**Concept Sort**

Word Work

**Grade Level**

[**3-5**](https://www.tolerance.org/search?f%5B0%5D=facet_sitewide_grade_level%3A36)

**What?**

A concept sort is a comprehension strategy in which students sort new vocabulary into categories.

**When?**

During or after reading.

**Why?**

When used during reading, a concept sort allows students to clarify the meaning of unknown words and demonstrate understanding of word relationships. When used after reading, the strategy promotes improved understanding and reinforcement.

**How?**

1. Choose your vocabulary words.
2. Write the words on sticky notes, index cards or on a pocket chart.
3. Determine concept categories relevant to vocabulary words.
4. Have students reread the central text using context clues to determine meaning of words. Have students use dictionaries when this is not possible.
5. Using two or three defined words, model the process of sorting words into the categories.
6. Have students sort the remaining words.
7. Debrief as a whole class. Discuss why certain words were placed in certain categories.
8. If students are ready, proceed with concept sort variations that require students to determine the categories themselves.

**English language learners**

Theme-based instruction is very beneficial to English language learners. It can be done in any language (including the use of pictures) and encourages higher-order thinking by making conceptual connections between words. The concept sort variations provided allow students to learn at their own pace.

**Connection to anti-bias education**

Concept sorts build word consciousness and understanding of the relationships between words and concepts. If maintained cumulatively, it provides a word bank resource students can access in all five ILP stages. Students build awareness of conceptual interconnectedness by categorizing and defining words according to theme.