

Name _____

How To Use KWL Charts

A KWL chart is a powerful graphic organizer designed to guide learning and enhance comprehension, especially when tackling new topics, engaging in research, or navigating complex reading material. The acronym KWL represents the three columns that structure the chart: What I Know, What I Want to Know, and What I Learned. These columns provide a framework that helps learners activate prior knowledge, define learning objectives, and reflect on their progress. Whether in classrooms, self-directed study, or professional development, the KWL chart is a versatile tool for learners of all ages.

By organizing thoughts and tracking the learning journey, KWL charts help learners engage more meaningfully with the material. Here's an expanded guide on how to effectively use this tool to maximize learning outcomes.

Steps for Using a KWL Chart

1. Preparation - The first step is to prepare the chart. This can be done on paper, a whiteboard, or digitally using templates or software. The chart should consist of three clearly labeled columns:

K (What I Know): This column is dedicated to capturing existing knowledge.

W (What I Want to Know): This is where questions and areas of curiosity are recorded.

L (What I Learned): Here, insights, findings, and new knowledge are summarized after learning.

To customize the chart further, rows can be added for subtopics, specific questions, or categories related to the main subject. This customization is especially useful for organizing complex topics into manageable sections.

2. Filling Out the "K" Column (What I Know) - This step activates prior knowledge and sets the stage for new learning. Begin by brainstorming everything you already know about the topic, even if your knowledge feels incomplete or uncertain.

Write down facts, concepts, or general ideas that come to mind.

Include assumptions or ideas that might later be corrected or refined.

Encourage group discussions, if applicable, to pool collective knowledge.

For example, if the topic is climate change, the "K" column might include statements like, "Greenhouse gases contribute to global warming," or "Deforestation affects the environment." Even vague ideas, such as "I think renewable energy helps combat climate change," are useful starting points. This step not only lays a foundation for learning but also helps identify gaps in understanding.

3. Filling Out the "W" Column (What I Want to Know) - The "W" column is where curiosity takes center stage. This step encourages learners to think critically about what they want to discover or understand.

Pose specific, open-ended questions that will guide the learning process. For example:

"Why is climate change accelerating?"

"What are the main sources of renewable energy?"

Explore broader areas of interest, such as causes, effects, or solutions to a problem.

Aim to ask questions that encourage deeper exploration rather than yes/no answers.

