

Categories (Sorting and Organizing)

Purpose

This routine encourages students to express ideas without the pressure of finding a correct answer. It also allows students to practice categorizing, labeling, and thinking creatively. This routine is adapted from the Professional Learning Opportunities Project's English Language Proficiency Standards (ELPS) course.

Time

This routine takes 5-10 minutes.

Supported standards

ELPS 4: Construct level-appropriate oral and written claims and support them with reasoning and evidence.

Materials

- Flashcards with words or pictures
- Blank table/chart (optional)

Procedure

1. The instructor creates flashcards with a word or picture on each. (Note: instructors may want to include older vocabulary that the student is familiar with but hasn't practiced recently.)
2. The instructor gives the student(s) the collection of flashcards and explains that they need to sort the flashcards into categories of their own making. Student(s) can use the premade chart provided on the last page of this document or they can group the flashcards in another way that makes sense. The instructor can model the activity first to demonstrate sorting the cards into categories.
3. Students explain how they organized the words or pictures. Students can add headings to their charts and explain their rationale for each group orally or in writing.
4. This routine can be done in a group with initial discussion between students, or it can be done one-on-one with a student directly explaining their reasoning and opinion to the instructor. In an online environment, the instructor can provide the list of words or pictures in a shareable document or whiteboard, and students can copy/paste or move the items into different columns on the chart.

Example

Look at these ten words. Organize them into three categories. Explain the reason for your decisions.

1. Hotel room
2. Tent
3. Swimming pool
4. Sunblock
5. Backpack
6. Suitcase
7. Hike
8. Car
9. Map
10. Credit card

Examples:

These are places you can sleep	These are supplies you need when you are on vacation	These are ways to spend the day during a vacation
Hotel room Tent Car	Sunblock Backpack Suitcase Map Credit card	Swimming pool Hike

These are things you don't want to lose on vacation	These are things for a hot and sunny day	These are things for a trip to the mountains
Tent Car Credit card Suitcase Backpack	sunblock swimming pool	map hike

Tutoring Routines
