



PRIOR KNOWLEDGE

Build a meaningful anchor between what students know and what they are about to learn.



WHAT?

Bridge the Gap: Explicitly link students' personal, cultural, and academic backgrounds to the objective throughout the lesson.

Surface & Refine: Bring misconceptions to the surface and address them before they take root.

Active Tools: Deploy low-stakes triggers like Anticipation Guides (T/F), KWLHAQ, Hexagonal Thinking, Quick Writes, or Graffiti Walls.



WHY?

The Mental Anchor: Provides a hook for new concepts, significantly boosting memory and comprehension across all subjects. Find a way to relate the concept to real life use.

Beyond the "Tap": When we adjust (build, correct, expand) knowledge (not just "tap" into it), we ensure students, especially those with limited background and knowledge can successfully apply learning to new concepts, tasks, and skills.



INSTRUCTIONAL DESIGN MOVES

Build the Bridge

Intentionally connect today's learning to a familiar experience, image, analogy, or previous concept that every learner can **access before introducing** new learning.

Build a Living Visual

Begin a **simple visual** (concept map, chart, or list) → add to it during learning → revisit at the end to show how understanding has evolved and progressed.

Leverage Anticipation Guides

Pose a few agree/disagree statements before learning → revisit after instruction → have **students revise thinking** using evidence to confirm or correct.

Start with a Visual Hook

Choose a visual (picture, video, etc.) that helps students make a **meaningful connection** to how the skill is used in real life—not just an attention grabber.



ARTICLES

[20 Ways to Access Prior Knowledge](#)

[Edutopia's: Why Prior Knowledge Wins the Game](#)

[Activating Prior Knowledge with Hexagonal Thinking](#)

[Anticipation Guides: Ideas & Examples Across All Content Areas](#)



VIDEOS

[Building Background Knowledge \(3 min.\)](#)

[Prior Knowledge Wins the Game \(2 min.\)](#)

[Hexagonal Thinking \(3 min.\)](#)

[Anticipation Guide \(1 min\) Science](#)

[Anticipation Guide \(1 min\) Math](#)



RESOURCES

[Hexagonal Card Generator](#)

[Anticipation Guide Template 1](#)

[Anticipation Guide Template 2](#)



AI PROMPT

I am planning a [grade level] [subject] lesson aligned to TEKS [# & full language]. Using research-based, up-to-date instructional strategies, suggest ways to activate prior knowledge before instruction, address misconceptions, and support diverse learners.