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Introduction



We all use graphic organisers of some kind, and to some degree, every day of our lives. A menu, a train schedule, a calendar and even a guide to television programs are all examples of graphic organisers. They are beneficial in making it possible for us to visualise information in a condensed and organised form. They also make it possible for us to organise plans, thoughts and ideas. They help writers to organise thoughts before writing. They are the tools that help us to learn, process information, envision and create.

If students become familiar with graphic organisers at an early age, they are more likely to have an understanding of how to organise ideas and concepts, how to think more clearly, how to plan with a goal in mind and how to relate concepts, ideas and facts to other concepts, ideas and facts. Learners, of all kinds, are better able to visualize information and ideas when familiar with graphic organisers. They are better able to access information, understand information, and organise and present information.

There are a variety of graphic organisers included in this book and a variety of ways to use them. The organisers are arranged according to their types and similarities, but many graphic organisers may be used for multi-purposes. Any graphic organiser may be modified (expanded, simplified or combined) to suit student capabilities, the intended purposes of the organiser or an entirely new use. The organisers may be reproduced, copied after being modified, used individually, in groups or enlarged for whole-class use.

Each section begins with an introduction offering suggestions for the uses of its graphic organisers. In addition, the simpler organisers are nearer the beginning of each section progressing to the more complex toward the end. Nevertheless, the graphic organisers in this book can be modified so that they are suitable to younger and older students. Some suggestions for ways to do this are found in the introductions.

Some organisers come with filled-in examples to get started, but that does not mean that the organiser can only be used in that manner and with that kind of subject matter. Some organisers come with very little direction, in part because they may be such common organisers that their usage is well known and they are included so that they may be readily accessible, and in part because some organisers are open-ended enough that your own interpretation, and the interpretations of the students, is encouraged.

Creativity is also encouraged. With familiarity with the organisers in this book, it is hoped that students and teachers will feel competent in creating new, useful, and specific organisers for their own needs. Learning is often fluid and organic, and so, organisers to facilitate such processes ought to also be organic and fluid. Graphic organisers can be created on the fly, as it were, while in process and in need of a way to structure what is being created, imagined or analysed.

Some kinds of organisers appear more than once in the book, with different purposes in mind. Even then, the uses of graphic organisers are not limited to only those purposes, and perhaps could be placed in every section of the book with some modification.

This book offers only a few of the many graphic organisers available. In addition, there are those that you are inspired to create after having experience with these. Each graphic organiser can be modified, combined and/or revised to fit the needs of students and the lessons being prepared. While there is some overlap between the books, for graphic organisers more suitable for younger students, see *Graphic Organisers Grades K–3*, TCM 3207.



Spinning webs



This section begins with the *Brainstorming rules* (page 6) because students of all ages need to be reminded that brainstorming is a time to withhold judgment and let the ideas flow. *Brainstorming web* (page 7) follows. This graphic organiser can be used while brainstorming, for recording ideas as a result of brainstorming, or for individual brainstorming. The best brainstorming is done as a group, however, and so it is recommended that the web be written on a blackboard or whiteboard to facilitate whole-class brainstorming whenever possible. *Web questions* (page 8) is a graphic organiser that can be useful at more than one level. In the circle, the student writes a question they have pondered. It could be a question generated from reading, from a unit of study or a research question. On the lines radiating outward from the circle, students can record their predictions about the answer, where they will look to find the answer or related information and questions. In the box at the bottom of the page, they can record the answer. If this web is used on a regular basis, it could be stored in a notebook so that students will have a collection of questions answered and the work that went into finding the answers.

Clustering is an important skill for organising thoughts and concepts. It's useful for research, note-taking and pre-writing, among other things. An example of a cluster can be found on page 9, and a blank cluster (page 11) for student use. Keep in mind, however, that clustering is often a free-form kind of activity with bubbles coming off at seemingly random locations. If clustering is used for a research paper, for instance, it is likely to be less free form, and more even-handed. When clustering is used as a pre-writing activity for creative writing, a paragraph, a poem, to develop a character, a vignette etc, it is more likely to take on a free form and even random organisation. Encourage students to experience clustering in many forms including a pre-set amount of bubbles, more like a structured web to be filled in, and as a structure that grows freely in the moment, along with their thoughts and ideas. Because clustering is more of a process than a graphic organiser to be filled in, a clustering activity is included on page 10. Students should have many opportunities to practice clustering in different ways, especially to generate ideas for writing.

A *Vocabulary Web* can be found on page 12. It might be useful to have each student keep a notebook of their filled-in copies of this web. It will be their own personal dictionary. The information is available at a glance when it is organised this way, making it easier for students to expand and retain their vocabularies. The *prefix webs* activity on page 13 will strengthen vocabulary skills as well as understanding of word relationships. Use the blank web (page 14) that follows to create additional prefix webs and suffix webs. Other word webs might include word roots, synonyms, homonyms etc.



Brainstorming rules



How to brainstorm

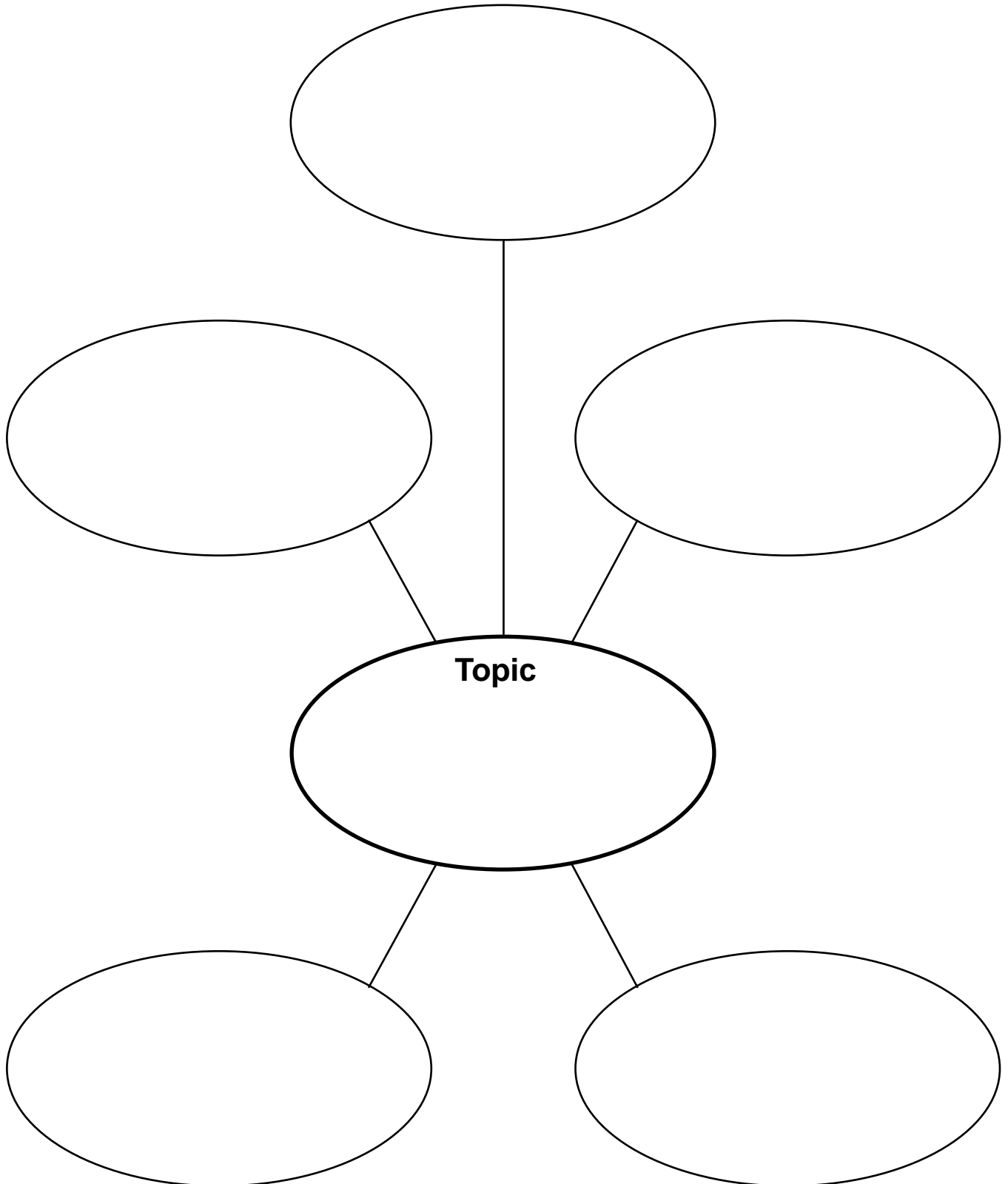
1. Write down every thought and idea. Every thought and idea has value.
2. Record thoughts and ideas very quickly. Keep things moving with a rapid flow of ideas.
3. Do not interrupt the flow to judge any thoughts or ideas. Record all thoughts even if they seem off topic, unrelated or even dumb.
4. Remember that ideas that do not seem worth recording might prove to be important after all. At the very least, they may lead to other valuable ideas.
5. Brainstorming can be done alone, but the more people involved in the process, the more ideas will be generated.
6. Keep brainstorming until the ideas slow down. Take a deep breath, pause and be ready to record some more ideas. They will still trickle in for a while.
 7. When the ideas finally seem to slow to a stop, look over what was generated.
8. Use the best ideas.

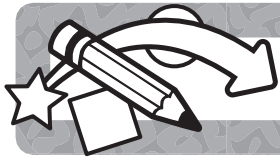


Brainstorming web



Directions: Write a word in each circle that talks about or describes the topic.





Web questions



Directions: In the circle, write one important question. On the lines coming out of the circle, write information that relates to the question. Then, in the box, write the answer to the question.