A Beginner's Guide to Graphic Organizers

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What Are Graphic Organizers?

Let's face it—writing can be hard! You may need to use a strategy to help collect your thoughts and put them together in a way that makes sense. Graphic organizers provide visual representations of concepts, knowledge, or ideas. By "mapping" out thoughts and information, writing becomes more focused and clear. Graphic organizers help an individual "visualize" information in a way that is easier to "see" and understand.

What Are Some Different Kinds of Graphic Organizers?

There are several graphic organizers for different types of organization. Below are some common examples:

Venn Diagram

feathers
fly
2 feet
wings

eggs
breathe
eat bugs

scales
crawl
4 feet
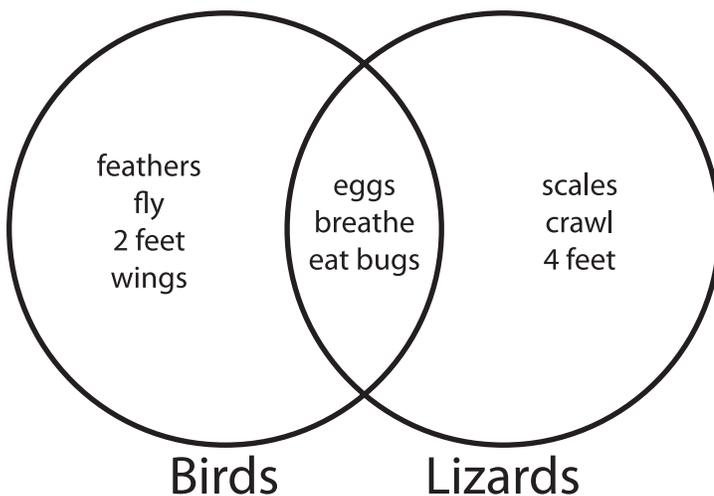
Birds　　　Lizards

Venn diagrams compare and contrast two things. For example, when comparing and contrasting birds and lizards, the student puts the similar characteristics in the middle of the Venn and the different characteristics in the ends of the Venn.

Four Square

Word: computer	Definition: "a programmable usually electronic device that can store, retrieve, and process data"
Associated Words: mouse, laptop, desktop, supercomputer	Drawing:

The following *Four-Square* method (Brunn, 2002) is one way to help vocabulary development.

Box 1: The student writes a new word or concept. The word can be simple, such as *computer,* or more complex, such as *solar system.*

Box 2: The student writes a definition.

Box 3: The student lists many associated words. For example, some words associated with *computer* might be *mouse, laptop, desktop, super-computer, etc.* Students may draw here as well!

Box 4: The student draws something that is the opposite of the target word. For example, the student could draw an animal for the word *computer*.

KWL

What do I know?	What do I want to find out?	What did I learn?

KWL stands for "What I **K**now, What I **W**ant to Know, and What I **L**earned." These organizers are great for students who need to do research for projects or to organize information to help them study for tests.

Column 1: The student chooses a topic and writes everything he/she knows about the topic. This column "activates" the student's prior knowledge.

Column 2: The student writes down any questions he/she has. This column helps the parent or teacher guide and tailor the instruction.

Column 3: After instruction, the student writes the answers to the questions he/she asked in the second column. In addition to these answers, the student writes down any other important information learned from instruction.

Resource

Brunn, M. (2002). The four-square strategy. *The Reading Teacher, 55,* 522-525.

Helpful Products

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Ask for Item #TP-18702   http://www.superduperinc.com/products/view.aspx?pid=TP18702&stid=

Map It Out: Visual Tools for Thinking, Organizing, and Communicating
Ask for Item #TP-18701   http://www.superduperinc.com/products/view.aspx?pid=TP18701&stid=

Webber® Slant Board and Binder
Ask for Item #OTS-225   http://www.superduperinc.com/products/view.aspx?pid=OTS225&stid=