

Strategy tool

Venn diagrams

A graphic organization tool used when comparing two things. Simple Venn diagrams are used, in which no more than two curves intersect at a common point. Shared characteristics are listed in the overlapping section allowing for easy identification of which characteristics are shared and which aren't. If comparing three things then 3 circles may be used to intersect.

Venn diagram - template

A concept map

A concept map consists of nodes or cells that contain a concept, item or question and links. The links are labelled and denote direction with an arrow symbol. The labelled links explain the relationship between the nodes. The arrow describes the direction of the relationship and reads like a sentence.

Concept map template

Graffiti wall

The collection of knowledge and ideas from all class members in the one process. Students are encouraged to use coloured markers to make the wall interesting.

Large sheets of paper are placed on the walls of the classroom. Students write their responses, draw pictures and record their thoughts on the given topic on the graffiti wall.

Placemat

The page is divided so that each group member has a section to write in with a square or circle in the middle to record the group response. Students are given an issue, topic or question to consider and they begin the process by considering their responses and ideas. Responses are recorded in their section of the placemat. Students share their perspectives and an agreed team response is recorded in the middle of the sheet. Possible follow up activities could include all class members walking around the classroom, considering the responses given by different groups and how they varied from their own.

Placemat template

Think, pair, share

In groups students consider a question or issue. They begin by reflecting on their opinions and ideas on the topic and recording them on a template, pairing up with the student next to them to discuss their ideas and opinions. The next stage of the process requires the team to come together and share their ideas and collate a group response. This should then be fed back to the class as a whole.



Y chart

A Y chart is also known as 'looks like, sounds like, feels like' and encourages students to think outside of the square. On a large sheet of paper teachers or students draw a large Y shape and label the different sections as shown below. The results can be displayed around the room. Possible follow up activities could include all class members walking around the classroom, considering the responses given by each group and how they varied from their own.

Y chart template

Barrier games

In a barrier game, students work in pairs to complete an information gap activity. Usually, one student has a complete map, drawing, table or graph, text, and the other has just the outline with some information filled in. The students have a piece of cardboard or a folder between them, so that the student with the incomplete document cannot see the completed example. The student with the complete document tells the other student where to place things on his or her document. The student with the incomplete document can ask questions to help place things as precisely as possible.

Anticipation Guide

An anticipation guide is a strategy that is used before reading or looking at new information to activate students' prior knowledge and build curiosity about a new topic. Before reading or focusing on new information, students listen to or read several statements (not questions) about key concepts presented; they're often structured as a series of statements with which the students can choose to agree or disagree. The statements are not taken directly from the reading or new information, but are inferential so that the students have to really think about it.

Anticipation guides stimulate students' interest in a topic and set a purpose for reading or researching.

Anticipation guide template

SCAMPER

Each letter in the acronym represents a different way you can play with the characteristics of what is challenging you to trigger new ideas:

- S = Substitute
- C = Combine
- A = Adapt
- M = Magnify
- P = Put to Other Uses
- E = Eliminate (or Minify)
- R = Rearrange (or Reverse)

To use the SCAMPER technique, first state the problem you'd like to solve or the idea you'd like to develop. It can be anything: a product, service or process you want to improve. After pinpointing the challenge, it's then a matter of asking questions about it using the SCAMPER checklist to guide you.

JIGSAW

Jigsaw is a cooperative learning strategy that enables each student of a "home" group to specialize in one aspect of a learning unit. Students meet with members from other groups who are assigned the same aspect, and after mastering the material, return to the "home" group and teach the material to their group members.

Just as in a jigsaw puzzle, each piece--each student's part--is essential for the completion and full understanding of the final product. If each student's part is essential, then each student is essential. That is what makes the Jigsaw instructional strategy so effective.

'The world café'

The room is actually set up like a café, with students sitting in groups of four or five at different tables, for deeply participative, high-quality conversations. They are guided to move to new tables as part of a series of conversational rounds focusing on questions. With each move, a table host remains behind, sharing the essence of his/her table's conversation. The others separate and move to new tables to consider a new question and connect to what other tables have talked about – in this way networking and cross-pollinating the conversations. The café format, with its ability to weave and further build insights, new ideas or new questions, enables collective intelligence to evolve within a group. With this approach, the collective wisdom of the group – greater than the sum of its individual parts – and channel it towards positive change.



Collective tagging

After reading a text, students are placed in small groups to suggest three 'tags' or key words that sum up what the story is all about – the key ideas or themes. These can be written on cards or post-its.

After all the groups have been heard, these tags – from both positive and negative aspects – are then grouped and sorted by the students to uncover common themes that are of interest or concern to the whole group.

Student then write a book review clarifying the main messages gained from the story using the sorted tags.

'Human photocopier -Collective memory'

Students are placed in small groups/teams and each team operates as a 'human photocopier', reproducing information as accurately as possible. The information can be an image, map, diagram or body of text, or a combination of these, and should represent an important element of the curriculum that you would like them to remember.

Each team member adopts a number from 1 to 4.

Place the map or diagram to be 'copied' under a sheet of paper so you can reveal it easily to a small group without it being seen by the others, i.e. on a flip chart turned away from the class.

Explain that you will call up all the number 1s and they will have 15 seconds to 'scan' and memorise the information. They will return to their teams and begin the process of reproducing it as exactly as possible. Then you will call up the 2s, then the 3s, and then the 4s. Everyone will get (at least) 2 turns.

Allow time at the beginning for teams to plan how they will go about the task.

Start the 'photocopiers'.

Provide time for progress review and response:

Half-way through, provide time for teams to reconsider and amend their strategies.

Strategy tool – A tool for the classroom

3

Four by four

Four by Four is an activity to produce four ideas in 4 minutes each.

Give each student a sheet of A4 paper. Ask them to draw a rectangle, about 6cm by 8cm, in the centre and then use vertical and horizontal lines to divide the area around the rectangle into four regions.

Allow 4 minutes for pupils to draw and annotate one of their design ideas in the centre space.

Ask them to pass their sheet to the next pupil in the group.

Allow them 1 minute to read the drawing they have just received and then 3 minutes to develop the idea in the top left-hand space on the sheet.

After 4 minutes the sheets are passed around to the next member of the group and the process is repeated, with pupils drawing in the top right-hand space. This continues until the sheet arrives back at the originator, complete with four developments of the initial idea.

The originator can then review the four developments and select or reject the suggestion.

Numbered heads together

Divide the students into groups of four and give each one a number from one to four.

Pose a question or a problem to the class.

Have students gather to think about the question and to make sure everyone in their group understands and can give an answer.

Ask the question and call out a number randomly.

The students with that number raise their hands, and when called on, the student answers for his or her team.

Anticipation Guide An anticipation guide is a worksheet containing a series of questions or statements related to one or more topics raised by upcoming reading in a class. Before reading, students are asked to indicate whether they agree or disagree with the statements or questions. As students read the text, they are asked to record the page numbers corresponding to the issues raised by the statements or questions. Once they have finished reading, students review the statements or questions and record for a second time whether they agree or disagree with them in order to see whether their answers have changed and justifying why their answers may have changed. Anticipation Guide template.

Inside/outside circles

Students are placed in two circles. Students in the inner circle face outwards, directly facing another student in the outer circle. This strategy enables discussion between students while encouraging movement and interaction.



Four corners

Four corners is a strategy for developing students' collaborative skills, encourage reflection and for developing empathy for other people points of view.

The corners of the classroom represent strongly agree, agree, disagree and strongly disagree. Students reflect on their response to an issue, statement or questions and which of the corners best captures their perspective and opinion. Students move to the relevant corner and pair up with another student in that corner to discuss their perspective on the issue. Students can also be paired with a student from the opposite perspective to discuss the issue with their partner.

Three step interview

Students are encouraged to interview class members, share their thinking and ask questions on an interview topic. Students are divided into teams of three and are assigned a role as an interviewer, reporter or interviewee. The roles rotate after each interview. At the completion of a unit of work students can use this process to share and learn more about each other's topics. Students might, for example, interview each other about their thoughts on a book, 'It Couldn't Happen to me' they have just read.

Fishbowl

Fishbowl is a strategy for discussion. A number of students are engaged in the discussion, debate or activity with 'observers' (the rest of the class) sitting behind and around in a fishbowl arrangement. They observe, think about and feedback on the progress of the participants.

Debate

A debate is a discussion between sides with different views. Persons speak for or against something before making a decision.

This strategy lends itself particularly to analysing issues and expressing different points of view. Students need to be aware of the rules of debating and to cooperate in establishing a respectful environment.

Continuum

Continuum is used for time lines showing historical events, ages (grade levels in school), degrees of something (weight), shades of meaning, or rating scales (achievement in school).

Fishbone A Fishbone Map is used to show the causal interaction of a complex event (an election, a nuclear explosion. Students are asked:

What are the factors that cause X ? How do they interrelate? Are the factors that cause X the same as those that cause X to persist?

Continuum template

Fishbone template

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Fishbone template

Spider map

The Spider Map is used to describe a central idea: a thing, a process, a concept, a proposition. The map may be used to organize ideas or brainstorm ideas for a writing project.

Key questions: What is the central idea? What are its attributes? What are its functions?

Spider Map template

P.O.O.C.H

This graphic organiser is a tool used to assist thinking when decision making.

P.O.O.C.H template

Clustering

Clustering is a nonlinear activity that generates ideas, images and feelings around a stimulus word. As students cluster, their thoughts tumble out, enlarging their word bank for writing and often enabling them to see patterns in their ideas. Clustering may be a class, group or an individual activity.



Cycle

A depiction of a Cycle attempts to show how a series of events interacts to produce a set of results again and again, such as the life.

Key frame questions: What are the main events in the cycle? How do they interact and return to the beginning again?

Cycle template

Interaction outline

Storyboard

A storyboard is a graphic, sequential depiction of a narrative. Students recall major events of the story, then illustrate the events in the squares or frames.

Storyboard template

Semantic mapping

Select a word central to the topic.

Display the target word.

Students generate as many words as possible that relate to the target word. Students write the generated words in categories and label categories. From this list, students construct a map. The teacher can then lead the class in a discussion that focuses on identifying meanings and uses of words, clarifying ideas, highlighting major conclusions, identifying key elements, expanding ideas, and summarizing information.

Semantic mapping template

Lotus diagram

The issue or challenge is placed in the centre square and the issue is then surrounded by eight new related areas/ideas. Each of the eight areas expand to generate as many facts, ideas or information as possible. Information and ideas can be expanded even further.

Lotus Diagram template

Chain of events

Chain of Events is used to describe the stages of an event, the actions of character or the steps in a procedure.

Key questions: What is the first step in the procedure or initiating event? What are the next stages or steps? How does one event lead to one another? What is the final outcome?

Chain of events template

Compare/contrast

Comparison/Contrast is used to show similarities and differences.

Key questions: What are being compared? How are they similar? How are they different?

Compare/contrast template

Discussion web

Divide the class into small groups of 3 or 4 students. Provide the groups with the Discussion Web graphical organizer

Ask the groups to write down at least 3 reasons for answering the question "Yes" and 3 reasons for answering the question "No."

On a simple "T-chart," record students' positive and negative responses. Use this list to promote discussion. Have students evaluate each reason ("pro" and "con") objectively and fairly.

After discussing the individual reasons, encourage each student to decide on a position on the general question. Point out that understanding both sides of an argument does not preclude taking a stand.

Have each student write his final conclusion on an index card. Collect the cards and tally the responses. Share the results with the class and list the most common reasons ("pro" and "con") for these decisions on a shared Discussion Web form.

Discussion web template

Summarise that

Have students' pair up and write three or four summary statements about what they have just learned. Then partner up two groups and share what has been written.



KWHL

K - Stands for helping students recall what they KNOW about the subject.

W - Stands for helping students determine what they WANT to learn.

L - Stands for helping students identify what they LEARN as they read.

H - Stands for HOW we can learn more (other sources where additional information on the topic can be found).

KWHL template

Quizzicals

After a presentation, students working in pairs ask questions of each other that focus on the presentations. These questions are based on the learning performance objectives provided to the students at the beginning of the presentation.

Herringbone

Students work in pairs or triads.

Students read a selection from a content textbook or another piece of reading material. Any appropriate prereading activity may be used.

After reading, groups complete the herringbone (see diagram below) by discussing the text, considering possible answers to the questions on the herringbone, and deciding cooperatively upon the answer that seems best to them.

When groups have completed their tasks, the teacher convenes the entire class so that groups can share their decisions, and the reasons for them, with each other. The focus of this discussion should be on decisions and reasons rather than "right" answers.

Herringbone template

Structured controversy

Select a specific problem. The closer the problem is to multiple issues central to the course the better. This strategy involves providing students with a limited amount of background information and asking them to construct an argument based on this information. This they do by working in groups.

Choose a discussion topic that has at least two well documented positions.

Prepare materials:

Clear expectations for the group task.

Define the positions to be advocated with a summary of the key arguments supporting the positions.

Provide reference materials including a bibliography that support and elaborate the arguments for the positions to be advocated.

Structure the controversy:

Assign students to groups of four.

Divide each group into dyads who are assigned opposing positions on the topic.

Require each group to reach consensus on the issue and provide a group report.

Conduct the controversy:

Plan positions.

Present positions.

Argue the issue.

Reverse positions and argue the issue from those perspectives.

Reach a decision.

One-minute feedback

During the last few minutes of class, ask students to respond to one of the following types of questions. Review student feedback after class and respond to it in the next class session.

- What was the "muddiest" point of today's class?
- What were the two most important points you learned today?
- What did you like best about today's class?

Question box

Encourage students to write their questions about any topic of class and deposit them in a central location. Devote one class or portion of a session to answering their questions. If you choose to respond individually to student's questions, let them know that you will answer within 24 hours. Retain copies of written questions for future reference when revising/reviewing your course.



Learning cells

Divide students into pairs to work on a specific in class reading, or their choice of a text. Each student prepares a series of questions derived from the reading and take turns asking and answering the questions. The pair then pairs up with another pair.

Crossfire panel

A closely moderated, heated, and argumentative discussion on a predetermined controversial issue. The topic is given to four or five student panelists prior to the class so that they can prepare background material. Students ask questions. At the end of the exercise, students are polled and the results are given to the panel for their summary comments.

Structured discussion

Class discussion focused on specific learning objectives that are either posted or handed out to students. Different groups may address different objectives, or the whole class may focus on a single objective.

Panel discussion

One group of 4-6 students sits at a table in front of the class. Assign, or have students select a topic for a time-limited discussion. Each panelist chooses to represent a different viewpoint and participates in a discussion, the remainder of the class listens. The class then asks questions of the panel with the instructor acting as moderator.

Symposium

Two or more five-to 10-minute presentations on different aspects of the same subject. These are then discussed briefly and followed by a question and answer session. Each student writes a short report on his/her part of the topic. A copy of each paper is provided to each student.

Strategy tool – A tool for the classroom

7

Where, what, when, how?

Students pair up and write a question they can pose to the class about one of the messages in the narrative. Pair up two groups and when they have had enough time to discuss it, call your volunteers to share their questions and answers. Alternatively they can write answers and students have to come up with corresponding questions.

Where, what, when, how? template

Game show

Create a Game Show with a range of open and closed questions based on the narrative.

What Do I Know?

Tell the students about the topics to be covered. Pass out large sheets of paper and form 5 groups. Ask each group to spend a few minutes talking about what they already know about topic eg alcohol. Read the story and then allocate one aspect of the story to each group and ask them to write what they now know about that topic. They can also include things they still want to know. Just before finishing, ask the students to write one summary statement. Share these statements.

Written scenario

Provide students with a brief (1-2 paragraph) description of a real or fabricated situation. Divide students into small groups to analyze the topic in stages. Ask students to select a recorder to present their group's analysis after a set amount of time.

True or false

After reading information ask students to write three true and three false things from the narrative. Pass them around so others can read them and explain why they are false.

In the spotlight

Ask students to take it in turns to sit in a chair at the front of the class. The other students can choose to take on the role of a person who featured in the novel. The other students can ask him or her questions, trying to guess the identity. The person sitting 'in the spotlight' can only answer 'yes' or 'no' to these questions.

Pyramid groups

Given a problem, students first work alone, then in pairs and finally in quads (maximum). In the latter stages, they compare, refine, and revise their conclusions and recommendations.



Incomplete statements

The instructor provides incomplete statements such as "My perspective on alcohol is..." The student is asked to complete this statement on a handout and then share their thoughts with their small group or the whole class.

Question challenge

Give the class a reading assignment and ask each student to write two questions that require responses of factual information, or concise answers. Ask students to share their questions with the class and ask the class to answer the question.

Student-generated questions

Explain the intellectual levels of questioning (recall, understanding, application, analysis and evaluation) and ask students to write a series of questions about the topic under discussion. Then ask students to answer the questions in pairs, groups, or the whole class.

Paraphrases

The instructor asks students to tell the class, in their own words, what the instructor or another student just said. Give students two to three minutes to write a response. Give students time to respond verbally, to question each other, and to clarify their own responses. This technique can be used several times throughout the class.

Student interviews

Ask students to form pairs and interview each other on a pre-selected topic. This is a good technique for exploring values and attitudes. Provide students with questions for the interview or let them generate their own questions. Report results as a percentage of the group response, i.e. 60% of the group agrees.

Strategy tool – A tool for the classroom

8

Envoy

Students form into groups and all groups are given the same topic to discuss or research.

One student from each group is selected to be the 'envoy'.

After the completion of the discussion or research each envoy reports to another group and outlines what was discussed, what ideas or suggestions were made, what conclusions were reached, what decisions were made etc. The new group reacts to the report and discusses the topic again.

The envoys return to the original groups, which discuss the new ideas.

S.W.O.T

SWOT is a framework for investigation that encourages students to look at an issue from both sides and to consider that information as they make decisions.

Consider the strengths of a particular situation.

- From these strengths develop opportunities which could arise.
Consider the weaknesses of a particular situation.
- From these weaknesses develop threats that could arise.
- Where possible make a list of recommendations.

SWOT Template

Issues map

An issues map can help identify the different dimensions or perspectives that relate to a particular event or topic of concern. It is often helpful to have issues phrased as questions as these can be answered differently depending on the point of view held by those who suggest an answer. The responses can then be categorised as positive or negative.

Issues map template

Cause and effect wheel

A cause and effect wheel is also known as concentric circles. This organiser assists students in understanding the relationships between cause and effect, action and reaction.

Cause and effect wheel template

Ripple effect chart

The ripple effect helps students to explore a topic and generate interesting and creative solutions. Simply ask the question, come up with as many answers as you can, then choose four to explore further using a ripple effect diagram.

Place a question in the middle of the ripple and decide four of the possible outcomes in the first ripple. Then repeat.

Ripple effect template



T chart

This organiser is called a T chart as it looks like the letter T. Across the top students write their topic and then either side of the organiser can represent opposing sides such as opinions and facts. The nature of the sides is determined by the teachers and students depending on the type of thinking to be undertaken, for example, critical, analytical, creative etc.

T Chart template

Back to back

After listening to information or reading a novel ask students to find a partner who is most interested in the same part of the story. Ask students to sit back to back and give them each a sheet of paper. Ask each student to write what he or she remembers about that topic. This can include graphics, images, concepts, or names of people, places and events. Announce they have three minutes to write as much as they can. When the time is up ask each student to turn and face his or her partner and compare notes. They can give their partner one point for each piece of information, and two points if the information is only recorded on one of their sheets of paper.

Dictagloss

Teacher reads a passage and students write down key words and phrases. The teacher then rereads the passage. In groups, the students reconstruct the passage as they heard it.

PMI

A PMI (Plus, Minus, Interesting) is used for affective processing to talk about the pluses, minuses and interesting points felt about a concept or issue.

PMI template

Reciprocal teaching

Reciprocal teaching refers to an instructional activity that takes place in the form of a dialogue between teachers and students regarding segments of text. The dialogue is structured by the use of four strategies: summarizing, question generating, clarifying, and predicting. The teacher and students take turns assuming the role of teacher in leading this dialogue.

Who, what, where, when, why, what if...

Write 'Who, What, Where, Why, When and What if' on a board. Ask students to form a small group and write a question starting with each word based on the story. Ask each group to swap their list of questions with a list from another group of students. Give them three minutes to work out the answers and then instruct the two groups to join up and share their questions and answers. This activity can be repeated to encourage movement and sharing of their' recollections and understandings.

WWWWW template

Agree or disagree?

Immediately after reading a text such as, "It couldn't happen to me' "Agree or disagree?" Then ask students to turn to the person sitting on their left and explain one thing they disagreed or agreed with from the narrative. He/she must convince his or her partner of her own point of view. After two minutes ask students to find a new partner and repeat the activity.

Vote with your feet

After reading novel ask students to choose one controversial point. Using chalk draw a line across the room. Write the letter A for Agree on one end of the line and D for Disagree on the other end. Ask students to move and stand on the line closest to their point of view. If they are undecided they can stand in the middle. Once students have taken up positions, challenge individual students to explain their point of view. Encourage the other students to listen and not react to each statement. After students have expressed different points of view, ask them to rethink the issue and vote with their feet again.

Walk and talk

After reading the novel ask students to find a partner and take a three minute walk while they talk about one thing they learnt the most about. They need to come up with two questions about the topic for further investigation or classroom discussion.

Consequences

A page is divided into four sections. These are then labelled; immediate, 1-5yr, 5-25 yr.,25+yr. Participants then brainstorm comments for each of those sections.

For example, Clearing rainforests.

Immediate: jobs, timber, death of some animals.

1-5yr: erosion, secondary jobs (building), disappearance of some species.

5-25yr: some regrowth, erosion, new animals (different species).

25+ yr: carbon dioxide levels increase, feral animals impact, loss of possible medicinal resources.



Hot potato

Small groups are given a sheet of paper. Each group is given 30 seconds to write anything they can about a certain topic before the sheet is passed on to another group. Each group reads the previous contributions and then must add some new ideas to the sheet. Process continues until each group receives back their original sheet.

Feedback

Brainstorm a list of criteria, which can be used to rate each character in the novel. Write the criteria up on a board. After reading the narrative, give each group of students one part of the story to provide feedback on. They will need to consider things like: interesting content, accurate information, entertaining,

Tic tac toe

Student can work in small groups, pairs or individually. The page is divided into 9 boxes. Students could categorize the notes into 9 chunks or go horizontally from the broader topic to the more specific. Alternatively, an illustration could be done in the middle with details filled in all around.

Tic Tac Toe template

Pyramids

This strategy/flowchart could be used for sequencing events, cause and effect or for organizing from narrow to broad. The inverted pyramid helps chart topics that flow from broad to narrow.

Pyramids template