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This tool organizes and structures information to be readily recalled by students.

Graphic Organizers

Imagine indulging in a shopping spree at your favorite storage supply store. You can select any bin, basket, or box that will accommodate every need, from where to put your extra buttons to storing memorabilia. These containers help us specifically sort our items by giving each object a designated place.


In teaching, there are so many concepts and so many ways to organize concepts to make them clear for our students. **Graphic Organizers** are like walking into that storage supply store and finding a container for each objective we teach. Each organizer contains guidelines to structure information to be readily recalled by the learner. **This tool makes ideas more comprehensible to students and is beneficial to the teacher in assessing what students understand.**

Graphic Organizers have many names, such as thinking map or cognitive organizer. If you are representing your ideas with graphics to show connection and cognitive thinking skills, then your concepts are displayed in a Graphic Organizer. Depending on the learning objective, they can be so much more than an oval with ideas stretched out on their ends. Here are various examples of the way information is presented in a Graphic Organizer. You can see that different ways of thinking can be represented with graphics to show the connection the learner has with the material.

Graphic Organizers (continued)

Synonyms:

Antonyms:

In My Own Words:

Picture:

Word:

Definition:

Prefix:

Part of Speech:

Sentence:
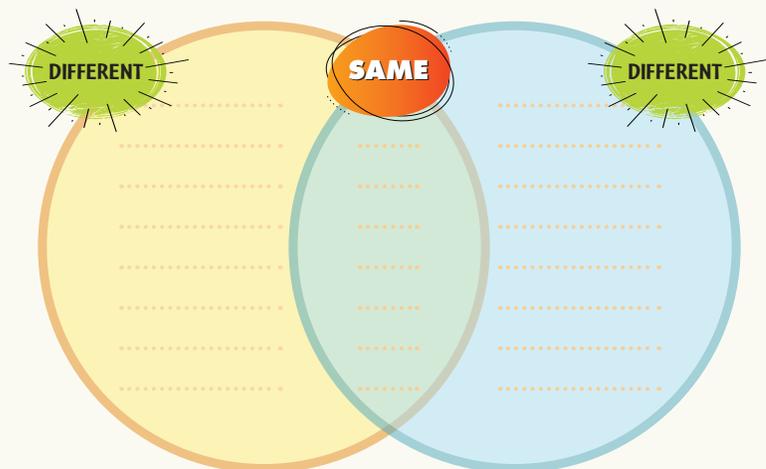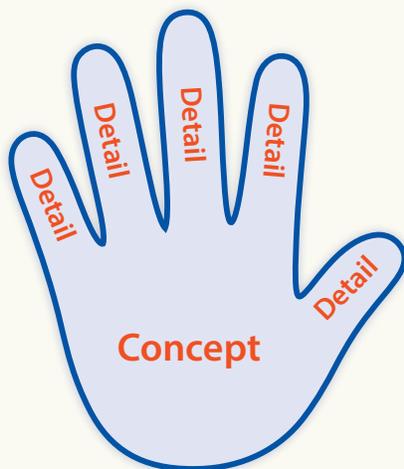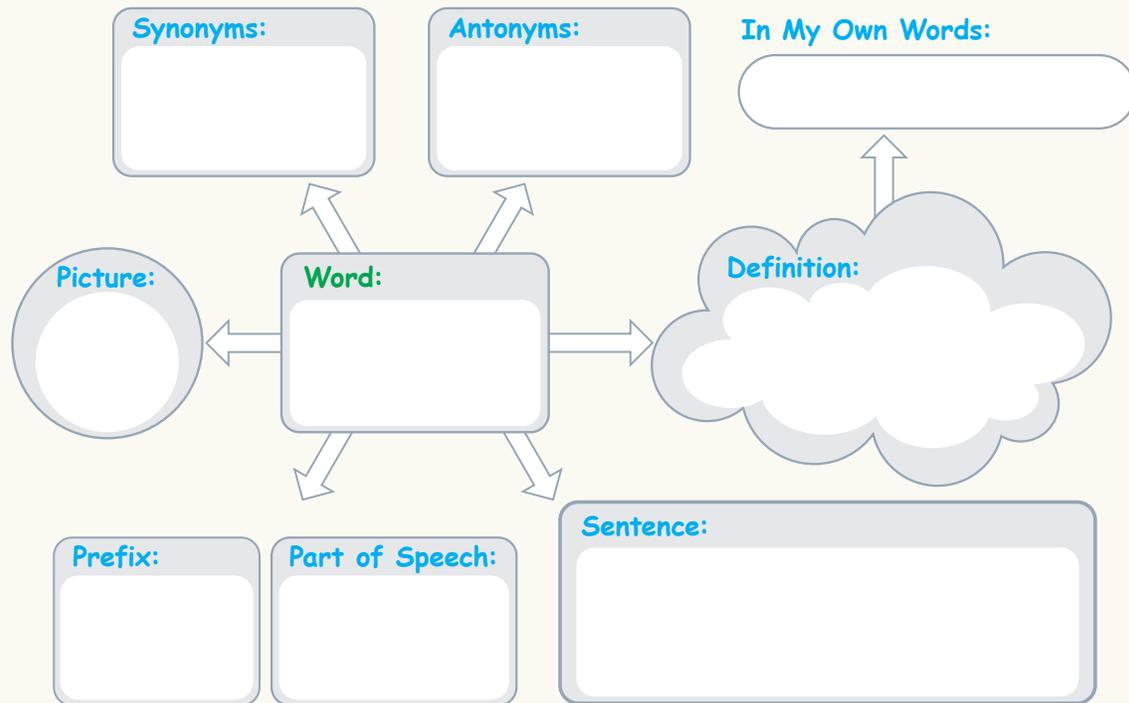
Graphic Organizers are useful tools for all subject areas. Students use them to organize their thoughts and ideas in preparation for answering questions. They can be used as a pre-writing tool for essays or as a visual display of information.

This tool appeals to the visual learner as well as the ultimate planner. The variation of Graphic Organizers is endless. Students can use these daily for routine tasks and projects. Once students are familiar with a particular format, it requires little explanation from the teacher each time it is used.

These graphics are easy ways to assess students' understanding on the spot. Teachers can zero in on specific sections in the organizer, review the information, and immediately assess student understanding. Rather than reviewing traditional writing tasks that require more time and effort, the organizer easily and graphically focuses key words that the teacher can review efficiently.

How to Use Graphic Organizers

1. **Explain**
    Teach students how to use the Graphic Organizer you've chosen for the activity. Clearly explain the situations in which certain Graphic Organizers are used and why they are effective for use at those times.

2. **Practice**
    Give students time to practice using various Graphic Organizers. While one student may find the bubbles and lines especially helpful, another student might prefer relatable objects.

3. **Use**
    After exposing your students to several different types of Graphic Organizers and showing them the proper ways to use them, give them the opportunity to find a new tool they can use on their own for future projects.

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Graphic Organizers (continued)

When to Use Graphic Organizers

Use Graphic Organizers at any point in the lesson to structure information into understandable chunks:

- ◆ When taking notes about new information in a lesson to organize ideas
- ◆ After reading a book to organize, analyze, or summarize plots or characters
- ◆ 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

Graphic Organizer Variations

The variety and flexibility of this tool offers teachers endless possibilities in which students can visually demonstrate their understanding of material being taught. As students work on specific objectives, they can refer to the previously taught organizers and appropriately apply the most effective approach. Students will start to identify their favorite format, the one they find most useful, to gather and organize information.

Value of Using Graphic Organizers

- ◆ The brain tends to remember things better when information is broken into segments.
- ◆ This is an effective tool to use with English Language Learners and struggling learners.
- ◆ Students are able to organize content into manageable parts.
- ◆ Students can show their comprehension visually.
- ◆ Teachers can easily observe student understanding.

Good organization is a lifelong skill. Exposing students to Graphic Organizers in various forms in a regular and purposeful way, will help students develop their own organizational skills and style.