

KWL Chart: How to Use This Resource

KWL charts are useful tools to help students structure their thought process when they learn new material. It allows students to state what they know about a topic, craft follow up questions, and record what and how they learned the material.

Sometimes, teachers ask students to complete the K column and W column at once, writing down all the ideas they currently know and the additional questions they have. Then they seek to find the answer and record the new information they learned.

An alternative way to complete this KWL chart, shown in the example below, is for students to use the L column- what they learned, to re-define what they know and ask additional follow up questions. This process is more closely aligned to a true inquiry-based classroom. New information learned in the L column becomes new "background knowledge" and is written in the K column. This process can continue throughout the lesson cycle: the new information they learned from their previous question can become a new "What I already know" discussion, and a new follow-up question can be crafted. The process continues throughout the class period or even over several days until students have a deep and clear understanding of the lesson topic. KWL charts are excellent tools to help teach depth of concepts in the classroom.

The specific method teachers require of students in their classroom will vary, but the point is clear: students help lead the learning process by crafting thoughtful questions to concepts they want to learn more about.

In the below example, the topic of discussion is adding fractions. A student crafted one statement he already knew about fractions: fractions are a part over a whole. Since the classroom lesson was focused on adding fractions, the student's natural question posed was inquiring about the differences between adding fractions and whole numbers. The answer that he discovered after the lesson activities was how to add the numerator when the denominators are the same. An inquisitive student may then wonder whether the same rule applies to fractions when the denominators are different, and thus the understanding of adding fractions goes deeper as the student continues to learn more rules regarding the addition of fractions.

Example:

Topic:
Adding
fractions

K (What I Already Know)	W (What I Want to Know)	L (What I Learned)
Fractions are a part over a whole. ----- The rule when adding fractions is to add the numerators only, if the denominators are the same.	How is adding fractions different than adding whole numbers? ----- But how do I add fractions if the denominators are different?	When adding a fraction like: $\frac{1}{4} + \frac{2}{4}$ you add the numerators only to give $\frac{3}{4}$. ----- You need always to find the common denominator before adding fractions.
<i>Students use this space to discuss their background knowledge about the lesson or individual topic.</i>	<i>Students use this space to craft questions sparked by their background knowledge</i>	<i>Students use this space to summarize what they learned based on the questions they asked.</i>

TOPIC:

STUDENT
NAME:

K

(What I Already Know)

W

(What I Want to Know)

L

(What I Learned)