CHAPTER THREE
Graphic Organizers for Vocabulary Development

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A special note on this chapter: As mentioned in Chapter One, all of these graphic organizers can be used as templates for a vocabulary log or notebook. These organizers become a student-created vocabulary reference book to which the students can refer during the course of the school year.
It is quite likely that most of us were taught vocabulary by being given long lists of words; we were required to write down the definition for each word and write a sentence using the vocabulary word. Once we had memorized these words, they were given on a quiz, usually on a Friday. Today we know that this is not the most effective way to teach vocabulary. Instead, vocabulary lessons must be contextual.

Simply put: the more students manipulate and use a new word, the more likely it will become part of their vocabulary. Vocabulary slides prompt students to use and apply newly encountered words. When students study fewer words in greater depth, as they do with the vocabulary slide, they are learning how language works. The sections of the slide require the students to examine the etymology and the part of speech, to find a synonym and antonym, and to use the word in an original sentence. These applications enable students to connect to and process the word through several tasks.

Tips for Classroom Implementation

You can have students create vocabulary slides from self-identified words in the assigned reading, or you can assign words. You can also use the vocabulary slides as flash cards that the students use for review.

The first time that I required eleventh-grade students in a British literature class to create vocabulary slides, the students were a bit surprised when I asked them to draw pictures of the vocabulary words. What I noticed was that the students had to internally process the vocabulary in order to create visual representations of the words’ meanings. As a result, I witnessed greater transference in the students’ writing and improved ability to recognize the newly acquired vocabulary words.
26 Concept or Vocabulary Map I

▶ Grades 5—12
▶ Social studies, English, science, health, mathematics

Students often memorize definitions rather than study words or concepts in depth. When students study words from different perspectives, they are more likely to internalize the new vocabulary. Our understanding of vocabulary acquisition has evolved. Visualization has become a critical component of effective vocabulary teaching. This organizer requires students to visually represent key aspects of a new word or concept.

Tips for Classroom Implementation

You or the student selects a word or concept for the center oval of the organizer. Students should record key elements of the concept or word in the upper left corner. In the upper right corner, the students should record information that is incorrectly assigned to the word or concept. Examples of the word or concept are recorded in the lower left corner. The lower right corner is where students can record examples that are not correct and explain why these examples are incorrect. The Wrong or Incorrect Characteristics box and the crossed-out Examples box are the most challenging and will need to be modeled for some students.

If you have your own classroom, post the vocabulary maps. They can be arranged in a word wall format. As you may recall, a word wall is a systematic organization of vocabulary words. The large letters of the alphabet are displayed on a classroom wall, and the vocabulary maps are posted under the corresponding letters. A word wall is not a display but a shared learning tool and a source for information.
27 Concept or Vocabulary Map II

Grades 5—12
Social studies, English, science, health, mathematics

This version is different from Concept or Vocabulary Map I in that it is more explicit about the placement of information and requires an exact definition for the vocabulary word or concept.

Tips for Classroom Implementation

You or the student selects a word or concept for the center box of the organizer. In the box directly above, students should write the dictionary definition of the word or concept. Students should record key elements of the word or concept in each of the boxes on the upper left side. In each of the boxes on the upper right side, the students should record information that is incorrectly assigned to the word or concept. Examples of the word or concept are recorded in the boxes along the bottom of the page.

The “What is it like?” and “What is it NOT like?” boxes can be particularly challenging. Be sure to model responses to these or allow students to work in pairs so that they will have greater success in completing this activity.
CONCEPT OR VOCABULARY MAP II

Name __________________________
Date __________________________

What is it?

What is like?

What is not like?

Word

Examples
28 Concept or Vocabulary Map III

Grades 5—12
Social studies, English, science, health, mathematics

This version of the concept or vocabulary map requires students to include an illustration or visualization.

Tips for Classroom Implementation

You or the student selects a word or concept for the center box of the organizer. Above the word or concept box, students should write the definition in the provided space. They should record key elements of the concept or word in each of the boxes on the left side. In each of the boxes on the right side, the students should record information that is incorrectly assigned to the word or concept. They should place a picture or icon that visualizes the word or concept in the oval at the bottom.

This organizer is particularly helpful with concrete nouns similar to those that you would find in a science textbook.
CONCEPT OR VOCABULARY MAP III

What is it?

Definition

Word or concept

Examples

Nonexamples

Illustration

Name __________________________

Date __________________________
29 Concept or Vocabulary Map IV

Grades 5—12
Social studies, English, science, health, mathematics

This version of the concept or vocabulary map requires a personal connection with the new vocabulary word or concept.

Tips for Classroom Implementation

You or the student selects a word or concept for the center box of the organizer. Above the word or concept box, students should write the definition in the provided space. They should record key elements of the concept or word in each of the boxes on the left side. In each of the boxes on the right side, the students should record information that is incorrectly assigned to the word or concept. In the bottom two boxes, students write personal connections and ideas about where they would encounter the word or concept. These kinds of personal connections help students connect to prior knowledge, thus promoting retention into long-term memory.
CONCEPT OR
VOCABULARY
MAP IV

What is it?

Definition

Word or concept

Examples

Nonexamples

I can find this word...

This word reminds me of...

Name __________________________
Date __________________________
The importance of encouraging students to study words cannot be emphasized enough. In this graphic organizer, students are prompted to research the etymology of words and connect visual images to the words that they encounter.

You or the student selects the vocabulary word to be recorded in the center box. In the box above the word box, students record the location where they discovered their word by writing a direct quote from the text or the page number where the vocabulary word or concept was first encountered. Context clues, which are hints or text that may indicate the meaning of the word, are recorded in the two boxes on the left side. The part of speech is placed in the oval on the right side. A sentence that requires students to use the new vocabulary word or concept is placed in the box at the lower center of the organizer. Below the sentence box, students write the exact definition of the word. Finally, an image or illustration that represents the student’s visualization of the word or concept is placed in the bottom space.

You can use these sheets as templates for students to compile into their own vocabulary detective notebook. I particularly like this idea because students have a written record of their vocabulary journey. Many students like to look back on the vocabulary that they have learned so that they can see how many words they have encountered and learned.
Name __________________________
Date __________________________

Detective

Text or quote where the word was originally found

Context clue #1

Word

Sentence

Definition

Context clue #2

Part of speech

Picture or illustration
31 Six-Column Vocabulary Organizer

- Grades 5–12
- Social studies, English, science, health, mathematics

This graphic organizer is a learning log that allows students to catalogue the etymology of vocabulary words they encounter in their reading.

### Vocabulary Word

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sentence</th>
<th>Dictionary Definition</th>
<th>Part of Speech</th>
<th>Synonym</th>
<th>Antonym</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Monotonous</td>
<td>Lacking variety</td>
<td>Adjective</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>At times</td>
<td>Without logic or meaning</td>
<td>Adjective</td>
<td>Disjointed</td>
<td>Related</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unaware</td>
<td>Very painful</td>
<td>Adjective</td>
<td>Rational</td>
<td>Unrelated</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tedious</td>
<td>Exciting</td>
<td>Adjective</td>
<td>Assemble</td>
<td>Calm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asleep</td>
<td>To lack comfort</td>
<td>Verb</td>
<td>Never</td>
<td>Occasionally</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Awkward</td>
<td>To break open</td>
<td>Adjective</td>
<td>Uncomfortable</td>
<td>Conscious</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disjointed</td>
<td>Incoherent</td>
<td>Adjective</td>
<td>Uncomfortable</td>
<td>Conscious</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Burst</td>
<td>To explode</td>
<td>Verb</td>
<td>Never</td>
<td>Occasionally</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Midnight Sun</td>
<td>Uncomfortable</td>
<td>Adjective</td>
<td>Uncomfortable</td>
<td>Conscious</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Students can use this organizer as a template for a vocabulary learning log. It can be used in classroom instruction for students to keep a running record of the vocabulary that they encounter and learn.

Of all the vocabulary graphic organizers that I have included in this chapter, I probably used this one most frequently. It was especially helpful for keeping a log or history of vocabulary words from a particular unit or chapter.
**SIX COLUMN VOCABULARY ORGANIZER**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Vocabulary word</th>
<th>Sentence (show your definition)</th>
<th>Part of speech</th>
<th>Antonym</th>
<th>Synonym</th>
<th>Picture or icon that represents the word</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

**Book Title**

**Name __________________________**  
**Date __________________________**
Vocabulary Tree

- Grades 5–12
- Social studies, English, science, health, mathematics

This highly visual graphic organizer requires students to specify a root word and related words, a strategy that supports students in learning and understanding new vocabulary.

Tips for Classroom Implementation

In addition to using this graphic organizer as a means to show how words can relate to a root word, I have also used this graphic organizer for expository writing. The students can use the main trunk for their thesis and the upper spaces to list details and evidence to prove the thesis.

I have also used the tree graphic organizer as a prereading activity. The students will write their main prediction about the text they are about to read on the trunk and then use the upper spaces for details and examples from the text to prove or disprove their prediction.
33 Cyber Vocabulary Detective
▶ Grades 5—12
▶ Social studies, English, science, health, mathematics

Oftentimes vocabulary words are assigned to students at the beginning of an instructional unit. This organizer prompts the students to find the assigned words on the Internet and to use this information to determine the meanings of the assigned vocabulary.

Tips for Classroom Implementation

Give the students a list of Internet sites that will assist them in researching the vocabulary. The students can work in pairs to complete the organizer.

Here are some sites that I recommend for vocabulary research.

Dictionary.com. This site offers a standard English language dictionary.
etymonline.com. This site describes the origins of words rather than supplying a traditional or straight definition.
Word.com. Sponsored by Merriam-Webster, this site offers complete information about words.

I am a big fan of this strategy for many reasons. Effectively using technology in classrooms helps all kinds of learners. Exploring Web sites to learn and study vocabulary is engaging because it is highly visual and resembles what people do in the “real world” to gather information; further, many Web sites provide audio support, which is particularly helpful for English language learners and students who have speech or language needs. The audio-supported Web sites often provide pronunciations of the words and have auditory files for definitions and sample sentences.
**DIRECTIONS:** As you look for your vocabulary words in the assigned Web sites, it is helpful to use the FIND command. For each of the assigned vocabulary words, write the sentence from the Web site where you find the word. Guess what the word might mean.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Vocabulary word</th>
<th>Sentence that includes vocabulary word</th>
<th>What might the vocabulary word mean?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>