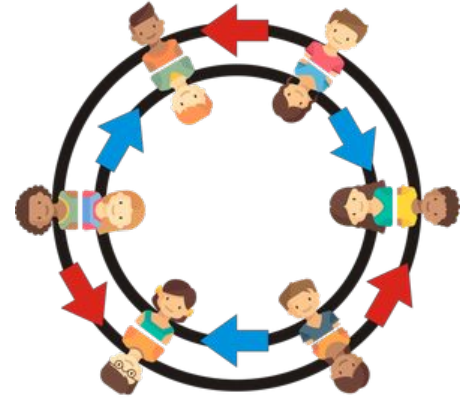
Overview

This strategy ask students to compare verbally or in writing their own ideas at the beginning of class to the ideas they have at the end of class, or at the end of the lesson.

The teacher can provide a range of stimuli for this strategy. Students could respond to the learning targets, a posed question, and more.



Inside/Outside Circles



Overview

1. Split the Class

Decide which half of the students will form the inside circle and which half will form the outside circle.

2. Question

Put a question or statement on the board. Give students at least ten seconds to think of an answer on their own.

3. Share

Ask students in the inside circle to share their response with the classmate facing them in the outside circle. When they have done this, ask them to say "pass," at which point their partners in the outside circle will share their responses.

4. Rotate

On your signal, have the outside circle move one step to the left or right and discuss the same question with the new partner.

[For more information](#)

Jigsaw



Overview

1. Prepare

Divide the reading selection into four segments, or prepare four separate reading selections on the content you are teaching. Put students into groups of four. These groups will be the “home groups” of the jigsaw. Prepare a direction sheet to help students to answer questions and gather information on each segment or selection.

2. Introduce to Home Groups

Divide the class into their home groups. Explain the strategy and the topic of study. Tell students that they are going to be responsible for teaching one segment or selection to the group they are sitting with now.

3. Break into Expert Groups

Now students will leave their home group to sit with a group of students assigned to the same reading segment or selection, their “expert group.” Ask students to begin reading to themselves, or have them take turns reading aloud. When students are finished reading, the group should discuss their segment, fill out their direction sheet, and decide what and how they should present to their home groups.

4. Regroup with "Home Groups"

Students regroup with their home groups. Each student is responsible for teaching their reading segment or selection to their home group. All students are responsible for learning all material. Determine how you’d like students to organize and summarize all the information they’ve learned. For example, you can provide a graphic organizer or ask them to make a poster to share with the class.

[For more information](#)

KWL

Overview

KWL is a technique used to assess what students “know,” “wish to know,” and “have learned” about a particular topic. Divide a sheet of paper into three columns labeled K, W, L.

Template

For more information

Topic: _____		Name: _____	
K What I Know	W What I Wonder	L What I Learned	

List, Group, Label

Overview

List-Group-Label is a vocabulary strategy that engages students in a three-step process to actively organize their understanding of content area vocabulary and concepts. It provides students with a way to recognize the relationships between words and concepts using their prior knowledge about a topic. The list-group-label strategy can be used before and after students read.

[For more information](#)

Most Valuable Point- MVP

Overview

1. Determine a topic, term, or concept that students will summarize.
2. Ask students to think about their learning and select what they think is the most valuable point (MVP).
3. Organize students into partners or small groups to discuss their MVPs.
4. Debrief as a large group. Ask students to listen for themes during the debrief.



Opinion Chart

Overview

List opinions about the content in the left column of a T-chart, and support your opinions in the right column.

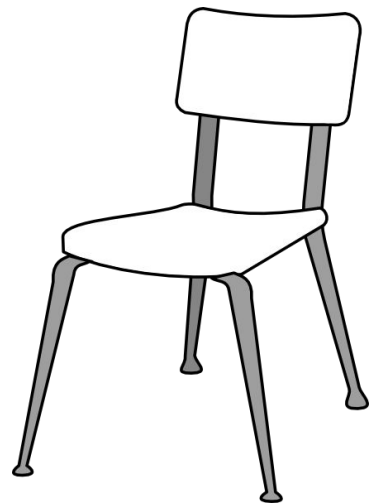
Opinion	Evidence to Support

Philosophical Chairs

Overview

In philosophical chairs, a statement is read that has multiple possible answers. Depending on whether students agree or disagree, students move to one side of the room or the other. Students then take turns defending their positions.

A Philosophical Chairs debate will often be based around a text or a group of texts that students have read and analyzed beforehand. Within the debate, students must cite evidence from those texts to support their claims.



Source: Cult of Pedagogy

https://www.cultofpedagogy.com/speaking-listening-techniques/?utm_source=pinterest&utm_medium=smartloop&utm_campaign=landingpage4&utm_content=1&utm_term=35497496⁴⁹

Pinwheel Discussion

Overview

Divide students into four groups. Three of the groups are assigned to represent specific points of view. Members of the fourth group are designated as “provocateurs.” They are in charge of making sure the discussion keeps going and stays challenging. One person from each group (the “speaker” sits in a desk facing speakers from the other groups, so they form a square in the center of the room. Behind each speaker, the remaining group members are seated: two right behind the speaker, then three behind them, and so on, forming a kind of triangle. The four speakers introduce and discuss questions they prepared ahead of time (this preparation is done with their groups). After some time passes, new students rotate from the seats behind the speaker into the center seats and continue the conversation.



Source: Cult of Pedagogy

https://www.cultofpedagogy.com/speaking-listening-techniques/?utm_source=pinterest&utm_medium=smartloop&utm_campaign=landingpage4&utm_content=1&utm_term=35497496⁵⁰

Question Formulation Technique

Overview

The Question Formulation Technique (QFT) is a simple but rigorous step-by-step process designed to help all people — students and adults — formulate, work with, and use *their own* questions.

Rules

- Ask as many questions as you can.
- Do not stop to discuss, judge or answer any questions.
- Write down every question exactly as it is stated. Number questions.
- Change any statements into questions.

Process

- Analyze QFocus
- Improve Your Questions: You might have these two kinds of questions in your list:
 - Close-Ended Questions: They can be answered with “yes,” “no,” or one word.
 - Open-Ended Questions: They require an explanation and cannot be answered with “yes,” “no,” one word.
- Identify closed- and open-ended questions.
 - Mark the closed-ended questions with a C and the open-ended questions with an O.
- Prioritize Your Questions: Choose the three most important questions from your list, keeping in mind the Question Focus.
- Debrief.



Question Stems

Overview

Question stems help scaffold student creation of claims and evidence.

Examples include:

- I believe that _____ because _____.
- I was most confused by _____.
- How is _____ an example of _____?
- Do you agree that _____? Explain.
- What evidence can you present for _____?

Quick Write

Overview

1. Ask

After five to ten minutes (depending on the students' age or attention spans) of listening, watching, or reading new input, ask students the following: "What are the most important points you have learned in the last ____ minutes?"

2. Write

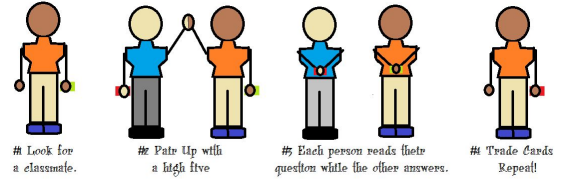
Set a timer for one minute as students write down their notes or draw a picture on index cards, scratch paper, or in notebooks.

3. Share

Elicit responses from the students. Correct any misunderstandings or confusions.



Quiz, Quiz, Trade



Overview

1. Create Questions

Provide each student with a flash cards about the current unit of study. One side of the card has a question or vocabulary term and the other side provides the answer or definition.

2. Pair Up

Use the stand up/hands up/pair up method for students to find a partner. Partner A holds up the flash card to show Partner B the question. Partner B answers. Partner A praises if correct or coaches if incorrect. They switch roles and Partner B asks Partner A the next question.

3. Hands Up

After thanking each other and switching cards, Partners A and B raise their hands to find a new partner and repeat the process for an allotted amount of time.

*For elementary or intermediate students, the teacher can monitor the time for each interaction. For example, music can be played and stopped, at which time each student has to put their hand up and find a partner. They can be given only a minute (or more, depending on the group and the difficulty of the content) to answer and discuss the questions. They trade flash cards. Then, the music comes back on and when it goes off, students must find a new partner and repeat the same process.

[For more information](#)

Root Cause Analysis/Iceberg Diagrams

Overview

Although a root cause analysis can be done in many ways, a tree serves as a nice analogy for students to visualize the root causes of an issue. The roots symbolize the root causes of a problem while the leaves symbolize the way the problem appears in society and in our daily lives. This is especially useful when students are unpacking how to take action on an issue.

[For more information](#)

[For more information](#)



Source: Advocates for Youth

https://advocatesforyouth.org/wp-content/uploads/storage/advfy/documents/Activist_Toolkit/toolkit%20diagrams.pdf

Save the Last Word for Me

Overview

1. Read

Assign a section of text and ask students to find three to five quotes from the text that they think are particularly interesting. The quotes may be something they agree or disagree with, something they find interesting, something they didn't know, something they would like to tell someone about, etc.

* For elementary students, only have them prepare one quote.

2. Write

Pass out index cards or slips of paper to each student, one card for each quote they have found. On one side of the card, ask students to write down the statements from the text. On the other side, instruct them to write any comments or feelings about their statements.

3. Group and Share

Divide the class into groups of 3-5 students. All students in the group are allowed to share one of their quote cards. The first student reads one of their quotes to the group and shows where to locate it in the text. However, the student isn't allowed to make any comments about his or her quote until the other members of the group give their reactions. Therefore, the student gets the last word in the discussion of the statement. This process continues until everyone in the group has shared at least one quote and has provided the last word in the discussion.

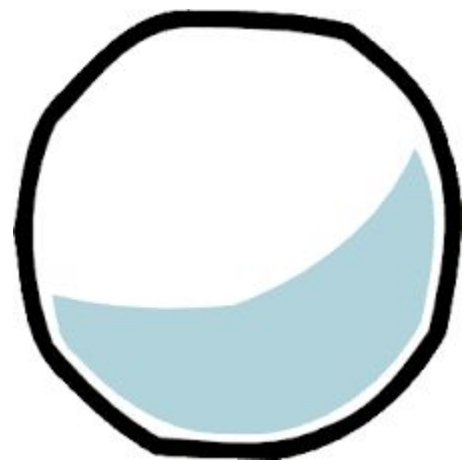
[For more information](#)

Snowball Discussion

Overview

Students begin in pairs, responding to a discussion question only with a single partner. After each person has had a chance to share their ideas, the pair joins another pair, creating a group of four. Pairs share their ideas with the pair they just joined. Next, groups of four join together to form groups of eight, and so on, until the whole class is joined up in one large discussion.

[For more information](#)



Source: Cult of Pedagogy

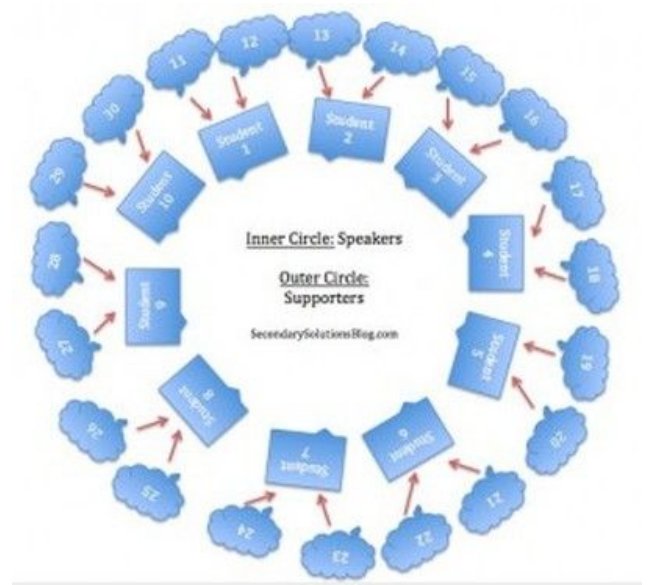
https://www.cultofpedagogy.com/speaking-listening-techniques/?utm_source=pinterest&utm_medium=smartloop&utm_campaign=landingpage4&utm_content=1&utm_term=35497496⁵⁷

Socratic Seminar

Overview

Students prepare by reading a text or group of texts and writing some higher-order discussion questions about the text. On seminar day, students sit in a circle and an introductory, open-ended question is posed by the teacher or student discussion leader. From there, students continue the conversation, prompting one another to support their claims with textual evidence. There is no particular order to how students speak, but they are encouraged to respectfully share the floor with others. Discussion is meant to happen naturally and students do not need to raise their hands to speak.

For more information



Source: Cult of Pedagogy

https://www.cultofpedagogy.com/speaking-listening-techniques/?utm_source=pinterest&utm_medium=smartloop&utm_campaign=landingpage4&utm_content=1&utm_term=35497496⁵⁸

Tea Party

Overview

This strategy gets students to consider parts of a text before reading it, reminding readers that comprehension begins before they read a text and that is not simply a set of comprehension questions that one completes after the reading is done. Utilizing this strategy, the meaning-making occurs even before students start reading the text.

1. Choose a text or multiple texts (fiction or nonfiction) that students will read/analyze.
2. Before students read, take actual phrases or images from the text and write each phrase on an index card.
3. Hand an index card to each student. Several students can have the same phrase.
4. When students receive their cards, they walk around the classroom, share their cards, listen to others, and discuss how the cards might be connected, making inferences as to what the text might be about.
5. Students meet in small groups to discuss what they've learned from the cards and what predictions they have for the text.

[For more information](#)



Source: K20 Learn

<https://learn.k20center.ou.edu/strategy/b30762a7557ba0b391f207f4c6014510>

Text Rendering

Overview

- **First Round:** Each person shares a sentence from the document that he/she thinks/feels is particularly significant.
- **Second Round:** Each person shares a phrase that he/she thinks/feels is particularly significant. The scribe records each phrase.
- **Third Round:** Each person shares the word that he/she thinks/feels is particularly significant. The scribe records each word.
- The group discusses what they heard and what it says about the text.
- The group shares the words that emerged and any new insights about the text.

For more information

Text to Text, Text to Self, Text to World

Overview

The Text-to-Text, Text-to-Self, Text-to-World strategy helps students develop the habit of making connections as they read. When students are given a purpose for their reading, they are able to better comprehend and make meaning of the ideas in the text. You can use this strategy with any type of text, historical or literary, and with other media, such as film. It can be used at the beginning, middle, or end of the reading process to get students engaged with a text, to help students understand the text more deeply, or to evaluate students' understanding of the text.

- **Select a Text** This strategy works best with a text that raises universal themes that might resonate with students' own experiences and with material they have studied previously. Teachers often give students their own copy of the text so that they can mark it up, although this is not required.
- **Guide Students through Text-to-Text, Text-to-Self, Text-to-World** The accompanying handout to this strategy provides you with sample questions that you can give students to guide them through this activity. The questions in the directions are general, but you can make them specific to the material your class is studying. For example, you might ask students to connect what they read to specific texts or to events you have studied earlier in the school year.
- **Debrief** Students gain a deeper understanding of the text, of their classmates, and of the world around them when they have the opportunity to discuss their responses with peers. Students can share their responses with a partner in small groups or as part of a larger discussion.

Handout



Source: Facing History and Ourselves

<https://www.facinghistory.org/resource-library/teaching-strategies>

Thumbs Up, Down, or Sideways

Overview

The teacher has students respond to statements about their learning in order to gauge where students are “just in time.” and adjust instruction.

Thumbs Up = I get it



Sideways = I sort of get it



Down = I don’t get it



Think Pair Share

Overview

Think: Ask students to think individually about the question/prompt.



Pair: Ask students to pair up with a partner to discuss the question/prompt.



Share: Ask partners to share their discussion about the question/prompt.



Town Hall Circle



Overview

This teaching strategy mimics the process of a town hall meeting, where community members take the floor to share their perspective on a topic of concern. Using this format, students have the opportunity to share their different perspectives by tapping into and out of the group conversation. Students often come away from this experience with a greater appreciation for how our perspective can limit the facts we have at our disposal and the opinions we hold. By listening to others' ideas, students broaden their understanding of the world in which they live.

- **Select Readings** Select four to six readings on the same topic that represent different perspectives.
- **Students Read in Groups** Divide the class into four to six groups (depending on the number of readings) and assign each group one of the readings. Some groups may prefer to read the text aloud after each student has also had the opportunity to read the text silently. Then have students discuss the reading among themselves, answering questions such as: What is this reading about? What are the main ideas and facts presented? Why are these ideas relevant or important? From whose perspective is this text written? How might that influence the ideas expressed in the text? Students appoint one person in their group to summarize their reading to the class.
- **Town Hall Discussion Part 1: Summaries** Arrange chairs in a circle, providing one chair per group. The person assigned to summarize for each group sits in the chair. The other students then form a larger standing circle around the chairs. Make it clear that each student in the class will have an opportunity to be heard. Students can only speak when they have entered the circle and are seated. Then, each representative summarizes the reading assigned to the group. It is important that no analysis or interpretation is allowed at this point—just the facts.
- **Town Hall Discussion Part 2: Comments and Questions** After all readings have been summarized, invite students seated in the circle to comment on what they have heard or to ask one of their peers a question. Students in the outer circle are then allowed to enter the conversation by "tapping" the shoulder of someone in their own group and taking their seat. The only way to enter or leave the discussion is by this process.
- **Debrief**

Source: Facing History and Ourselves

<https://www.facinghistory.org/resource-library/teaching-strategies>

TQE Method

Overview

This protocol has students come up with their own **Thoughts**, lingering **Questions**, and **Epiphanies** from an assigned reading.

T = Thoughts

Q = Questions

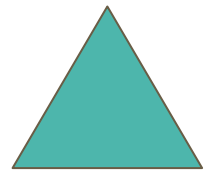
E = Epiphanies

Triangle, Square, Circle

Overview

1. Triangle

After a lesson, have students draw a triangle and next to it write down three important points from the presentation or reading they just saw or completed.



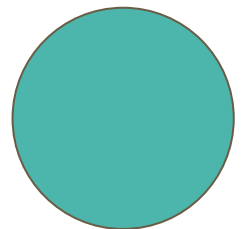
2. Square

Then, have students draw a square and next to it write down anything that “squares” with their thinking or anything they agree with.



3. Circle

Finally, have the students draw a circle and next to it write down anything that is still “circling” in their head or questions that they have.



For Primary Grades PK-1, this strategy should be used in whole-group rather than as an independent task, with the teacher charting ideas. Of course, since many children will want to participate, there might be more than 3 ideas in each shape.

[For more information](#)

Tug of War

Overview

Students explore an argument and identify reasons in support of each side of the issue or problem. This activity encourages students to think carefully about the multiple "tugs" and to place them on the "rope" based on the strength of each reason. After all of the "tugs" are placed, each student will evaluate the information, take a stance on the issue, and support their stance with sound reasoning.

1. Identify and frame the two opposing sides of the issue.
2. Label each side of the tug-of-war rope with these opposing sides.
3. Generate as many "tugs," or reasons that pull you toward supporting each side of the dilemma. Write these on sticky notes.
4. Determine the strength of each "tug" (reason) and place it on the tug-of-war rope. Put the strongest tugs at the farthest ends of the rope and the weaker tugs toward the center.
5. Write any "What if . . . ?" questions that arise on sticky notes and place them above the tug-of-war rope.
6. Discuss the completed tug-of-war. Which side had the strongest tugs?
7. Ask students to take a stance and give reasons to justify their choice.

[For more information](#)



Source: K20 Learn

<https://learn.k20center.ou.edu/strategy/b30762a7557ba0b391f207f4c600e440>

Turn and Talk

Overview

1. Question

Pose a question or prompt for students to discuss and tell them how much time they will have. A one-to-two minute discussion is most productive.

2. Turn

Have students turn to a specific partner. Pair students using *Eyeball Partners*, *Shoulder Partners*, or *Clock Partners* (see variations in link below). Partner assignments should be set up beforehand so that students can quickly and easily pair up.

3. Talk

Set a timer for the allotted time, and have students begin discussing the assigned question or prompt. When time is up, ask partners to share out thoughts and ideas from their discussion.

[For more information](#)

Tweet It

Overview

Define/Explain _____ in under 240 characters.



Two Minute Interview



Overview

In an activity using the Two-Minute Interview strategy, students gather evidence and ideas by asking questions to a rotating partner. Use this strategy to stimulate students' thinking as they investigate an essential question or search for evidence in response to an essay prompt. By requiring students to practice active listening and reading, this strategy helps students develop essential skills for learning new information. You can also use this strategy as a way to have students share their work with peers.

- **Students Prepare** Ask students to create a list of questions they have about the historical case study the class is investigating or the evidence they have collected. Alternatively, you can ask students to respond to a question such as “Do you agree that laws are the most important factor in overcoming discrimination? Why or why not?”
- **Two-Minute Interviews**
 - Divide the class in half randomly. Place chairs in two long rows so that students will sit facing each other.
 - Tell students that they will have two minutes to interview each other. One row of students will ask the questions, listen carefully, and take notes. The other row will answer.
 - After two minutes, have one row of students move down so that everyone has a new partner to share evidence or ideas with. Continue this activity until you feel that students have gathered enough evidence or shared enough ideas to generate a full-class discussion.
 - Go [here](#) to read more about the teacher's role during this time.
- **Debrief** After this strategy, you will want to debrief in a class discussion and/or a journal reflection. Prompts for journal writing include:
 - How might you respond to the prompt or essential question now?
 - What did you learn today? How does this information relate to the prompt or essential question?
 - What else do you want to know?

Source: Facing History and Ourselves

<https://www.facinghistory.org/resource-library/teaching-strategies>

Two Stray, One Stay

Overview

1. Group

Arrange students into groups of three and assign each student a number, either: 1, 2, or 3. Then assign a letter to each group.

2. Assign

Give all groups the same assignment. This could be a task to perform, a problem to solve, or a question to discuss. Tell the students that after a certain amount of time, they will each be going to another group to share how their response to the assignment. Every group member needs to be able to talk about their response.

3. Move

After groups have had their chance to formulate their response (adjust according to the task performed), have all students who were numbered 1 stand up. They will rotate to the group next to them. For example, Student #1 in Group A will move to Group B and Student #1 in Group B will move to Group C. Then, have all students who were numbered 2 stand up. They will rotate two groups. For example, Student #2 in Group A will move to Group C and Student #2 in Group B will move to Group D. Student #3 stays in his or her original position.

4. Interview

In their new groups, students interview one another about how they completed the assignment. Everyone should take notes and prepare to take the new ideas back to their own original group.

5. Return and Share

After five to ten minutes (depending on the complexity of the assignment), all students return to their original groups. As the original group of three, they will each share what they learned from the other groups they worked with.

[For more information](#)

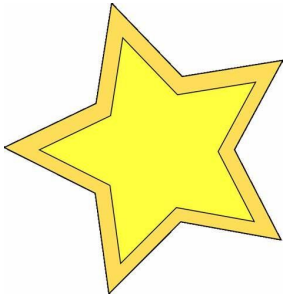
Source: The Teacher Toolkit,

<http://www.theteachertoolkit.com/index.php/tool/two-stray-one-stay>

Two Stars and a Wish

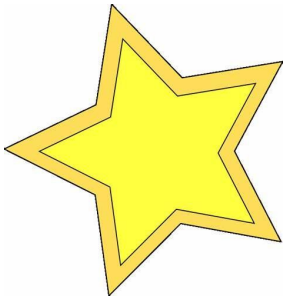
Overview

Students review work of their peers identifying:



Two Stars:

Two positive aspects of the writing/ information.



One Wish:

One specific suggestion for improvement.



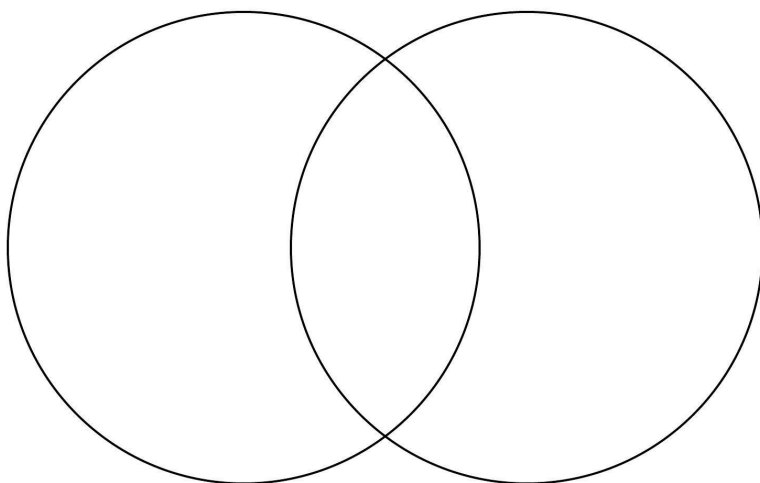
Venn Diagrams

Overview

Venn diagrams should be used to analyze the commonalities and differences of a topic/concept.

- Students write the characteristics of a given topic in the two outside circles.
- Next, students write the commonalities between the topic in the inner circle where the circles intersect.

Template



What? So What? Now What?

Overview

This instructional strategy allows students to reflect in a meaningful manner to construct better meaning of material being taught in class. As a modification, you can easily turn this into a small-group discussion. Simply have students share in rounds. Listeners can ask clarifying questions if they need to.

1. Ask students to write "What? So What? Now What?" on their papers, leaving space between each question. Teachers may also create a template if they so choose.
2. What? - In this section, students recall what they did in a concise manner. What did they do? What are they working on?
3. So What? - In this section, students articulate why they did what they did. Why is this important to me? Why does this matter?
4. Now What? - In this section, students write out the applications of what they did. How does this apply to my learning? What implications does this have?

[For more information](#)



Window Notes

Overview

Window Notes is a strategy that students use to organize information while taking notes, reading a text, or completing an assignment or task.

1. Instruct students to fold a piece of paper into fourths, creating four equal rectangles. Students should then trace over the folds, distinguishing the four quadrants. (Handouts with a printed template could be copied and provided to students.)
2. Have students label the quadrants Facts, Feelings, Questions, and Ideas, respectively.
3. Introduce the topic and ask students sort and record information obtained from the lecture/reading/task that fits within the four categories.
4. Request that students share their notes with the whole class or in a small group.

[For more information](#)

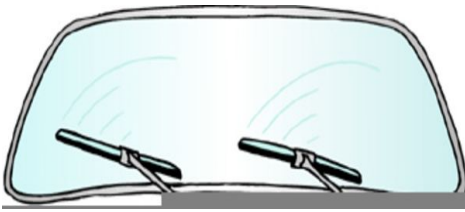


Source: K20 Learn

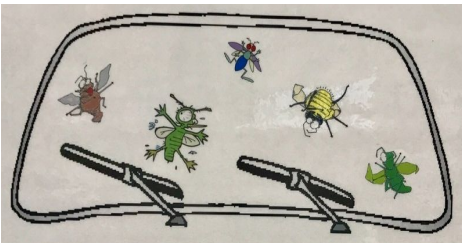
<https://learn.k20center.ou.edu/strategy/fc74060730ea745c8c4f356aa2015ac0>

Windshield Check

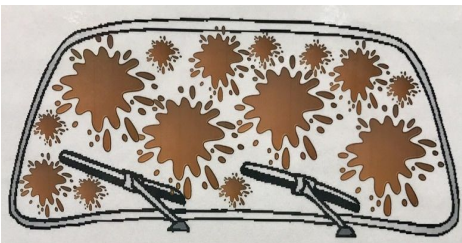
Overview



Clear = I get it.



Buggy = I get it for the most part.



Muddy = I still don't get it.

Sources

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<https://k12teacherstaffdevelopment.com/tlb/what-is-carousel-brainstorming-technique/>
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- National School Reform Faculty
<https://nsrfharmony.org/protocols/>
- Right Question Institute www.rightquestion.org
- Science Formative Assessment, Page Keeley
- The Teacher Toolkit <http://www.theteachertoolkit.com/>
- Thinking Collaborative
<https://www.thinkingcollaborative.com/strategies/>