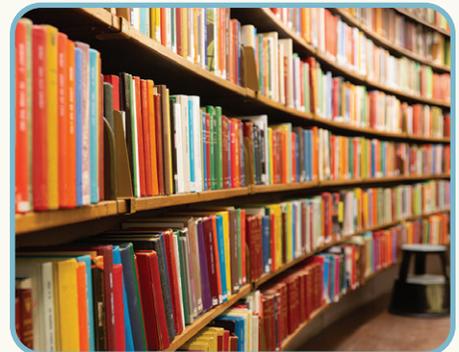


This tool engages students in activities of sorting and categorizing to help them analyze similarities and differences among concepts.

## Card Sort

We love to categorize, sort, and organize objects and information from the world around us to make it meaningful and relevant. We group things by similar colors, textures, and even tastes. Supermarkets, department stores, and dining buffets are arranged for easy consumer access. The Dewey Decimal Classification system has the contents of libraries organized in a distinct way.



Teachers use Card Sort to engage students in activities of sorting and categorizing to help them analyze similarities and differences between concepts. This provides the teacher with a quick, informal assessment of how students perceive the concepts they are learning. Teachers can observe a small group, participate in a large group discussion, or facilitate an individual's understanding of the lesson's content. Students' interpretation of Card Sort activities is a simple method teachers can use to plan further instruction on the concept being taught.

Card Sort activities are not graded; they are a formative assessment tool to provide feedback. How students categorize a set of pictures, objects, or labelled cards into distinct groups provides you with an informal way to check for understanding. Depending on what you are looking to assess, a Card Sort can be created that is specific to the criteria of the lesson.

## Card Sort (continued)

### How to Use Card Sort

#### 1. Create

Card Sort can be used for a variety of functions. Decide which concepts or terms you want students to learn, then make enough card sets for pairs, trios, or groups of four to use. Be consistent in preparing each Card Sort to minimize questions.

Consider using Card Sort activities in the Guided Practice portion of a lesson to engage students in collaborative discussions and decision-making.

Also consider Card Sort in specific study centers or for independent drill and practice. Provide an answer key or code on the back of the cards for students to self-check their accuracy. If you are determining specific categories for students to organize the cards, make the category cards distinct from the regular cards—a different color, larger in size, wording all in caps, or different font.

### SORT BY COLOR

	<input style="width: 100%; height: 100%;" type="text"/>	<input style="width: 100%; height: 100%;" type="text"/>	<input style="width: 100%; height: 100%;" type="text"/>			
	<input style="width: 100%; height: 100%;" type="text"/>	<input style="width: 100%; height: 100%;" type="text"/>	<input style="width: 100%; height: 100%;" type="text"/>			
	<input style="width: 100%; height: 100%;" type="text"/>	<input style="width: 100%; height: 100%;" type="text"/>	<input style="width: 100%; height: 100%;" type="text"/>			
	<input style="width: 100%; height: 100%;" type="text"/>	<input style="width: 100%; height: 100%;" type="text"/>	<input style="width: 100%; height: 100%;" type="text"/>			

Provide discussion topics to elicit student interaction. Card Sort provides the teacher and students feedback on how students are thinking about the concepts. Sample discussion topics can be general:

- ♦ How are \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ different?
- ♦ How are \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ the same?
- ♦ How can you tell the difference between the \_\_\_\_\_ and the \_\_\_\_\_?
- ♦ What does \_\_\_\_\_ include that \_\_\_\_\_ doesn't?
- ♦ What generalizations can you make about the \_\_\_\_\_?

#### 2. Sort

Have the students sort the cards into meaningful groups or matches. Model the conversation students will have with one another to determine how to sort their cards or how to match them.

#### 3. Discuss

Discuss the categories or matches. Ask groups to explain how they decided to sort their cards.

## Card Sort (continued)

### When to Use Card Sort

Use Card Sort at any point in the lesson to structure meaningful conversations:

- ◆ Before beginning a new assignment to assess prior knowledge
- ◆ After introducing new vocabulary
- ◆ After learning about categories and classification
- ◆ When a unit is completed to review concepts and terms
- ◆ Introduction to a new unit
- ◆ Practice new material

Card Sorts can be used to differentiate instruction. Different groups can have different levels of understanding of the same concepts. Students who have accommodations or modifications can use specialized Card Sorts to meet their individual needs—ELL students or struggling readers can use card pictures while other students have word cards.

Card Sorts provide a learning outlet for kinesthetic learners who benefit from movement as they arrange the cards. Advanced learners can provide rationale for each of their classifications or create their own example to add to the Card Sort. Students who need more practice with the content can be assigned with partners capable of explaining the material while they sort the cards together. Card Sort can also be a fun class competition to see which group correctly sorts the cards quickest.

Card Sorts are very versatile. This activity can take as little as five minutes by having students quickly sort cards and check their answers. Or it can last up to 45 minutes by assigning students to record their answers, explain and defend their classification choices, and answer reflection questions.

### Card Sort Variations

#### Concept Sort

Ask students to group terms or concepts into piles and have them write the name of the category or relationship on a blank card to be placed on top of each pile.

#### Re-Sort

Ask students to sort the cards several times in the same sitting, making different connections and categories for the terms and concepts each time. After each sort, students write the names of the new categories or relationships on blank cards and place them on top of the differently sorted piles.

### Value of Using Card Sort

- ◆ Allows students to think critically about the concepts they are learning
- ◆ Engages students in high level thinking skills
- ◆ Helps teachers facilitate deeper understanding or intervene and redirect learning accurately
- ◆ Provides the teacher with an informal assessment of student understanding when learning and exploring new concepts
- ◆ Allows teachers to intervene to provide immediate feedback, redirect inaccurate perceptions, or reteach on the spot

Card Sort allows the students to process information in their own way while also working with vocabulary, terms, and concepts. Sorting the cards gives students a structure to speak meaningfully with one another about the content and helps teachers confirm concepts are understood to identify learning gaps.