

Concept Sorts for Vocabulary Development

Notes for the Teacher

A *concept sort* is an activity in which pictures, objects, or words are grouped by shared attributes. The three picture sorts in this unit are designed to build vocabulary, develop critical-thinking skills, and teach the process of sorting. Use one or more of these example sorts early in the school year to demonstrate and practice sorting routines. These sorts are especially useful in the content areas you are teaching; you can use them to informally assess your students' academic language skills in English. Consider creating a sort similar to the oceanic habitat example in this unit that fits with your classroom units of study. Watch to see whether students understand your directions for doing a sort and then categorize the pictures appropriately. Note how students sort the items when they have an opportunity to do a sort of their own categorizing. Are students able to describe their thinking in English? Do they use single words, phrases, or complete sentences? Which words do students know, and which will they need instruction to learn? Do they use home language resources to better understand the concepts and language involved with the sorts? Use these sorts to support your instruction in science, math, or social studies, and create other sorts based on the thematic studies in your classroom.

Standard Weekly Routines for Use With Sorts 1-3

- 1. Learning and Practicing Unknown Vocabulary** First, discuss how the pictures connect to the content area studies in your classroom. Preview the pictures from the sort with your students. Name each picture, and have students repeat the name. Next, ask students to name the pictures. Set aside words that are unknown to be reviewed. Select up to ten of the unknown pictures for vocabulary study. Talk about the pictures with students, clarify their meanings with a student-friendly definition, and invite students to use the words in sentences. If possible, have students share the names of the pictures in Spanish.
- 2. Repeated Work with the Pictures** Students should repeat the sort several times after it has been modeled and discussed under your direction. Make a copy of the blackline master for each student, enlarging it to make it more readable and reduce paper waste. Provide opportunities for students to create their own categories for the sort and to share

their ideas with others. After cutting out the pictures and using them for individual practice, store the pieces in an envelope or baggie to sort again several times on other days. See *WTW EL* for tips on managing picture sorting.

- 3. Picture Hunts and Picture Dictionaries** Students can look through magazines, catalogs, and newspaper ads for pictures of things to add to their concept sorts. Encourage students to share their findings and create personal picture dictionaries so they can reference the vocabulary in the future.
- 4. Games and Writing Activities** Many games, such as Concentration, I Spy, Charades, and Bingo, are outlined in *WTW EL* and will help you use the concept sort cards for vocabulary and language-development activities. Students can also pair up to quiz each other on the names of the pictures. Use the concept sorts as springboards for student writing projects.

Sort 1: Plant Parts

Items in the Plant Parts Concept Sort

root	stem	leaf
fruit	flower	(flower)
(cauliflower)	(stem)	(roots)
(corn)	(peach)	(carrots)
(celery)	(vine)	(grapes)
(rose)	(leaves)	(spinach)

Demonstrate, Sort, Check, and Reflect

- Prepare a set of pictures from the Sort 1 images on page 8 for teacher-directed modeling. Practice the vocabulary with students as described earlier in the Standard Weekly Routines section.
- Begin a concept sort by stating your thinking out loud as you model for your students. *“There are lots of pictures here of plant parts—roots, stems, leaves, fruits, and flowers. The words in dark letters are the labels for these groups. Let’s make five groups with a word at the top of each column and then decide whether the plant part is a root, stem, leaf, fruit, or flower.”* Hold up the picture of a flower. *“This is a picture of a _____? Flower, yes. A flower goes in the flower group. What about a peach? What part of a plant is a peach? The fruit, right!”* Now hold up something that is a little more challenging, such as the celery. *“This is a picture of celery. What part of a plant is the celery we eat? Have you ever seen little roots growing underneath this part of the celery? Or the leaves growing at the other end? This celery is the stem of a plant.”* Continue working your way through each item to decide where it will go—in the root, stem, leaf, fruit, or flower group. Encourage students to participate in your decision making as you go. The completed sort should be categorized as follows:

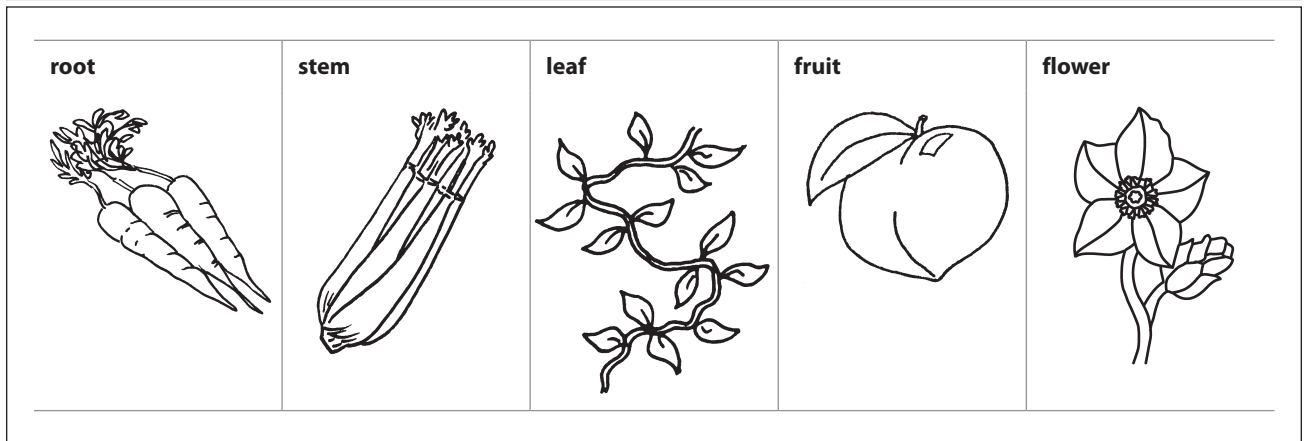
Root: roots, carrots

Stem: stem, celery

Leaf: vine, leaves, spinach

Fruit: corn, peach, grapes

Flower: flower, cauliflower, rose

FIGURE 1.1 Beginning of Plant Parts Concept Sort

- Next demonstrate how to check, correct, and reflect. *“When we are all done, we read our columns and check our work. If we find something that does not belong, we make a change.”* Read the pictures in each column, adjusting if necessary. Restate why you sorted the way you did. The beginning of the plant parts concept sort is pictured in Figure 1.1.
- Give students their own sets of plant part picture cards for use in sorting. Allow them to repeat the sort and then discuss their thinking with their classmates and you. Have them name the items in their groups and check them. Listen to the language your students use, and take advantage of opportunities to repeat the names of unknown words.

Extend

On subsequent days, ask students to find other pictures of plant parts. They can draw them or cut them out of magazines. Students can also write the names of specific plant parts and include more words in their sorts. Have them play guessing games in pairs to identify the names of the pictures. Put the picture and word cards in plastic bags for students to take home to practice with their families. If plant parts are included in your science curriculum, connect this sort to other class lessons. Have students glue the pictures into individual dictionaries or science notebooks to refer to as they learn new words in English. Read and discuss some of the pictures and stories from the following Literature Connection feature.

Literature Connection

- Blevins, W. (2004). *Parts of a plant*. Mankato, MN: Compass Point Books.
- Bodach, V. K. (2007). *Flowers (Plant Parts Series)*. Mankato, MN: Capstone Press.
- Bodach, V. K. (2007). *Fruits (Plant Parts Series)*. Mankato, MN: Capstone Press.
- Bodach, V. K. (2007). *Leaves (Plant Parts Series)*. Mankato, MN: Capstone Press.
- Bodach, V. K. (2008). *Roots (Plant Parts Series)*. Mankato, MN: Capstone Press.
- Bodach, V. K. (2008). *Stems (Plant Parts Series)*. Mankato, MN: Capstone Press.
- Bulla, C. R. (2001). *A tree is a plant*. New York: HarperCollins.
- Cherry, L. (2003). *How groundhog’s garden grew*. New York: Scholastic.

- Cole, H. (1997). *Jack's garden*. New York: Mulberry Books.
- Ehlert, L. (1990). *Growing vegetable soup*. San Diego, CA: Harcourt.
- Gibbons, G. (1993). *From seed to plant*. New York: Holiday House.
- Gibbons, G. (2008). *The vegetables we eat*. New York: Holiday House.
- Kudlinski, K. V. (2007). *What do roots do?* Minnetonka, MN: NorthWood Books for Young Readers.
- Maestro, B. (1993). *How do apples grow?* New York: HarperCollins.
- Richards, J. (2002). *A fruit is a suitcase for seeds*. Minneapolis, MN: Millbrook Press.
- Stevens, J. (1995). *Tops and bottoms*. San Diego, CA: Harcourt.
- Worth, B. (2001). *Oh say can you seed? All about flowering plants*. New York: Random House.

Sort 2: Geometric Figures

Items in the Geometric Figures Sort

curved	straight	(circle)
(square)	(oval)	(figure eight)
(parallelogram)	(rectangle)	(quatrefoil)
(crescent)	(ellipse)	(trapezoid)
(rhombus)	(triangle)	(star shape)
(pentagon)	(octagon)	(hexagon)

Demonstrate, Sort, Check, and Reflect

1. Prepare a set of pictures from the Sort 2 images on page 9 for teacher-directed modeling. Practice the vocabulary with students as described earlier in the Standard Weekly Routines section.
2. Begin the concept sort by stating your thinking out loud as you model for your students. *"This sort has lots of pictures of shapes or geometric figures. Let's try sorting the figures by whether they have straight or curved sides. The words in dark letters are the labels for these groups: curved and straight."* Hold up the picture of a circle. *"This is a picture of a _____? Circle, yes. A circle has a curved side. I am going to put the circle under the word curved and we can put other pictures of curved shapes underneath. What about a rectangle? Does a rectangle have curved sides or straight sides? Straight sides, right."* Now pick up another geometric figure card, such as a parallelogram. *"This is a picture of a parallelogram. Does a parallelogram have curved or straight sides? Straight. Let's put the parallelogram below the rectangle because it also has straight sides."* Continue working your way through the figures to decide where each will go—underneath the word *curved* or *straight*. Encourage students to participate in your decision.

making as you go. Remember to repeat the figure names that are more difficult many times as you sort them. The completed sort should be categorized as follows:

Curved: circle, oval, figure eight, quatrefoil, crescent, ellipse

Straight: square, parallelogram, rectangle, trapezoid, rhombus, triangle, star shape, pentagon, octagon, hexagon

3. Next demonstrate how to check, correct, and reflect. *“When we are all done, we read our columns and check our work. If we find something that does not belong, we make a change.”* Read the pictures in each column, adjusting if necessary. Restate why you sorted the way you did.
4. Give students their own sets of geometric figure cards for use in sorting. Allow them to repeat the sort and then discuss their thinking with their classmates and you. Have them read the items in their groups and check them. Listen to the language your students use, and take advantage of opportunities to repeat the names of unknown words or build sentences with the words as students’ language skills allow.

Extend

On subsequent days, ask students to think of other ways to sort their picture cards. Have them play guessing games in pairs to identify the names of the pictures. Share cognates in Spanish, such as *rectangle/rectángulo*, *hexagon/hexágono*, *rhombus/rombo*, or *parallelogram/paralelograma*. Put the picture cards in plastic bags for students to take home to practice with their families. Make a duplicate set of geometric figure cards to use in playing matching games. Look for objects in the environment and in print materials that have the same shapes as the geometric figures. Have the students create art projects using a variety of curved or straight-sided figures and then write stories about them. Read and discuss some of the pictures and stories from the following Literature Connection feature.

Literature Connection

- Aboff, E. M. (2010). *If you were a polygon*. Mankato, MN: Capstone Press.
- Aboff, E. M. (2010). *If you were a triangle*. Mankato, MN: Capstone Press.
- Blaisdell, M. C. B. (2010). *If you were a circle*. Mankato, MN: Capstone Press.
- Blaisdell, M. C. B. (2010). *If you were a quadrilateral*. Mankato, MN: Capstone Press.
- Greene, R. G. (2001). *When a line bends . . . a shape begins*. Boston: Sandpiper Books.
- Hoban, T. (1996). *Shapes, shapes, shapes*. New York: Greenwillow Books.
- Johnson, S. T. (1995). *Alphabet city*. New York: Penguin Putnam, Inc.
- Lionni, L. (1995). *Little Blue and Little Yellow*. New York: HarperCollins.
- Metropolitan Museum of Art. (2005). *Museum shapes*. New York: Little, Brown Books for Young Readers.
- Micklethwait, L. (2004). *I spy shapes in art*. New York: Greenwillow Books.
- Pelletier, D. (1996). *The graphic alphabet*. New York: Scholastic.
- Pluckrose, H. A. (1995). *Shape*. Danbury, CT: Children’s Press.
- Seuss, D. (1973). *The shape of me and other stuff*. New York: Random House Books for Young Readers.
- Walsh, E. L. (2007). *Mouse shapes*. San Diego, CA: Harcourt.

Sort 3: Oceanic Habitat

Items in the Oceanic Habitat Sort

plant	animal	nonliving
(crab)	(kelp)	(rockweed)
(rock)	(shark)	(beach)
(zooplankton)	(sea otter)	(large fish)
(sea grass)	(Irish moss)	(small fish)
(shrimp)	(orca)	(boat)

Demonstrate, Sort, Check, and Reflect

1. Prepare a set of pictures from the Sort 3 images on page 10 for teacher-directed modeling. Practice the vocabulary with students as described earlier in the Standard Weekly Routines section.
2. Begin the concept sort by stating your thinking out loud as you model for your students. *“This sort has lots of pictures from an oceanic habitat. Some of these items represent living things like plants and animals. Others are not alive. Let’s sort by whether the item is a plant, an animal, or a nonliving thing.”* Demonstrate the sort as has been described for Sorts 1 and 2 earlier. The completed sort should be categorized as follows:

Plant: kelp, rockweed, sea grass, Irish moss

Animal: crab, shark, zooplankton, sea otter, large fish, small fish, shrimp, orca

Nonliving: rock, beach, boat
3. Next check, correct, and reflect with the students. *“Let’s read our columns and check our work. If we find something that does not belong, we will make a change.”* Read the pictures in each column, adjusting if necessary. Restate why you sorted the way you did.
4. Give students their own sets of ocean picture cards for use in sorting. Allow them to repeat the sort and then discuss their thinking with their classmates and you. Have them read the items in their groups and check them. Listen to the language your students use, and take advantage of opportunities to repeat the names of unknown words or build sentences to extend students’ language skills. Use some of the disciplinary language of science, such as *“A shark is similar to or different from a crab in the following ways . . .”*

Extend


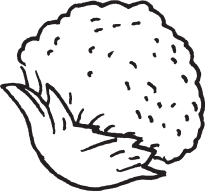
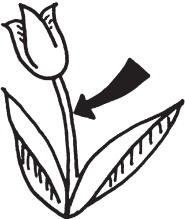




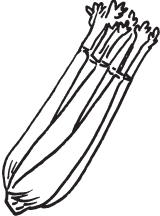

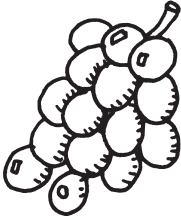

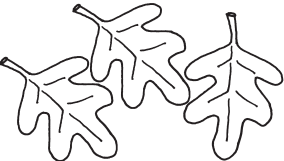

On subsequent days, ask students to think of other ways to sort their picture cards. Have them play guessing games in pairs to identify the names of the pictures. Put the picture cards in plastic bags for students to take home to practice with their families. Have students glue the pictures onto blank paper to create an underwater scene and then label their creations or write some descriptive statements about them. Enlarge the pictures and put them in a pocket chart

along with their names for students to make connections between the oral and written words. Read and discuss some of the pictures and stories from the following Literature Connection feature.

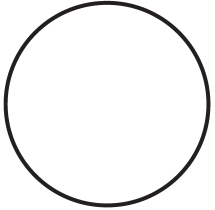
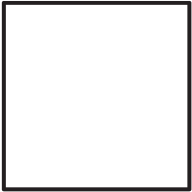
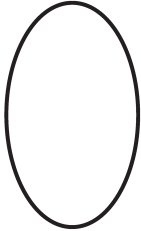



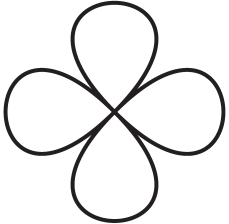

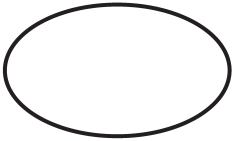

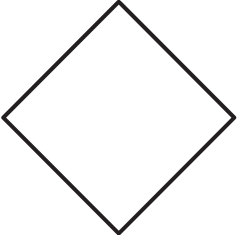
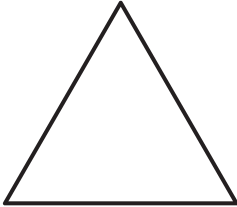
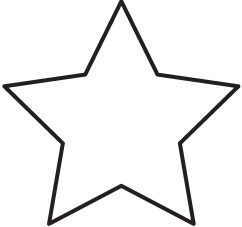
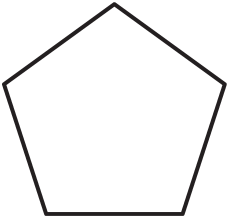
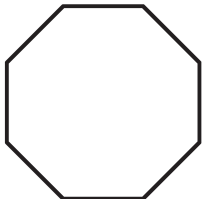
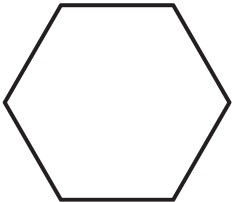
Literature Connection

- Dell, P. J. (2006). *Ocean plants*. Mankato, MN: Capstone Press.
- Ganeri, A. (2003). *I wonder why the sea is salty and other questions about the oceans*. New York: Kingfisher Books.
- Krinking, K. W. (2003). *The ocean is . . .*. New York: Henry Holt & Co.
- Ling, M. (2001). *Eye wonder: Oceans*. New York: DK Children.
- Lugtu, C. J. L. (2004). *Life in an ocean*. Mankato, MN: Capstone Press.
- Macken, J. E. (2005). *Water habitats/Habitats acuáticos: Beaches/Playas*. Milwaukee, WI: Weekly Reader Early Learning Library.
- Pallotta, J. (2005). *Ocean counting: Odd numbers*. Watertown, MA: Charlesbridge.
- Pitkin, L. (2003). *Journey under the sea*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Ring, S. (2005). *El océano*. Mankato, MN: Capstone Press.
- Salas, L. P. (2007). *Oceans: Underwater worlds*. Mankato, MN: Picture Window Books.
- Tagliaferro, L. (2007). *How many fish in the sea?* Mankato, MN: Capstone Press.
- Ward, J. (2000). *Somewhere in the ocean*. Lanham, MD: Rising Moon.

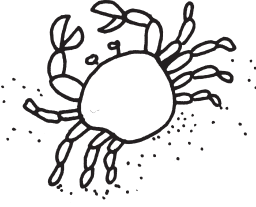
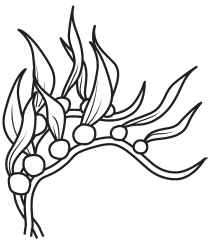

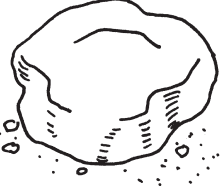

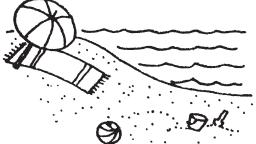
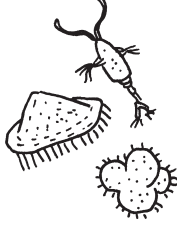

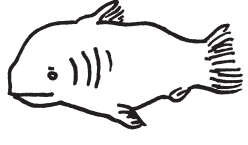

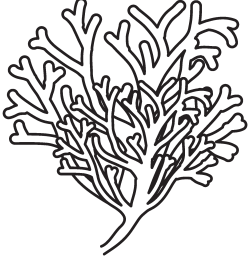


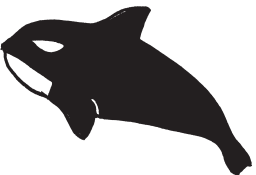
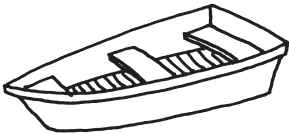
SORTS 1-3**SORT 1: Plant Parts**

root	stem	leaf
fruit	flower	
		
		
		
		

SORT 2: Geometric Figures

<p>curved</p>	<p>straight</p>	
		
		
		
		
		

SORT 3: Oceanic Habitat

plant	animal	nonliving
		
		
		
		
		

Assessment of Concept Sorts

Use the concept sorts to informally assess your students in three areas: vocabulary knowledge, sorting procedures, and content area learning. Consider the following questions:

- 1. Vocabulary Knowledge** How many of the pictures can students identify? Are they able to say the words in English, in their home language, both, or neither? Do they use the words in simple sentences or have extended conversations about the items? Notice the level of word and sentence knowledge students have so that you can build on their abilities in future word-study activities.
- 2. Knowledge of Sorting Procedures** Are students able to do the concept sorts on their own? Are they able to repeat the sort independently? Do they follow the procedures of checking and reflecting on their sorts? What aspects of the sorting process are difficult for them and may require further instruction?
- 3. Content Knowledge** Do students demonstrate the content knowledge represented by the concept sorts? For example, have students correctly sorted the plant parts, geometric figures, and components of the oceanic habitat? Can students apply these understandings to new examples outside of the sort? What do their reflections or writings demonstrate about their learning?