

Topic: _____		
<i>K</i>	<i>W</i>	<i>L</i>

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KWL

APPROPRIATE USES

1. At the start of a lesson or unit, to help students recall what they think they already know or what they learned in a prior lesson. Prior knowledge collection can focus on any one of the following:

- Use learning tool (e.g., the Web, a Word program).
- Use a thinking process (e.g., analyzing, predicting).
- Use content (mathematics, literacy, science, music).
- Use a cooperative learning strategy (think-pair-share).
- Use a cognitive function (reflection) or deficiency (impulsivity).
- Use an instructional tactic (think-pair-share).

2. At the end of a unit to help students capture what they learned about the focus point.

Learning Phase:

Gathering information

Level of Difficulty: Easy

Purpose: To help students gather information from prior knowledge and/or experience

Thinking Process: Naming

Key Vocabulary

Prior, gather, brainstorm

Attribution

Donna Ogle introduced the KWL into classrooms in 1986. Others have added additional letters such as “H” for “How we will learn.”

LESSON DESIGN

Check Prior Knowledge of the KWL Organizer

1. Show the KWL for all to see. Ask how many have used the KWL. (If none, go on to explain its purpose.)
2. Ask for volunteers to tell how they used the KWL and how it helped them learn the material.

Explain the KWL’s Purpose

1. The KWL is an organizer to help students check their prior knowledge of a topic, concept, or process before learning about it. With this prior knowledge, the brains of the students will recall what they already know (the K of KWL) about the topic. When they get new information, students will use their brains to join the old knowledge with the new.
2. The second benefit of the KWL is to stir interest in what students also want (the W of KWL) to know additionally about the topic. The best students are those who ask questions!
3. The third benefit is to provide a chance for students at the end of a lesson to look back and assess what they learned in the lesson.

Clarify and Model the Task

1. Introduce the topic of the day’s and/or week’s lesson. Teachers may use the title of the next textbook chapter or ask a “launch question” about the topic.
2. Show the organizer for all to see. Explain the parts (K column, W column, and L column). Start with K column (what we think we know about the topic).
3. Group students into trios. Starting with the shortest person in each trio and working to the tallest, assign the roles of presenter, recorder, and manager. Review responsibilities of each (pp. 216–217) and the DOVE guidelines (p. 216).
4. Provide each recorder with a large sheet of newsprint (or butcher paper) and markers. Instruct the recorder to make a large KWL similar to the model.

5. Invite each trio to brainstorm all they think they know about the topic or the launch question. Take just two or three responses. Repeat the process with the “What do we want to know about this topic?” in the W column.

Complete the Task

1. Instruct each trio to continue brainstorming in each of these columns.

2. When several of the learning groups have completed the tasks, stop the work and invite one group from the back of the classroom to come to the front. Two will hold the completed chart and the recorder will read the K and the W lists.

3. Invite other students to add different items to the learning group’s lists. Likewise, they can add all items on their own list.

4. Instruct the recorder to keep the list for the group. The groups will return to these lists at the end of the lesson.

5. During the lesson, highlight any material that relates to the questions posed.

6. At the end of the lesson, instruct each group to rotate its three roles so that each student has a different job.

7. Invite the trios to brainstorm what they learned in this lesson (the L of KWL). They should check to see that they learned all the items under “W” and add anything else not on the original lists.

Guide Reflection

1. **Focus on Content.** Match trios together into learning groups of six. Invite each trio to share its “learned list” telling what was important about each item in relation to the topic of the lesson (e.g., “The Continental Congress was important because . . .,” “Harriet Tubman played a key role in American history because . . .”).

2. **Focus on Process.** In the learning groups of six, the group will select one member who was not yet the recorder during this lesson for that role. In turn, each member (starting with the person sitting to the right of the recorder) will complete the sentence, “When using the KWL, I learned that. . .” (The recorder will list these responses on a new sheet of newsprint.)

3. If time allows, do a round robin of the recorders. Each will select two items from the list to share with the class.

KWL ORGANIZER EXAMPLES

Elementary Grade Example

Topic: <u>Mathematics: Addition</u>		
<i>K</i>	<i>W</i>	<i>L</i>
numbers, plus, and side by side, columns, two digits	how to add nickels, how to add decimals, how to add dimes	how to add money (pennies to quarters), how to add decimals, how multiplication is additional

Middle Grade Example

Topic: <u>Technology: PowerPoint</u>		
<i>K</i>	<i>W</i>	<i>L</i>
slides, motion, sound, flow, images, charts	photographs, less words, rehearsal, sending by mail, auto-content wizard	templates, photographs, practicing, sending by mail, outlines, wizards, spell check, text boxes, designs

Secondary Grade Example

Topic: <u>The Underground Railroad</u>		
<i>K</i>	<i>W</i>	<i>L</i>
Harriet Tubman, safe houses, abolitionists, Canada	dangers, accomplishments, states, other people involved, effect on Lincoln	Frederick Douglass, Susan B. Anthony, Emancipation Proclamation, routes, places

MORE IDEAS

Elementary Grade Examples

Mathematics: Mixed numbers, sets, diagrams

Language Arts: Aesop's Fables, Chitty Chitty Bang Bang, Winnie the Pooh

Science: Solids, liquids and gases, thermometer, sources of energy

Social Studies: Maps, tables, graphs, geographic features of our state

Other: Nations of the world in our classroom (e.g., Nigeria, Croatia, Italy, Tibet), where I have lived (e.g., New York, Danville, Indianapolis, San Jose, Mexico City), where I have visited (Disney World, Gettysburg, my grandmother's house)

Middle Grade Examples

Mathematics: Measuring temperature, finding the mean, plane shapes

Language Arts: Wind in the Willows, writing a story, comparing two characters in a story

Science: Healthy food, life in a river, NASA

Social Studies: Cliff dwellers, early explorers of America, the Boston Tea Party

Other: Melodic notation, two-part harmony, Hispanic influences on American sculpture

Secondary Grade Examples

Mathematics: Limits of values of functions, proof of the chain rule, conditional probability

Language Arts: Figurative language, soliloquy, Nathaniel Hawthorne

Science: Nuclear fusion, asteroids, Newton's Second Law

Social Studies: The fall of the Roman Empire, apartheid, Machu Picchu

Other: American jazz, George Balanchine, Bob Fosse

Make Your Own

Topic: _____

<i>K</i>	<i>W</i>	<i>L</i>

Your Ideas

KWL Graphic Organizer

Topic: _____		
<i>K</i>	<i>W</i>	<i>L</i>