

Recursive Graphic Organizers

Overview:

This Assessment/Reflection strategy involves the use of a familiar tool, the graphic organizer, and bumps it up another level by having students use it to reflect upon and add to their learning throughout the lesson.

Purpose:

Graphic organizers are a useful tool for students to organize, clarify, or simplify complex information. Research has shown that the use of visual representations increases brain activity and aids information processing. By having students **return to the graphic organizer throughout the lesson** to make additions and modifications, you increase their engagement with the learning, speed the processing of information, and build in opportunities for students to self-assess and reflect on their learning.

Application: When and where can I use it?

Graphic organizers can be used in any grade level and with any content. Teacher-generated organizers are a useful scaffold to support student learning. They provide students with a means to categorize information, recognize patterns, find connections between ideas or concepts, and compare perspectives. Different lessons require different types of graphic organizers, and it is important that the organizer you provide to your students is intentionally matched to your learning goals and that the organizer does not unintentionally limit student thinking. By pairing visual and linguistic representations, graphic organizers work as a culturally responsive tool and using it throughout the lesson means that students are reflecting upon, and refining, their learning.

Getting Started: What are some tips for starting and using this routine?

Select an appropriate graphic organizer; one that is aligned with the learning targets of your lesson and provides appropriate amounts of scaffolding for your students. Explain the organizer to your students and why you are using it for this lesson.

Use the graphic organizer *throughout* the lesson. Have students fill in the organizer at the start of the lesson to activate their prior knowledge (and serve as an informal pre-assessment of your learning objectives). During the lesson, periodically stop and ask students to update their organizer with new information they learned, using a different colored pencil or marker. This continued interaction with the visual representation of information helps speed processing, moving the new learning into long term memory.

Have students swap papers with a neighbor to compare what is the same or different on their organizers. What can they add to their organizer after discussing the learning with their peer?

Read more about this Instructional Move:

[Increasing the Value of Graphic Organizers | Edutopia](#)

[15 Different Types of Graphic Organizers for Education \[2021\] \(visme.co\)](#)

References:

[Increasing the Value of Graphic Organizers | Edutopia](#)

Hammond, Z. Culturally Responsive Teaching and the Brain. Thousand Oaks: Corwin. 2015