



SCAFFOLDED GRAPHIC ORGANIZERS

Scaffolding graphic organizers gives students an entry point into learning by reducing cognitive load, supporting connections, and improving retention. It's best when they are prepared ahead of time, but staff can also create them responsively in the moment.

SUPPORTIVE SCAFFOLDS

Help access original content/goal

- **Color Code It:** Color-map categories so relationships are instantly visible. (e.g., cause = red, effect = blue)
- **Chunk & Reveal:** Show one section at a time (by cutting or covering) to reduce cognitive load and keep focus.
- **Embed the Questions:** Place a guiding prompt directly beside each box. (e.g., "What caused this?")
- **Anchor to the Source:** Add the exact page, paragraph, or slide number where the answer lives.

ADAPTIVE SCAFFOLDS

Adjust how the original content is presented or worked with

- **Sentence Starters:** Kick off thinking with a partial sentence. ("This happened because...")
- **Visual Supports:** Pair icons, images, or clipart with key concepts to build meaning.
- **Student-Friendly Vocabulary:** Swap academic terms for plain language (giving alternatives but keeping rigor.)
- **Mini Anchor Chart:** Attach a personal reference card showing how to use the organizer.
- **Pre-Filled Examples:** Model one or two sections so students see the expected level of thinking.
- **Read-Aloud Access:** Enable text-to-speech so students can hear both the organizer and the source text.
- **Offer Oral Response Option:** Let students dictate/ explain thinking verbally.

TRANSFORMATIVE SCAFFOLDS

Change/Shifts the original learning goal or content

- **Add Multiple Choice or Matching Options:** Allow students to choose or match from a list.
- **Use Word, Visual, or Picture Banks:** Let students drag or copy items into the organizer from the bank.
- **Drawing or Sketch Notes Instead of Writing:** Allow students to draw representations instead of writing sentences.
- **Provide Cut-and-Match Response Pieces:** Give students a box of phrases or visuals to match to the organizer.
- **Fill in the blank:** prefilled & use limited strategic blanks (cue verbally or visually)
- **Switch the Organizer Format:** Use a simplified version with fewer sections or digital tools.
- **Complete with a Peer or Adult:** Use collaborative mapping or scribing support.



RESOURCES

Accommodation Central: [Graphic Organizers](#)

Thinking Maps®: [Read and watch more here.](#)

Thinking Maps®: [Great examples of each here.](#)

ReadWriteThink • TeacherMade • BookWidgets: free, editable, classroom-ready organizers

Canva: templates to edit, print, or share digitally
Napkin AI (free): Type your content; AI instantly generates clean visuals and concept maps

Microsoft Word + Dictate: Open a template, turn on speech-to-text, done

Microsoft Whiteboard: Built-in templates for real-time collaborative response

See It in Action! Make a copy & explore these examples across grade levels & content areas. [Click here.](#) and open in Word!