THE K. PATRICIA CROSS ACADEMY

INSTRUCTOR'S GUIDE

Teaching Technique 05

Group Grid

ACTIVITY TYPE	TEACHING PROBLEM ADDRESSED	LEARNING TAXONOMIC LEVEL
• Group Work	• Lack of Participation	• Foundational Knowledge
• Graphic Organizing	• Insufficient Class Preparation	• Learning How to Learn
• Learning Assessment	• Surface Learning	• Integration & Synthesis

Group Grid

In *Group Grid*, group members are given pieces of information and asked to place them in the blank cells of a grid according to category rubrics, which helps them clarify conceptual categories and develop sorting skills.

1 Clarify your teaching purpose and learning goals for the *Group Grid*

2 Choose two or more related categories that organize course information

3 Create a grid along with list of items to be sorted

4 Develop a plan for learning assessment or grading

5 Communicate assignment instructions to students

6 Allow students time to complete the *Group Grid*

7 Reflect upon the activity and evaluate its effectiveness

Step-By-Step Instructions

In this section we provide you with guidance on each of the seven steps involved as you consider this technique.

STEP 1: CLARIFY YOUR TEACHING PURPOSE AND LEARNING GOALS

A *Group Grid* is a collaborative activity that uses a graphic organizer. Graphic organizers are powerful tools for converting complex information into meaningful displays. Because information can be arranged spatially, graphic organizers can help students discover the patterns and relationships among ideas that are sometimes impossible to convey in text alone. This, in turn, can help learners find meaning in what they are learning, which can stimulate their motivation to learn it. Because they can show the inter-relationships among parts as well as the relationship of the parts to the whole, they help students view information on both holistic and detailed levels. Because they can compress and focus information, they can make interpretation, understanding, and insight easier. Helping novice learners see the benefits of using graphic organizers can equip them with an important tool for learning more efficiently and effectively.

This technique is probably most useful in introductory-level courses where students are building basic schema, learning a large number of new terms, and trying to understand the categorization rules of the discipline. Organizing and classifying information helps students to clarify conceptual categories and to develop categorization skills. By making students' conceptual organization explicit and graphic, *Group Grid* also helps students move from surface to deeper learning, which also helps them to remember the information. *Group Grid* can be structured to ensure that all students participate.

A *Group Grid* is a flexible technique that can be used for many different instructional purposes, so think through how you want to use it in your course. For example, it can provide a framework for gathering and sorting ideas for discussion, writing, or research. It can also help students better understand different aspects of a concept. It can reveal what information is known and highlight what is still missing. *Group Grid* can also be used for assessment and grading, efficiently displaying the order and completeness of a group's thought processes and the strengths and weaknesses of their understanding.

STEP 2: IDENTIFY THE LEARNING TASK'S UNDERLYING PROBLEM AND PROMPT

Students sort pieces of information by placing them in the blank cells of a grid. The grid's columns and rows consist of superordinate concepts, and student groups receive scrambled lists of subordinate terms, names, equations, images, or other items that belong in the categories. Teams sort the subordinate items into the correct grid categories.

STEP 3: SET ASSIGNMENT PARAMETERS

Assignment parameters are informed by the grid itself, so an important first step is to select two or more related categories that organize course information. The simplest grid sorts information into two or three columns. More complex grids have more columns, or they may contain a second level of sorting where the top horizontal row identifies one level of organization and the far left vertical column identifies another level of organization. The item placed at the point of intersection must meet both column and row classification criteria.

You can create a grid by using a word processing table function, drawing a large rectangle and dividing it into as many smaller rectangles as you have categories and items of information. Write the name of the categories in the top row and/or left column, leaving the remaining cells blank. Either write out the items that teams are to sort in a scrambled list on the side of the grid or write the list on a separate piece of paper, a presentation slide, or whiteboard. Write out a list of items that belong in each category. Check to make sure you can fill out the grid yourself. Once you have the grid, you can make decisions on other assignment parameters such as how you will form groups, how much class time to allot, how you will present groups with the grid and items to sort, and so forth.

STEP 4: DEVELOP A PLAN FOR LEARNING ASSESSMENT OR GRADING

Consider using the grid you constructed to evaluate students' grids or to have students check the accuracy of their grids. If you want to grade the activity, determine how you will do so. For example, you might want a simple tally of correct responses.

STEP 5: COMMUNICATE ASSIGNMENT PARAMETERS TO STUDENTS

Distribute a handout that includes the blank grid along with the items to be sorted as a handout, or have students copy the grid from a presentation slide that you project from the whiteboard.

STEP 6: IMPLEMENT THE TECHNIQUE

- Form groups.

- Give students the list of scrambled items of information.

- Have students fill in the blank cells of the grid. Groups can discuss and come to consensus about how the items should be sorted and fill out the grid as a group project. Or individual students can take turns in a 'round robin' order filling in one cell per turn. Each person within the group, or each pair within a quad, can have their own writing style (cursive vs. printing) or colored markers to distinguish their contributions.

- Students submit completed grids for assessment and evaluation, or you can post a correctly completed grid for them to check for accuracy.

Step-By-Step Instructions (CON'T)

STEP 7: REFLECT UPON THE ACTIVITY AND EVALUATE ITS EFFECTIVENESS

When reflecting on the activity and how effective it was, consider the following questions:

- Did the technique match the course learning goals and objectives?

- Did it meet my goals for this learning module?

- Was it appropriate for the students?

- Did the technique keep the students engaged?

- Did it promote student learning?

- Did it provide me with information about student understanding?

If you answer yes to all or most of these questions, next consider how you might improve the activity for the next use.

Support Materials

The materials in this section are intended to help you with the process of implementing this technique. For *Group Grid*, we provide examples of different ways to vary this technique.

WAYS TO VARY GROUP GRIDS

- Omit providing students with the lists of items to be organized and instead give them grids that include only the categories, and then have them generate the items to write in the cells.

- Conversely, give students grids that include only the cell items and ask them to identify category names.

- Simple, 2-column grids can be very effective using a variety of superordinate categories such as pros and cons, costs and benefits, advantages and disadvantages, problems and solutions, cause and effect, fact or fiction, and so forth.

- Consider having students fill out a 2-column pro-con grid from different perspectives. For example, 3 separate grids can analyze the benefits and detriments of online course delivery from the student's perspective, the teacher's perspective, and the institution's perspective.

Technique Template

Following are two templates to assist you as you think through how you might implement this technique in your own class. The first is a completed template, providing an example of how Elizabeth Barkley adapted *Group Grid* in her course, *Music of Multicultural America*. The second is a blank template for you to fill out to tailor this technique for your course.

Technique Template

Sample *Group Grid* Completed Technique Template:

Content from Elizabeth Barkley

Music of Multicultural America
Course Name

COURSE CHARACTERISTICS

What are the situational factors that impact this course? For example, is it on campus or online? How many students? Is it lower division or graduate? Are there student attributes such as attitudes, prior knowledge, reasons for enrolling, and so forth that should be taken into account as you consider this technique?

> My course is an on campus, Honors Institute section of a lower division General Education course. The course meets my institution's United States Cultures & Communities requirement and also the Humanities requirement. It enrolls about 25-30 students. A significant number are international students and we are also trying to recruit more first generation students. As Honors students, they typically have good academic skills and are highly motivated.

STEP 1: CLARIFY YOUR TEACHING PURPOSE AND LEARNING GOALS

Why are you choosing this technique? What do you hope to accomplish?

> I am looking for a collaborative activity that will help students better clarify foundational knowledge related to the evolution of the Blues because they currently confuse various genres, key musicians, and so forth.

STEP 2: IDENTIFY THE LEARNING TASK'S UNDERLYING PROBLEM AND PROMPT

What is the question you want learners to address, or problem you want them to solve?

> I will give students a list of pieces of information related to the evolution of the Blues genre, and then ask them to sort them by key categories: dates, style, structural characteristics, and key musicians. After they have completed that, I will ask them to identify the style of blues of different listening examples I will play.

STEP 3: SET ASSIGNMENT PARAMETERS

What are the assignment logistics? For example, will this be assigned individually or is it group work? How long will the assignment take? Will students be submitting a product? What materials, resources, or additional information do you anticipate needing?

> This will be a group project for groups of 3. I will make a handout that includes both the grid and the list of pieces of information they need to sort. I will ask group members to use different colors of pens or pencil to indicate their individual responses and also write in a 'key' that identifies name with color. I will need to have extra pens/colored pencils on hand.

STEP 4: DEVELOP A PLAN FOR LEARNING ASSESSMENT OR GRADING

If you decide to assess learning, how will you determine that learning has occurred? For example, will you use a simple +/check/- grading system? If you use a rubric, will you use an existing one or create one? What will be your criteria and standards?

> I will use this primarily as a formative assessment strategy to determine how well students are understanding the differences between different blues styles. I will therefore not grade it, but I will tally the number of correct responses by individual student and include those in the Participation component of their grades.

STEP 5: COMMUNICATE ASSIGNMENT PARAMETERS TO STUDENTS

How will you communicate assignment parameters to students? For example, through a handout? A prompt on a presentation slide? Assignment instructions in your online course?

> I will include instructions on the Group Grid handout that I will distribute in class, and I'll also allow time for questions.

STEP 6: IMPLEMENT THE TECHNIQUE

How will you adapt steps/procedures for your students? Are there any additional logistical aspects to consider?

I need to create the handout, determine how much class time I'll allow for this activity, and how I want to organize students into groups. I also need to bring a variety of colored pens or pencils.

STEP 7: REFLECT UPON THE ACTIVITY AND EVALUATE ITS EFFECTIVENESS

Note: This step will be completed after you have implemented the technique.
Did this technique help you accomplish your goals? What worked well? What could have been improved? What might you change if you decide to implement the activity again?

After I implemented this technique I asked students how they liked it, and many said it was very helpful for helping them distinguish between the different blues styles. They also liked the opportunity to connect theory with practice by applying the information to examples of blues I played for them. I will use it again, and maybe create a similar activity on jazz.

Technique Template

This template is intended for use when planning to implement **Group Grid** in your class. Fill in the blanks below, and use the information provided elsewhere in the Instructor's Guide to assist you in your thinking.
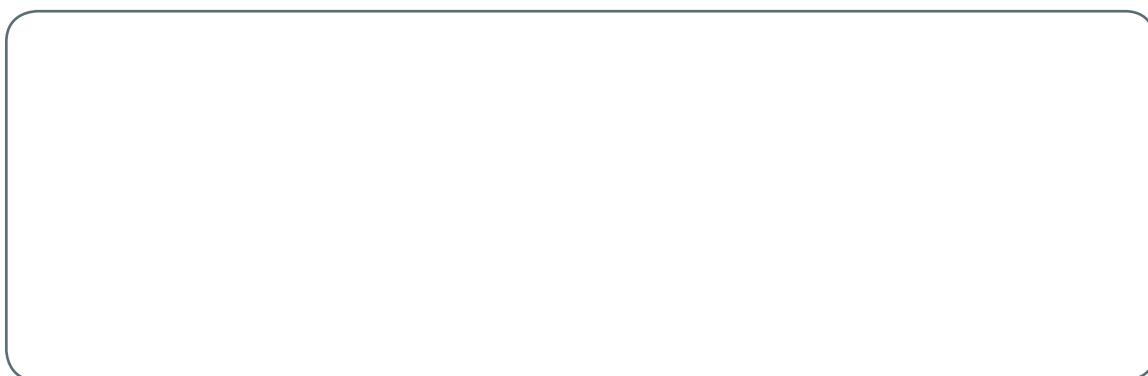
_____

Course Name

COURSE CHARACTERISTICS

What are the situational factors that impact this course? For example, is it on campus or online? How many students? Is it lower division or graduate? Are there student attributes such as attitudes, prior knowledge, reasons for enrolling, and so forth that should be taken into account as you consider this technique?
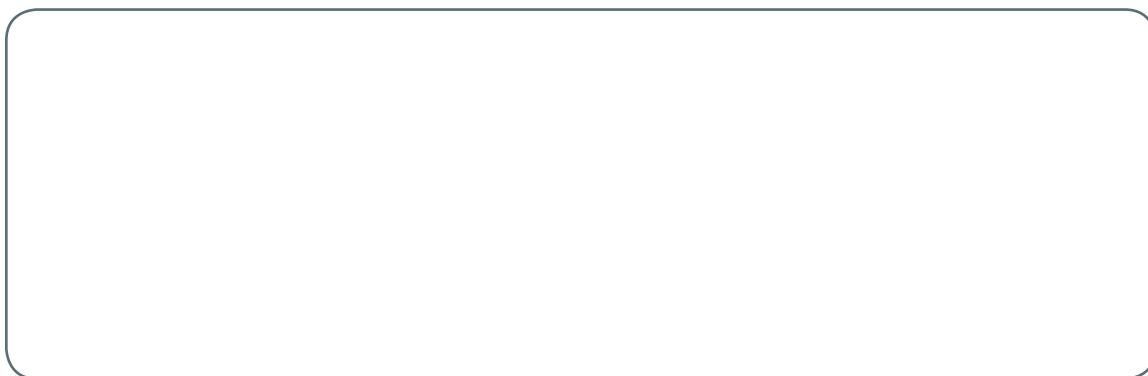
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Note: This step will be completed after you have implemented the technique.
Did this technique help you accomplish your goals? What worked well? What could have been improved? What might you change if you decide to implement the activity again?

References and Resources

PRIMARY SOURCE

Content for this download was drawn primarily from "Collaborative Learning Technique 20: Group Grid." Barkley, E. F., Major, C. H., Cross, K.P., (2014). *Collaborative Learning Techniques: A Handbook for College Faculty.* San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, pp. 268–272. It includes material that was adapted or reproduced with permission. For further information about this technique, including examples in online and on campus courses, see the primary source:

Barkley, E. F., Major, C. H., Cross, K.P., (2014). *Collaborative Learning Techniques: A Handbook for College Faculty.* 2nd Ed. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

CITATIONS AND ADDITIONAL SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER READING

- Angelo, T.A., & Cross, K.P. (1993). Categorizing grid. In Classroom assessment techniques, 2nd ed. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, pp. 160–163.

- Moor, D.W., & Readence, J.E. (1984). A quantitative and qualitative review of graphic organizer research. *Journal of Educational Research, 78*(1), 11–17.

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