

DURING READING

Identifying Text Structures and Using Graphic Organizers

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Portions of this section on developing and using graphic organizers were adapted from Lenz, B. K. (1983). Promoting active learning through effective instruction: Using advance organizers. *Pointer*, 27, 11–13; Sprick, R., Sprick, M., & Garrison, M., (1993). *Interventions: Collaborative planning for students at risk*. Longmont, CO: Sopris West; and University of Texas Center for Reading and Language Arts. (2003). *Special education reading project secondary institute — Effective instruction for secondary struggling readers: Research-based practices*. Austin, TX: Author.

TEXT STRUCTURES

Good readers use text structure as a context for comprehension. Text structure refers to the organization of text. It is important that students are aware of and are able to recognize different types of text structures. When students identify text structures, they are more likely to activate background knowledge, preview the text efficiently, and understand the purpose of the text. The explicit teaching of text structures and how to recognize them is particularly important for students with learning disabilities and for English language learners (Dickson, Simmons, & Kameenui, 1998). Understanding the relationships among the ideas presented in text alleviates some of the complexity of information-dense expository text. Teachers can support students' understanding of text by using graphic organizers to illustrate how text is organized.

The two broad categories of text that older readers will encounter are narrative text and expository text. Saenz and Fuchs (2002) found that secondary students with learning disabilities must be taught the distinctions between expository and narrative text structures, and this is likely true for other struggling readers as well. It is important to explicitly teach the purpose, characteristics, and key terms related to each type of text. Explain to students how recognizing text structure will help them better understand, or comprehend, what they read.

Narrative text structure is commonly found in English language arts and social studies textbooks, particularly in biographies. Sometimes other textbooks provide biographies of leaders in a subject area (such as famous mathematicians or scientists). Figure 30 describes key elements of narrative text.

FIGURE 30. ELEMENTS OF NARRATIVE TEXT.

Examples	Fiction Autobiographies Legends	Historical Fiction Biographies Folktales	Science Fiction Fantasies Myths	Plays Mysteries
Purpose	To entertain or inform			
Characteristics	<p>Follow a familiar story structure</p> <p>Beginning: Introduction of setting, characters, and conflict</p> <p>Middle: Progression of plot, which includes rising action, climax, and falling action</p> <p>End: Resolution or solution to the problem</p>			
Narrative Terms (student-friendly definitions)	Exposition	Introduction of setting, characters, background information, and conflict		
	Setting	Time and place		
	Characters	People, animals, or other entities in the text		
	Conflict	Problem		
	Internal Conflict	A character's struggle within himself/herself		
	External Conflict	A character's struggle with another character		
	Rising Action	Events leading up to the climax; trying to solve the problem		
	Climax	Emotional high point of the story; conflict is addressed		
	Falling Action	Consequences or events caused by the climax		
	Resolution	Final outcome		

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Expository texts can have several different text structures, and within one text, the text structure can change multiple times. This can present particular challenges to middle school readers. Figure 31 illustrates elements of expository text. It is helpful to explicitly teach students how to recognize different text structures. Focus on one structure at a time and add more as students master each one.

FIGURE 31. ELEMENTS OF EXPOSITORY TEXT.

Examples	Newspapers	Textbooks	Magazine Articles	Brochures	Catalogues
Purpose	To inform				
Characteristics	Titles Tables	Headings Diagrams	Subheadings Graphics	Boldface Words	Charts
Organization	One expository passage may be organized using several different text structures.				
Types of Organization	Cause-Effect		How or why an event happened; what resulted from an event		
	Chronology/Sequence		The order of events/steps in a process		
	Compare/Contrast		How two or more things are alike/different		
	Description/Categorization		How something looks, moves, works, etc.; a definition or characterization		
	Problem-Solution		What's wrong and how to fix it		
	Position-Reason		Why a point or idea should be supported; what's wrong with an idea		

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As they attempt to identify expository text structures, it can be helpful for students to locate signal words commonly associated with different text structures. A list of signal words for each text structure is included in Figure 32 and in the Appendix.

Signal words can help students think about the relationships between ideas, but signal words should be only one piece of information that is used to determine the text structure. Some signal words can indicate more than one text structure. For example, the phrase “for this reason” may signal a cause-and-effect structure or a position-reason structure. It is important that students learn to *focus on what the author is trying to communicate about the information in the text*, rather than relying on only signal words. Figure 33 illustrates the connection between the author’s purpose and the text structure typically associated with it. A copy of this figure is included in the Appendix and can be used as a class handout.

As mentioned above, sometimes one passage may contain several different text structures. When there are multiple text structures in a single passage or when it is difficult to identify a text structure, teachers find it helpful to return to the primary focus of the passage or of the lesson. Teachers may ask themselves questions such as, “What is it I want students to know and be able to do as a result of reading the text?” and “What is the organizational pattern inherent in that primary focus?” For example, if a section of science text describes an activity in which students determine what will happen as a result of mixing certain chemicals, the overarching structure may be cause and effect. If, on the other hand, the focus is on comparing mixtures and solutions, the overarching structure may be compare/contrast. If the text describes an activity in which students combine substances and then determine whether this results in mixtures or solutions, the overarching structure is probably description/categorization.

FIGURE 32. SIGNAL WORDS.

Cause-Effect		
How or why an event happened; what resulted from an event		
Accordingly	For this reason	Next
As a result of	Hence	Resulting from
Because	How	Since
Begins with	If...then	So that
Consequently	In order to	Therefore
Due to	Is caused by	Thus
Effects of	It follows	When...then
Finally	Leads/led to	Whether

Chronological Order/Temporal Sequencing		
The order of events/steps in a process		
After	Following	On (date)
Afterward	Formerly	Preceding
Around	Immediately	Previously
As soon as	In front of	Second
At last	In the middle	Shortly
Before	Initially	Soon
Between	Last	Then
During	Later	Third
Eventually	Meanwhile	To begin with
Ever since	Next	Until
Finally	Not long after	When
First	Now	While

Compare/Contrast		
How two or more things are alike/different		
Although	Even though	Nevertheless
And	However	On the contrary
As opposed to	In common	On the other hand
As well as	In comparison	Opposite
Better	In contrast	Otherwise
Both	In the same way	Same
But	Instead of	Similar to
Compared with	Just as/like	Similarly
Despite	Less	Still
Different from	Likewise	Whereas
Either	More than	Yet

(figure continued on the next page)

Description/Categorization

How something looks, moves, works, etc.; a definition or characterization

Above	Down	Near
Across	For example	On top of
Along	For instance	Onto
Appears to be	Furthermore	Outside
As in	Generally	Over
Behind	Identify	Refers to
Below	In addition	Such as
Beside	In back of	To illustrate
Between	In front of	To the right/left
Consists of	Including	Typically
Describe	Looks like	Under

Problem-Solution

What's wrong and how to fix it

Answer	Problem	The problem facing
Challenge	Puzzle	The task was
Clarification	Question	Theory
Difficulty	Reply	This had to be accomplished
Dilemma	Resolution	To fix the problem
How to resolve the issue	Response	To overcome this
Lies	Riddle	Trouble
Obstacles	Solution	Unknown
One solution was	Solved by	What to do
Overcomes	The challenge was	What was discovered
Predicament		

Position-Reason

Why a point or idea should be supported; what's wrong with an idea

Accordingly	It is contended	Therefore
As illustrated by	It is evident that	Thesis
Because	It will be argued that	This contradicts the fact that
Consequently	Must take into account	This must be counterbalanced by
For instance	Since	This view is supported by
For this reason	The claim is limited due to	Turn more attention to
In conclusion	The implication is	What is critical
In order for	The position is	What is more central is
It can be established	The strengths of	

FIGURE 33. IDENTIFYING TEXT STRUCTURE.

If the author wants you to know...	The text structure will be...
How or why an event happened; what resulted from an event	Cause-Effect
The order of events/steps in a process	Chronological Order/Sequencing
How two or more things are alike/different	Compare/Contrast
How something looks, moves, works, etc.; a definition or characterization	Description/Categorization
What's wrong and how to fix it	Problem-Solution
Why a point or idea should be supported; what's wrong with an idea	Position-Reason

USING GRAPHIC ORGANIZERS TO HELP STUDENTS ORGANIZE INFORMATION

Graphic organizers help students understand what they read by connecting prior knowledge to new learning (Schwartz, Ellsworth, Graham, & Knight, 1998) and making the relationships within and between concepts clear and visual. Such organizers can be used before, during, and after reading to help students connect new information to prior knowledge, compare and contrast, sequence events, identify important information in the text, see part-to-whole relationships, and categorize information (Schwartz, Ellsworth, Graham, & Knight, 1998; Sprick, Sprick, & Garrison, 1993). Kim, Vaughn, Wanzek, and Wei (2004) examined the research on using graphic organizers with students with learning difficulties and concluded that, “Across the board, when the students were taught to use graphic organizers, large effect sizes were demonstrated on researcher-developed reading comprehension post-tests” (p. 114).

Several premade graphic organizers can work well with different types of text. These are often provided with textbooks, but teachers should ensure they correspond to the primary focus of the lesson. It is also relatively easy to design effective graphic organizers yourself that will meet the needs of the specific content of a text.

The steps to designing a graphic organizer are simple but require that teachers have a strong grasp of the concepts they plan to teach and what they expect their students to learn.

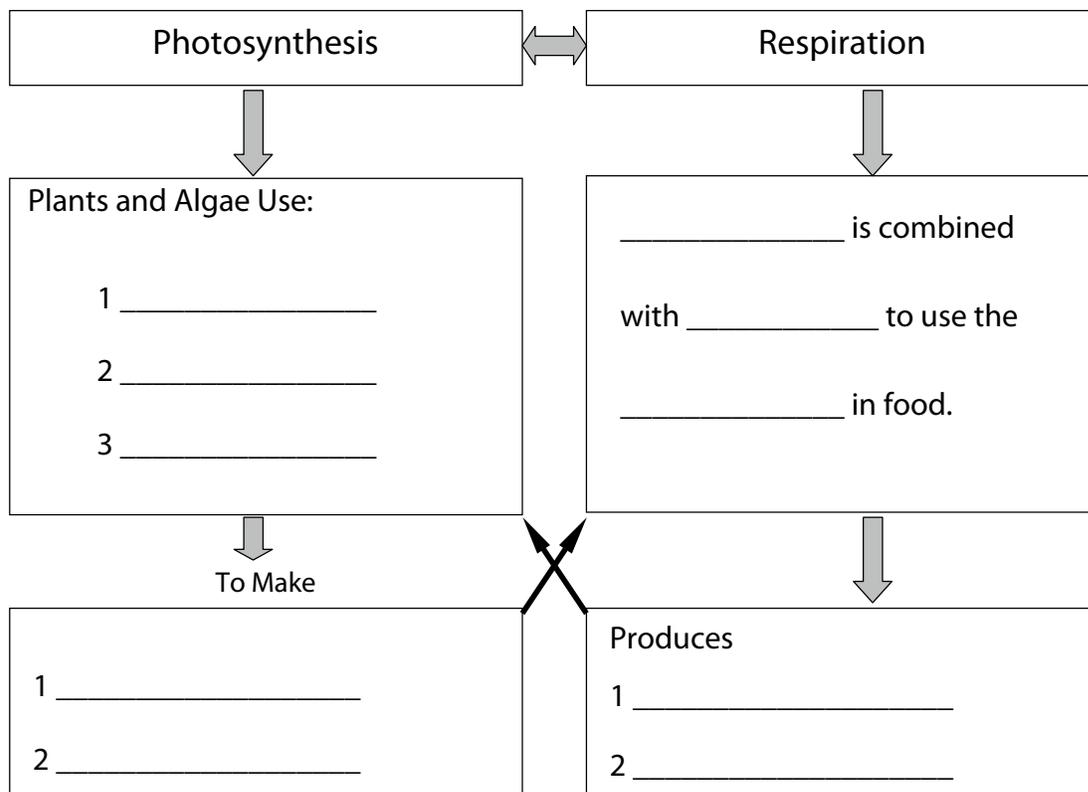
HOW TO DESIGN A GRAPHIC ORGANIZER

1. Read the text and list or outline the most important concepts, or “big ideas,” that students need to learn.

2. Identify the overarching text structure of the passage or of a section of the passage.
3. Organize the key concepts in a way that shows how they are related to one another. Your goal is to present the key concepts visually for students.
4. Provide relevant background information such as the relationship to previous lessons. Look for ways to connect to students' prior knowledge.
5. Add any terms, phrases, or ideas that clarify the relationships.
6. Check that the major relationships within and between concepts are clear and presented as simply as possible.
7. Provide blank space for students to fill in appropriate information. Students should be actively engaged in completing the organizer.

It is not necessary to add any peripheral information or “busywork” for students. It is important that the graphic organizer shows only the essential information that students need to learn. Figure 34 shows a graphic organizer that was created specifically for a science lesson.

FIGURE 34. TEACHER-DEVELOPED GRAPHIC ORGANIZER.



HOW TO USE A GRAPHIC ORGANIZER

Before reading:

- Show the graphic organizer to students and discuss students' prior knowledge.
- Use the graphic organizer as a tool to preview the chapter or text.
- Ask students to make predictions about the text based on the graphic organizer.

During reading:

- Have students fill in important information as they read the text.
- Confirm and/or modify students' predictions about the text.

After reading:

- Have students write a summary of the chapter or text using the graphic organizer as a guide.
- Have students use the graphic organizer to present the content orally to a peer, tutor, or mentor.
- Have students write study guide or test questions based on the graphic organizer.

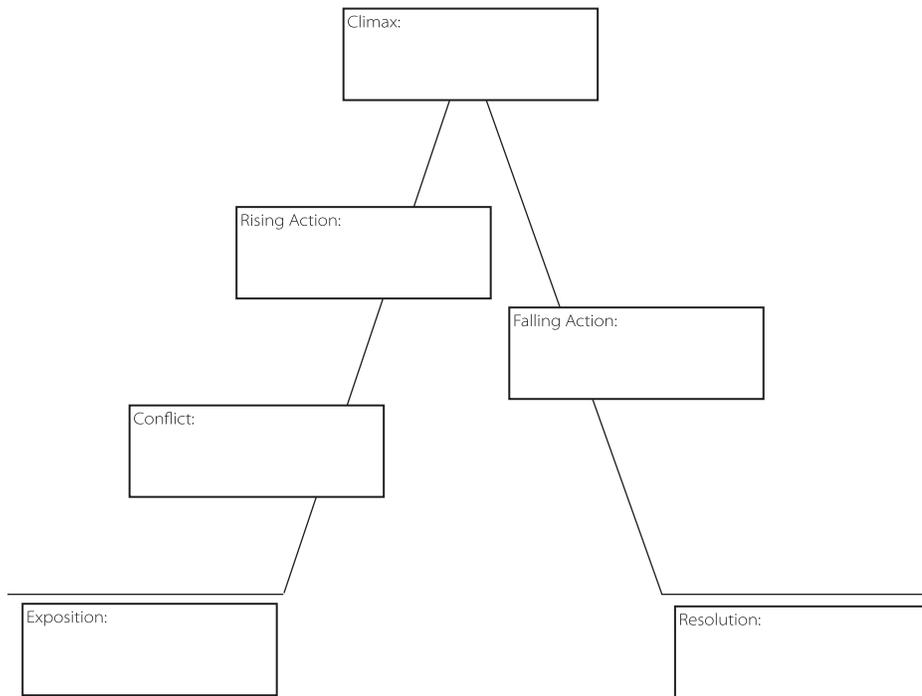
SAMPLE GRAPHIC ORGANIZERS

There are several types of graphic organizers that work well for different purposes. Samples of the following types are included in the Appendix.

Story Map

A story map is a graphic organizer designed for narrative text. Story maps may include elements such as exposition or introduction, conflict or problem, rising action, climax, falling action, and the resolution. Story maps may also contain a description of the characters and setting. Figure 35 is a sample story map.

FIGURE 35. SAMPLE STORY MAP.

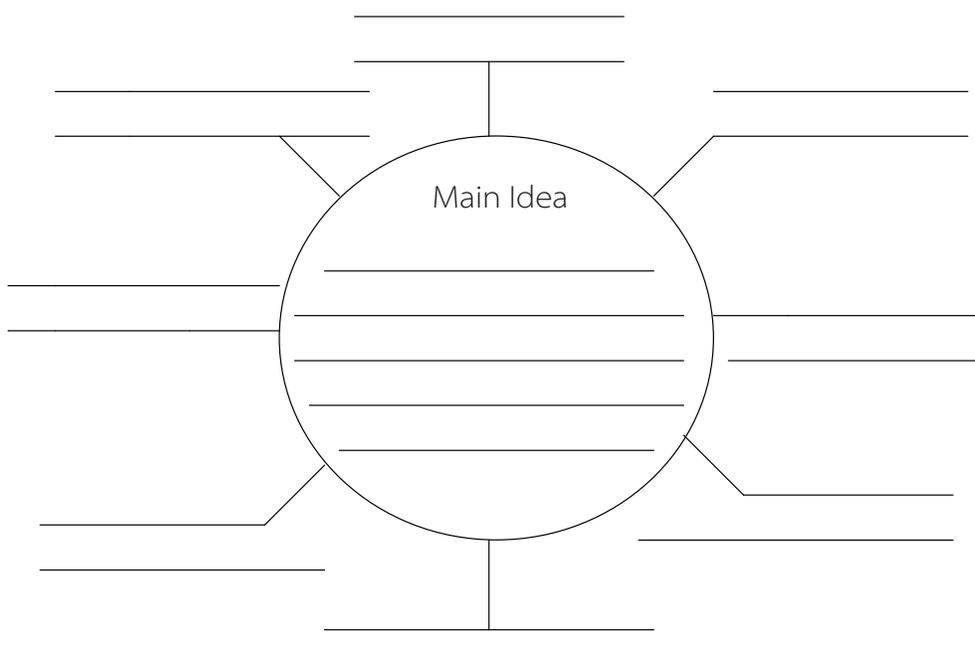


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Main Idea Web

A main idea web is a simple graphic organizer that can be used with paragraphs, sections of a chapter, or entire textbook chapters.

FIGURE 36. MAIN IDEA WEB.



Know and Learn Charts

The Know and Learn Chart is a simple variation of the Know, Want to Know, and Learned (K-W-L) Chart (Ogle, 1986). This organizer can be made with two pieces of chart paper—one completed before and one after reading, or it can be written on the chalkboard or an overhead transparency. The goal of this organizer is to show students how to think about what they already know about a topic before reading and then to verify and modify their thinking after reading. Before reading a passage or chapter, ask students what they already know about the topic. Write all of their responses under the “K” on the chart. Then, after reading the passage or chapter, return to the chart, and with the students, think through which of their answers are correct and which answers need to be changed or modified.

FIGURE 37. KNOW AND LEARN CHART.

Know	Learn
What do I already know?	What did I learn?

Adapted with permission from Ogle, D. M. (1986). K-W-L: A teaching model that develops active reading of expository text. The Reading Teacher, 39, 564–570.

Partially Completed Outline

Students can complete this type of organizer either individually or in pairs while they are taking notes or as they read the text. Figure 38 illustrates a portion of a partially completed outline designed for a specific science text.

FIGURE 38. SAMPLE PARTIALLY COMPLETED OUTLINE.

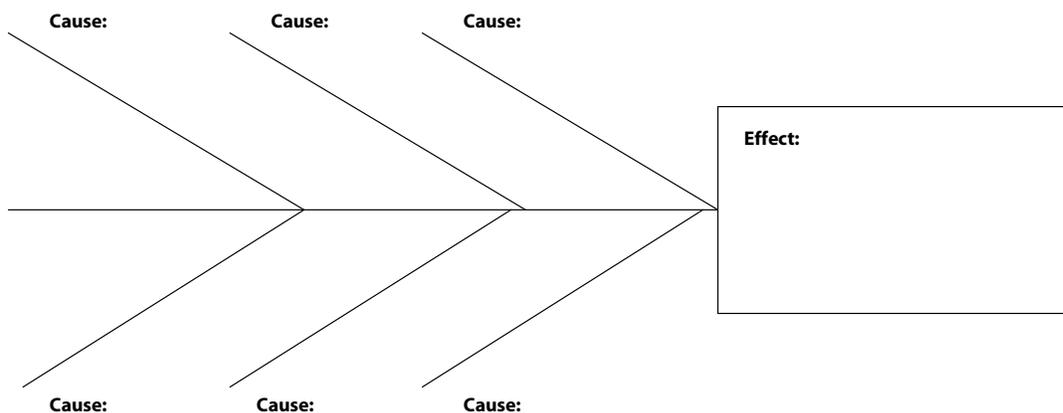
Life in the Ocean	
I. Things the oceans provide for organisms	
A.	_____
1.	Allows easy _____
2.	Ocean organisms use less _____ to move around
B.	_____
C.	_____ for life processes
D.	_____ outside the parents' bodies
E.	_____ (p. 317)
F.	_____ (p. 317)

Graphic Organizers Based on Specific Text Structures

Text structures can be represented by a variety of graphic organizers. Teachers may choose to have students complete only one of these organizers to represent a single overarching text structure, or the organizers can be combined or used sequentially to represent more than one important text structure within a lesson.

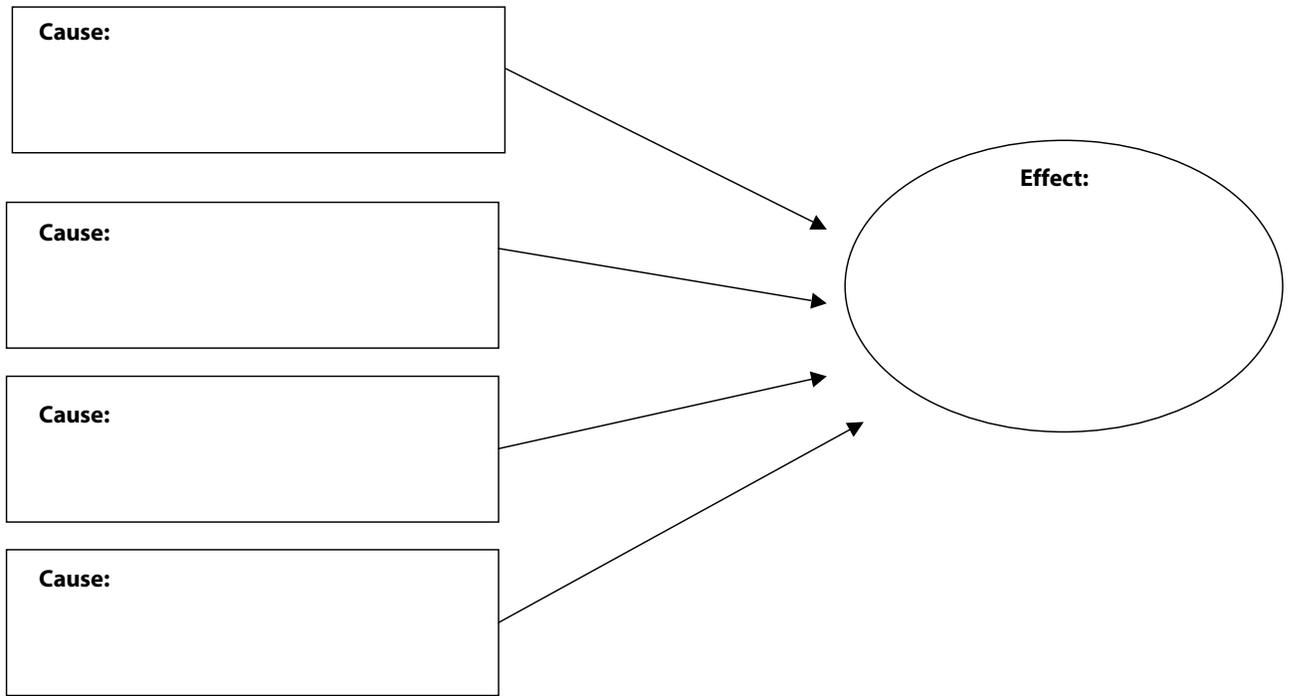
Cause-Effect (how or why an event happened; what resulted from an event)

FIGURE 39. CAUSE-EFFECT HERRINGBONE.



Based on Jones, B. F., Pierce, J., & Hunter, B. (1989). *Teaching students to construct graphic representations*. *Educational Leadership*, 46(4), 20–25.

FIGURE 40. CAUSE-EFFECT SEMANTIC MAP.



Chronology/Sequence (the order of events/steps in a process)

FIGURE 41. CHRONOLOGY/SEQUENCE GRAPHIC ORGANIZER.

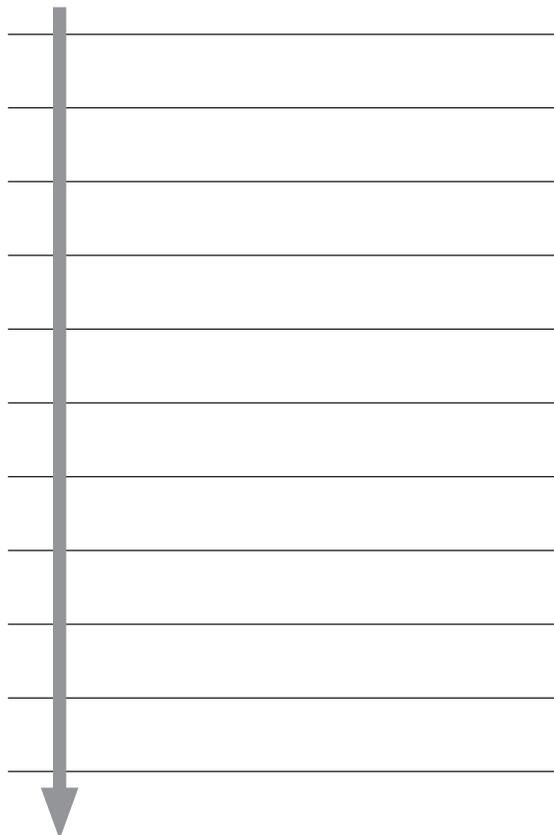


FIGURE 42. TEMPORAL SEQUENCING EXAMPLE.

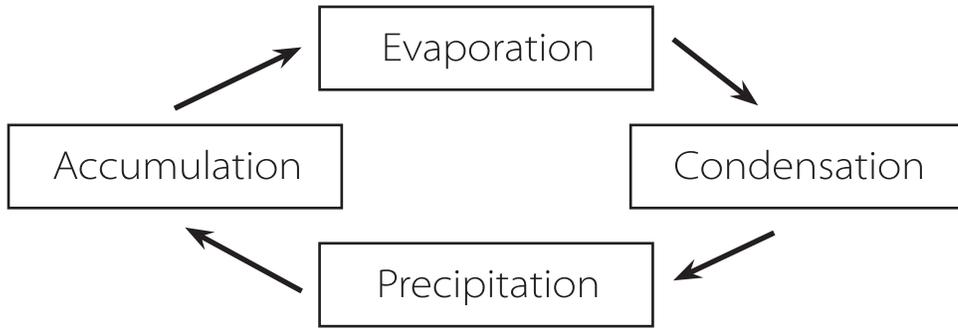
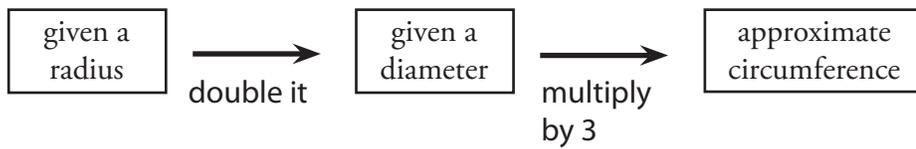
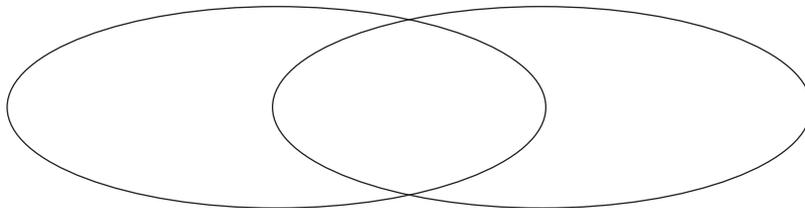


FIGURE 43. CHRONOLOGICAL ORDERING/SEQUENCING EXAMPLE.



Compare/Contrast (how two or more things are alike/different)

FIGURE 44. COMPARE/CONTRAST GRAPHIC ORGANIZER.



Description/Categorization (how something looks, moves, works, etc.; a definition or characterization)

FIGURE 45. DESCRIPTION GRAPHIC ORGANIZER (WEB).

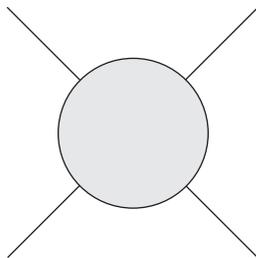


FIGURE 46. DESCRIPTION GRAPHIC ORGANIZER EXAMPLE 1 (CHART).

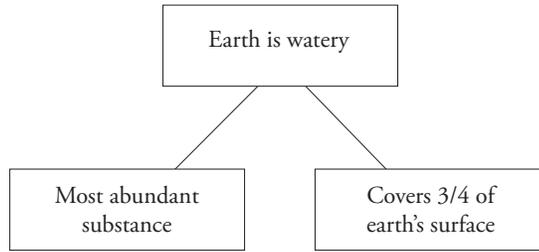
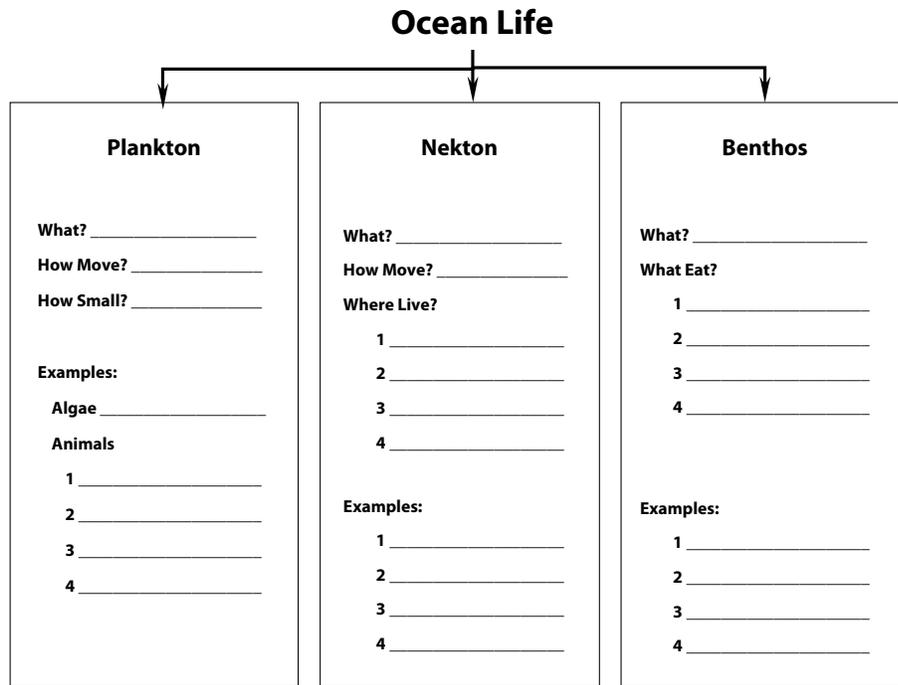


FIGURE 47. DESCRIPTION GRAPHIC ORGANIZER EXAMPLE 2 (CHART).



Problem-Solution (what's wrong and how to fix it)

FIGURE 48. PROBLEM-SOLUTION GRAPHIC ORGANIZER.

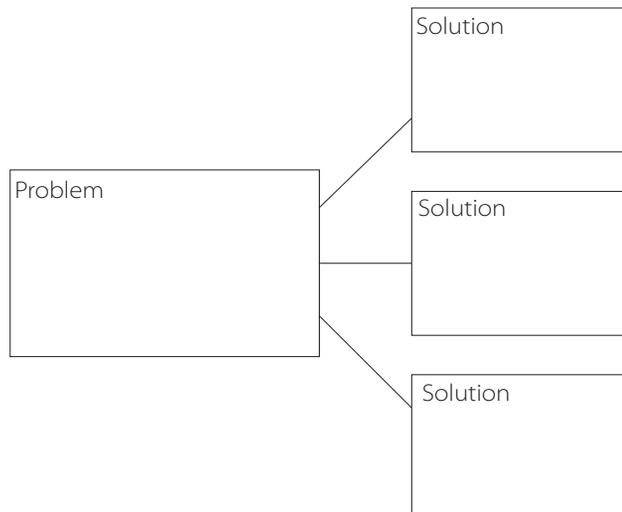
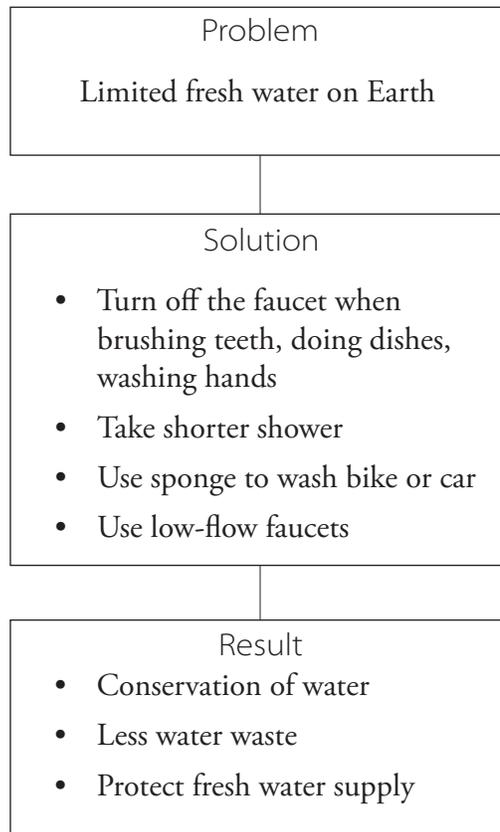


FIGURE 49. PROBLEM-SOLUTION-RESULT GRAPHIC ORGANIZER EXAMPLE.



Position-Reason (why a point or idea should be supported; what's wrong with an idea)

FIGURE 50. POSITION-REASON GRAPHIC ORGANIZER EXAMPLE.

