

Different Types of Graphic Organizers and Their Uses

Graphic organizers are visual displays of key content information designed to benefit learners who have difficulty organizing information (Fisher & Schumaker, 1995). Graphic organizers are meant to help students clearly visualize how ideas are organized within a text or surrounding a concept. Graphic organizers provide students with a structure for abstract ideas.

Graphic organizers can be categorized in many ways according to the way they arrange information: hierarchical, conceptual, sequential, or cyclical (Bromley, Irwin-DeVitis, & Modlo, 1995). Some graphic organizers focus on one particular content area. For example, a vast number of graphic organizers have been created solely around reading and pre-reading strategies (Merkley & Jeffries, 2000).

Different types of graphic organizers and their uses are illustrated below.

<p style="text-align: center;">Concept Map</p> <p>A concept map is a general organizer that shows a central idea with its corresponding characteristics. Concept maps can take many different shapes and can be used to show any type of relationship that can be labeled.</p> <p>Maps are excellent for brainstorming, activating prior knowledge, or generating synonyms.</p> <p>Maps can be used to show hierarchical relationships with the most important concepts placed at the top.</p>	<pre> graph TD A[Early Means of Transportation] --> B[canoe] A --> C[walking] A --> D[horses] B --> E[water] C --> F[land] D --> G[land] E --> H[fast] F --> I[slow] G --> J[carry goods] </pre>
<p style="text-align: center;">Flow Diagram or Sequence Chart</p> <p>A flow diagram or sequence chart shows a series of steps or events in the order in which they take place. Any concept that has a distinct order can be displayed in this type of organizer. It is an excellent tool for teaching students the steps necessary to reach a final point.</p> <p>The following examples illustrate the many uses of flow diagrams or sequence charts.</p> <p>In reading, sequence charts can be used to outline the key events in a story or chapter.</p> <p>In science, they can serve as the procedures section in the scientific process.</p> <p>In history, they can be created as a timeline.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Steps to Preparing for the Spelling Test</p> <pre> graph LR 1[1 Write your name on your paper in top left corner.] --> 2[2 Write the date under your name.] 2 --> 3[3 Number your paper from 1 to 20.] </pre>

<p style="text-align: center;">Compare/Contrast or Venn Diagram</p> <p>A compare/contrast or Venn diagram is used to identify the similarities and differences between two or more concepts. The most commonly used organizer, this instructional tool is found in textbooks, on standardized tests, and in teacher resource materials.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Character Comparison</p> <table style="width: 100%; border: none;"> <tr> <td style="text-align: center; width: 33%;">Bill</td> <td style="text-align: center; width: 33%;">Both</td> <td style="text-align: center; width: 33%;">Kendra</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="border: 1px solid black; border-radius: 50%; padding: 10px; vertical-align: top;"> Happy Smart 4 siblings Baseball player </td> <td style="border: 1px solid black; border-radius: 50%; padding: 10px; vertical-align: top;"> In the 4th grade Watch "Rugrats" Like to read Math is favorite subject </td> <td style="border: 1px solid black; border-radius: 50%; padding: 10px; vertical-align: top;"> Wears glasses Basketball player 2 dogs Pretty </td> </tr> </table>	Bill	Both	Kendra	Happy Smart 4 siblings Baseball player	In the 4 th grade Watch "Rugrats" Like to read Math is favorite subject	Wears glasses Basketball player 2 dogs Pretty			
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<p style="text-align: center;">Cause-and-Effect Diagram</p> <p>A cause-and-effect diagram highlights the direct relationship between different events or concepts. This tool is one of the most beneficial organizers because of its many applications in all subject areas.</p> <p>For example, this diagram might be used to analyze characters and events in reading, to discuss major events in social studies, or to study the impact of a science experiment.</p>	<table style="width: 100%; border: none;"> <tr> <td style="text-align: center; width: 33%;">Causes</td> <td style="width: 33%;"></td> <td style="text-align: center; width: 33%;">Effects</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="border: 1px solid black; border-radius: 50%; padding: 10px; vertical-align: top;"> It did not rain for 3 weeks </td> <td style="border: 1px solid black; border-radius: 15px; padding: 10px; text-align: center; vertical-align: middle;"> The flower died Main Event </td> <td style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 10px; vertical-align: top;"> The bee could not find nectar </td> </tr> <tr> <td style="border: 1px solid black; border-radius: 50%; padding: 10px; vertical-align: top;"> The temperature was 100 degrees </td> <td></td> <td style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 10px; vertical-align: top;"> The plant did not reproduce </td> </tr> </table>	Causes		Effects	It did not rain for 3 weeks	The flower died Main Event	The bee could not find nectar	The temperature was 100 degrees		The plant did not reproduce
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<p style="text-align: center;">Main Idea and Details Chart</p> <p>A main idea and details chart shows the hierarchical relationship between major concepts and their subordinate elements. This organizer is extremely beneficial in helping students distinguish central ideas and their corresponding details from less important information.</p> <p>When using the type of graphic organizer, clearly label the main idea and the details as such. Use a different shape or area for the main idea and the details.</p>	<table style="width: 100%; border: none;"> <tr> <td style="text-align: center; width: 33%;">Main Idea</td> <td style="width: 66%;"></td> </tr> <tr> <td style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 10px; vertical-align: middle;"> Thomas Jefferson was an important Virginian. </td> <td style="border: 1px solid black; border-radius: 50%; padding: 10px; vertical-align: top;"> He wrote the Declaration of Independence. </td> </tr> <tr> <td></td> <td style="border: 1px solid black; border-radius: 50%; padding: 10px; vertical-align: top;"> He was the third president of the United States. </td> </tr> <tr> <td></td> <td style="border: 1px solid black; border-radius: 50%; padding: 10px; vertical-align: top;"> He founded the University of Virginia. </td> </tr> </table>	Main Idea		Thomas Jefferson was an important Virginian.	He wrote the Declaration of Independence.		He was the third president of the United States.		He founded the University of Virginia.	
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This is an excerpt from the *Considerations Packet Graphic Organizers: Guiding Principles and Effective Practice* prepared by Brad Baxendell, July 2003. To order this packet, visit our website at www.wm.edu/ttac and click on the "Considerations Packets" link.