Know/Don’t Know/Do Charts

“An education isn’t how much you have committed to memory, or even how much you know. It’s being able to differentiate between what you do know and what you don’t.” Anatole France, Nobel Prize-winning author

At the end of a class period, the end of a section, or when helping students review for a test, have them create a “Know/Don’t Know/Do” chart. This technique serves two purposes: (1.) to help students identify gaps in their knowledge and understanding, and (2.) to provide students with the opportunity to take responsibility for identifying the best ways to gain the missing knowledge and understanding.

These charts are most often made by hand-drawing three simple columns on a sheet of paper. However, to promote sharing, consider having students articulate their ideas on a wiki in your LMS. They will pick up ideas from each other about what to study and how to study.

While this is a great way for students to simply learn content, it can also apply to higher order thinking. For instance, sometimes what a student doesn’t know is foundational knowledge. However, more often, what a student doesn’t know is how to apply a theory or methodology. It may take some coaching to encourage students to think about those application skills being as important as the content knowledge.

Many students have limited approaches to studying. Faculty often know techniques that are especially relevant to their discipline, which can be highlighted for students as they consider the “do” portion of this activity. Consider partnering with your campus’s Learning Center, early in the semester, to share additional ways of “doing” to learn or study for the course.

*Content Knowledge Example from American History:*

**What I Know:** The Jim Crow Era was after the Civil War and before the Civil Rights Movement.

**What I Don’t Know:** There were important U.S. Supreme Court cases, but when did they happen and why were they significant?

**What I Will Do:** I’ll use my textbook and a free online timeline tool to map out and annotate the most significant cases. I’ll then pair up with 3 peers from class so we can study the timeline and quiz each other on the details of the cases.

**Additional resource:**

Vanderbilt University has a wonderful page with more details about the significance of helping students develop skills in metacognition (<https://cft.vanderbilt.edu/guides-sub-pages/metacognition/>).

**Submitted by:**

Jennifer Garrett-Ostermiller, M.Ed. [she/her pronouns]

Faculty Professional Development Specialist

Center for Teaching & Learning

The University of Vermont