

“What the heck is a ‘hamburger paragraph’?”

A parents’ guide to graphic organizers!

WHAT IS A GRAPHIC ORGANIZER? A graphic organizer is a visual representation of information that many teachers use to present concepts to students, as well as to teach the students how to organize facts and ideas.

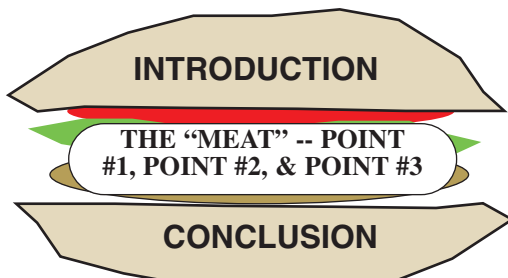
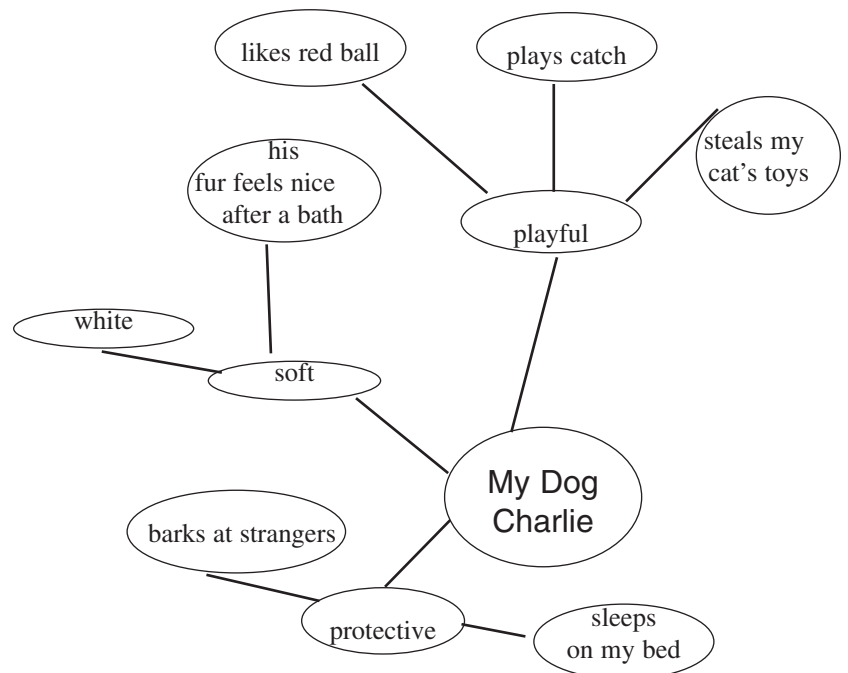
WHY DO TEACHERS USE THEM? Graphic Organizers can be used in all curriculum areas to help students:

- ✓ generate ideas
- ✓ solve problems
- ✓ understand abstract ideas--students can “see” the information
- ✓ keep track of multiple pieces of data
- ✓ remember new information by connecting it to previously acquired knowledge
- ✓ focus on the ideas they want to share in a paragraph or essay, making the task less overwhelming
- ✓ visualize concepts such as cause and effect, life cycles, chain of events, fact vs. opinion, pro vs. con, etc.
- ✓ understand story structure, thus boosting reading comprehension
- ✓ compare and contrast people, places, or things

WHAT DO THEY LOOK LIKE? Graphic organizers are blank until the teacher, or student, fills them in with information. There are dozens graphic organizers available, both in print and on the Internet. The most common are:

○ **Webbing (Web Map or Clustering):**

Quick! What do you think of when you think of *dogs*? You may have thought of *soft*, *protective*, *playful*. Webbing is a way to generate many words or ideas about a topic quickly, while showing the relationship between them. If a student were planning to write about his or her dog, for example, s/he might first draw a Web Map to brainstorm ideas.



○ **Paragraph Structure (Hamburger Paragraph):** This is a popular graphic organizer. Think of a hamburger. The meat is the most important part, but it still needs a bun to be complete. In a well-written paragraph, the body is where we find the most important information--the meat--but a strong introduction and conclusion hold it together.

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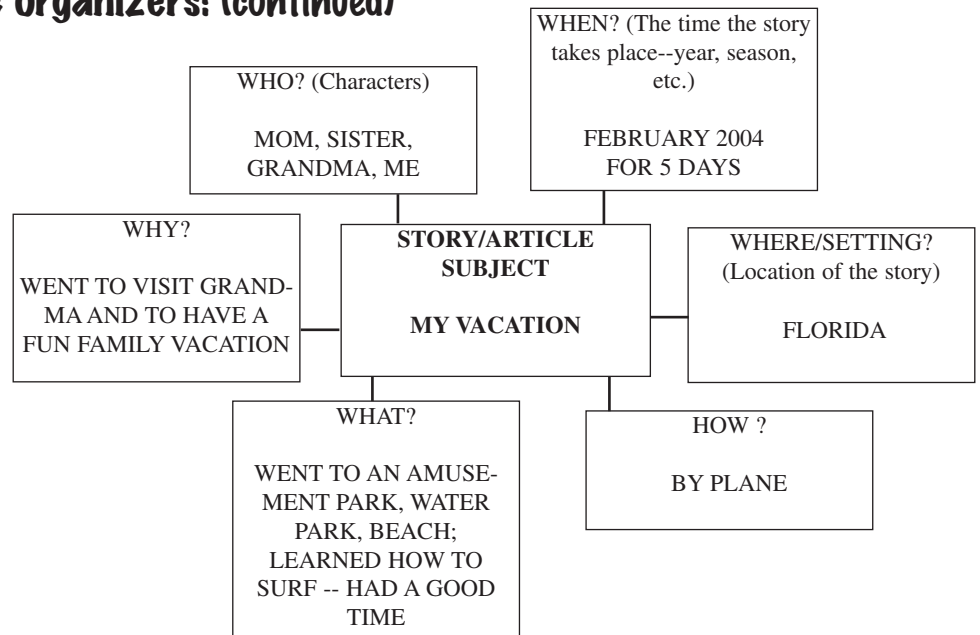
A parents' guide to graphic organizers! (continued)

○ Concept Map:

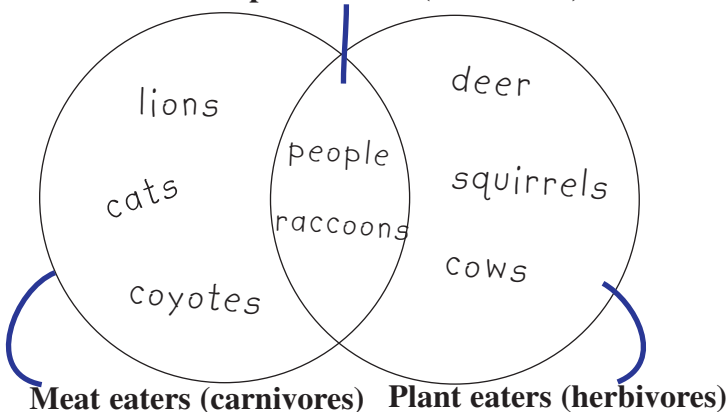
Q: What are the main parts of a story?

A: Who, What, Where, When, Why, How

A Concept Map can help students organize the components of a story they'll write, or help them analyze a story that they have read. At the center is the major event/main idea. If a student were to write about her vacation, she might first organize her thoughts using a blank Concept Map. (Right: Sample Concept Map filled in by a student.)



meat and plant eaters (omnivores)



○ **Venn Diagram:** A Venn Diagram (left) is used to compare and contrast items. They can be used in many subjects. In science, for example, students could use a Venn Diagram to sort animals who are meat eaters, plant eaters, or omnivores (that eat both).

○ **KWL:** A KWL chart sorts the information: What I **KNOW**; What I **WANT** to learn; What I have **LEARNED**. Teachers often use a KWL before starting a unit of study to determine what the students know about the subject and what they want to learn about it. KWLs are used again at the completion of the unit to assess what the students have learned. Students can also use KWLs before they begin an in-depth research project.

WHERE CAN I LEARN MORE? Other types of graphic organizers include spider maps, tree diagrams (e.g. "family trees"), flow charts, timelines, tables, and more! Visit www.enchantedlearning.com/graphicorganizers or www.edhelper.com/teachers/graphic_organizers.htm to view and download samples.

Cited Sources:

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