

Using Graphic Organizers

SUMMARY

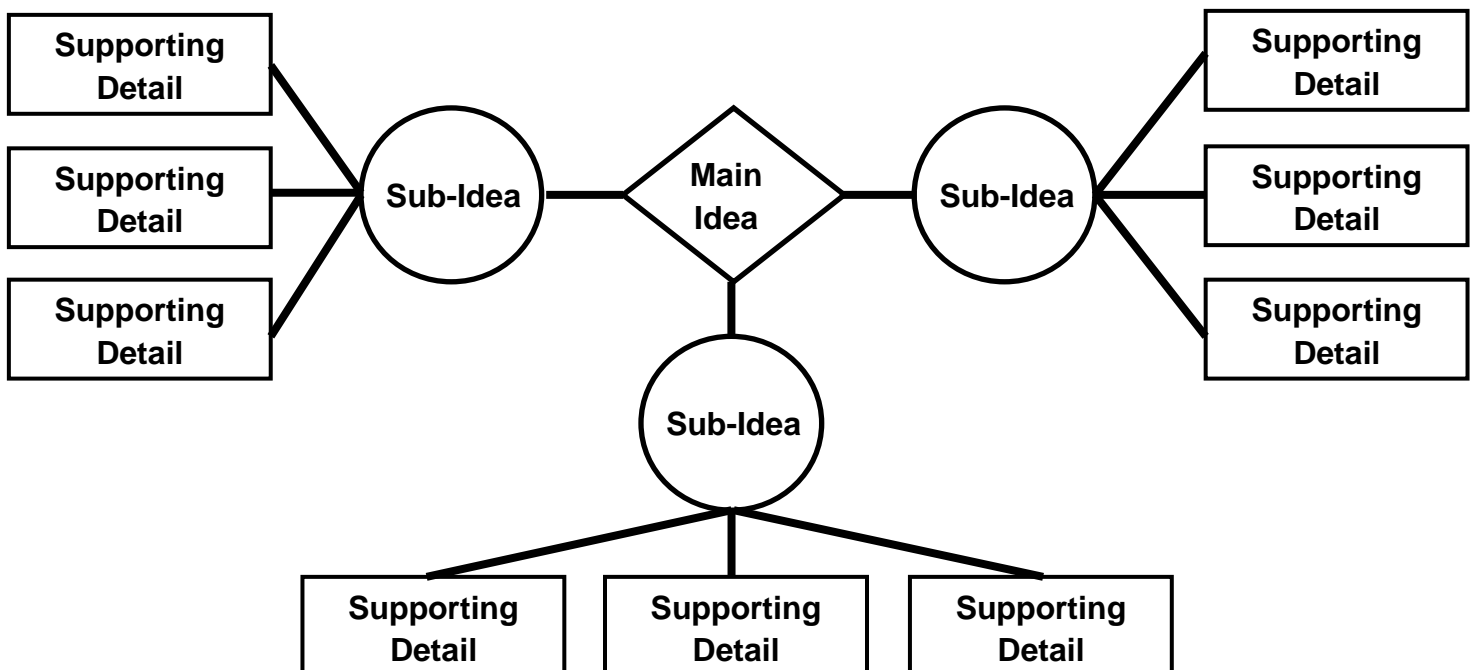
Graphic organizers are defined as “visual and graphic displays that depict the relationships between facts, terms, and/or ideas within a learning task” (National Center on Accessible Instructional Materials). They are very useful for many types of student-oriented learning tasks such as pre-reading, pre-writing, and project planning, where information and ideas must be organized in a logical sequence. They are also useful to teachers for organizing learning elements in lessons and units. For example, a graphic organizer could be used to identify how specific science or math practices are included in a lesson on momentum. In this way the organizer serves as a detailed checklist. See below for another graphic organizer example.

AUDIENCE

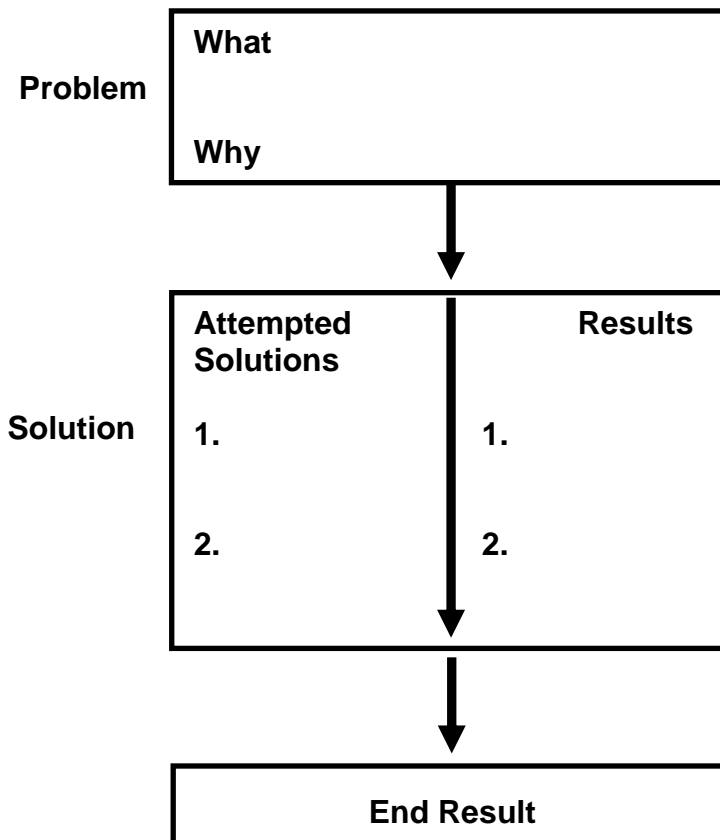
All educators in grades pre-K - 12.

GRAPHIC ORGANIZERS AS PRE-READING & PRE-WRITING TOOLS

Many textbooks such as science and math texts are written in highly-organized fashion to facilitate a logical flow of cumulative content knowledge. Nearly all of them are divided into units, chapters, and individual sections that cover specific concepts. For pre-reading, graphic organizers can be used to organize a chapter or section into titles, headings, subheadings, and then key details under each subheading, much like an outline but depicted visually rather than in paragraph form. This helps readers understand the structure of the text and helps scaffold reading comprehension. Graphic organizers work the same way for pre-writing, except the type of organizer will depend on the learning task. Graphic organizers are also useful for solving problems. Below are two organizer examples.



Problem-Solution Outline



GRAPHIC ORGANIZERS AND COMMON CORE / NGSS PRACTICES

At the end of this tip sheet are two graphic organizers designed by RAFT that help teachers and students identify different ways that math and science/engineering practices are exercised in RAFT's activity kits and idea sheets. Graphic organizers make lesson planning easier by organizing the sequence of conceptual knowledge needed to answer essential questions, understand big ideas, and achieve content-specific learning objectives.

EDUCATORS' REFLECTIONS

1. In what ways might using graphic organizers help *you* with writing lessons?
2. Do I use graphic organizers with my students? If yes, do I favor one main design or do I use a variety? How do I ensure the graphic organizer I use is best suited for the learning tasks I pose to my students?
3. How might I include instruction on designing graphic organizers in my current curriculum? In what ways will the students benefit from designing their own graphic organizers?

RELATED RESOURCES

Hands-on RAFT activities where students organize or sort information and/or objects:

- [http://www.raft.net/ideas/Sorting Trays.pdf](http://www.raft.net/ideas/Sorting%20Trays.pdf)
- [http://www.raft.net/ideas/Sorting it Out with Science.pdf](http://www.raft.net/ideas/Sorting%20it%20Out%20with%20Science.pdf)
- [http://www.raft.net/ideas/Attribute Sudoku.pdf](http://www.raft.net/ideas/Attribute%20Sudoku.pdf)

National Center on Accessible Instructional Materials:

- http://aim.cast.org/learn/historyarchive/backgroundpapers/graphic_organizers#.VJH-Ontna-E
- Variety of graphic organizers available for download / printing from Houghton Mifflin Harcourt's Education Place: <http://www.eduplace.com/graphicorganizer/>