Graphic Organizers

Graphic organizers are great tools for learners who have strong visual preferences or who have strong visual memories. While we are treating them as pre-writing tools, they also make good note-taking templates for the right type of learner, since they help a reader to consolidate print-heavy information from another source— for example, a textbook— into a visual format.

The type of graphic organizer that you use will depend on what you want to do. You can use an organizer for the following reasons:

- Brainstorming
- Comparing and contrasting
- Cause and effect or Problem and Solution.

Brainstorming

Brainstorming is the process of creative thinking to generate ideas. Mind maps or cluster diagrams are useful tools for brainstorming. They can help you branch out from an idea or subject to related ideas or components of a subject.

Mind mapping websites:

- Popplet: http://popplet.com/
- mindmaps: http://drichard.org/mindmaps/

Mind map example:

Comparing and contrasting

Comparing and contrasting two or more things can help you better understand ideas. This technique involves examining how they are similar and how they differ from each other. Examples of graphic organizers for brainstorming are Matrix diagrams and Venn diagrams.

The Matrix Organizer helps you to organize your research findings based on similar points of comparison, and enables you to note significant differences.
Matrix Example:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Point of Comparison</th>
<th>Van A</th>
<th>Van B</th>
<th>Van C</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Price</td>
<td>$17,495</td>
<td>$17,398</td>
<td>$16,715</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Resale Value (48 mon)</td>
<td>5.8% above average</td>
<td>4.1% above average</td>
<td>5.7% above average</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Power</td>
<td>4-cylinder engine</td>
<td>4-cylinder engine</td>
<td>4-cylinder engine</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>148 horse power</td>
<td>122 horse power</td>
<td>132 horse power</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fuel Economy</td>
<td>8.1 kilometres/litre city</td>
<td>8.1 city</td>
<td>7.8 city</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>5.8 highway</td>
<td>6.6 highway</td>
<td>6.2 highway</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dependability Rating</td>
<td>Below average</td>
<td>Below average</td>
<td>Near top of rating</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The Venn diagram uses overlapping circles to categorize the similarities and differences of two or more things, such as two articles on the same subject.

Venn Diagram Template: Venn Template

Venn example:
Cause and effect, or Problem and Solution

Using a graphic organizer can help you analyze the causes of events or problems. The Fishbone Diagram can be used to organize writing tasks that focus on cause and effect (with the cause above and the effect below) or a problem and solution.

Fishbone diagram template: Fishbone template

Fishbone example:

- The economy
- Desire for freedom
- Desire for further education
- Career aspirations
- First time mothers are older than in the past