

More About Graphic Organizers

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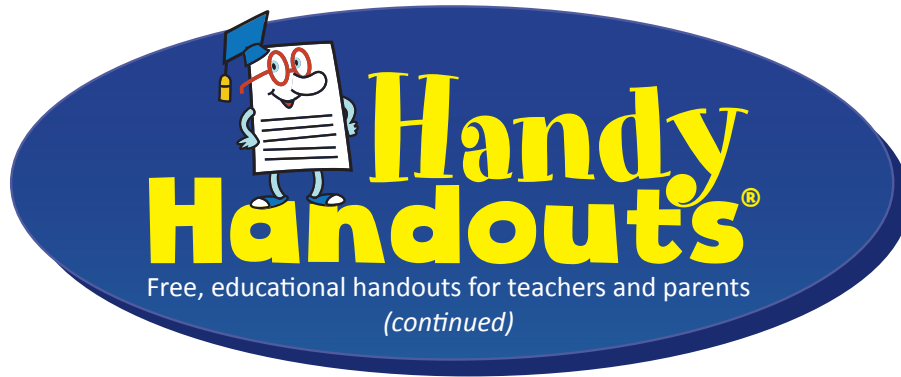
Graphic organizers are visual tools that can help students organize thoughts, think creatively, plan assignments, summarize information, process ideas, and understand concepts. Graphic organizers use shapes, lines, images, words, and the arrangement of words on a page to make information more meaningful and memorable. They can be especially helpful for students who have learning disabilities or for students with special needs.

Graphic organizers are used to illustrate associations between words and concepts. They can be used for:

- **Comparing and contrasting** – How are two concepts or ideas similar? How are they different?
- **Classifying ideas** – What category does a concept fall into? What are some similar concepts?
- **Giving examples** – What are some illustrations of the concept?
- **Showing the order of events in time** – What happened first? What happened next? What happened last?
- **Explaining the steps in a sequence** – Where do you begin? What do you do next? What is the final step?
- **Revealing cause and effect relationships** – What caused something to happen? What is the end result?

There are many different types of graphic organizers. Venn diagrams, Four-Squares, and KWL Charts (which stands for “What I **K**now, what I **W**ant to know, and what I **L**earned”) are three common examples. (See [Handy Handout #203](#), “A Beginner’s Guide to Graphic Organizers” for more information about these three types of graphic organizers.) Another popular way to organize information is by using a mind map (also known as a concept map, brainstorming web, spider diagram, or spray diagram).





Mind maps are typically created around a main concept or idea that is written or illustrated in the center of a page. Closely related concepts or subheadings of the topic are linked by lines to the main idea. Then those related concepts branch out into further subheadings, examples, or smaller categories. There are two primary ways to create a mind map. Some students may find it easier to work from the center of the page outward through the smaller branches, while other students may prefer to write all of their ideas out on the paper as they brainstorm them, then link them with lines, shapes, or colors based on their relationship to the main idea and subheadings. The best thing about mind maps (as with all graphic organizers) is that there are no hard and fast rules for using them, so each student can create one in a way that suits his/her learning style best!



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