

READING Strategy → Concept Sorts

Reading component

Vocabulary/Comprehension

Overview of the strategy

Concept sorts are activities in categorization. Students can sort objects, pictures and/or words by concepts or meaning. This is an excellent way to link vocabulary instruction to what students already know and to expand their conceptual understanding of essential reading vocabulary.

Strategy procedure

1. Gather students together around a large table or pocket chart.
2. Choose something to sort. For younger students, use objects or pictures. For older students, use words. Possibilities for concept sorts include objects, such as students (male/female, hair color, eye color, age, favorite color), shoes (boys'/girls', right/left, tie/Velcro/slip-on), coats (short/long, button/zip, hood/hoodless), and buttons (number of holes, shapes, colors, sizes). Possibilities could also include units of study, such as food groups, animals, forms of transportation, and states of matter.
3. Begin with an open sort: Let the students determine how to sort based on their background knowledge and experience.
4. Ask students to describe how the things in each category are alike.
5. Decide on a key word or descriptive phrase to label each category.
6. Model writing key words. Also, write individual labels for each item if sorting objects or pictures.
7. Allow for individual sorting, using a closed sort. Have the items and labels available for students to sort on their own or with a partner during free time or center time.

Variations of the strategy

1. Use as advanced organizers for anticipating new reading.
2. Revisit and refine after reading to assist in recall and comprehension.
3. Use to organize ideas prior to writing.

Source

- D.R. Bear, M. Invernizzi, S. Templeton, and F. Johnston, *Words Their Way* (Upper Saddle River, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, 1997).