A Classroom Assessment Technique: Categorizing Grid

[Effective in small and large classes and useful for online adaptations]

Purpose: To help both you and your students determine what they know and don't know.

Overview: In many disciplines, especially at an introductory level, a first step to real problem solving is learning how a variety of conceptual taxonomies work. In other words, students need to learn the rules for what goes with what. **Categorizing grids** can be a useful diagnostic aid in these situations. Courses in the biological and life sciences, for example, lend themselves easily to the use of this technique. To begin, you will need to identify a key taxonomy and then design a grid that represents those interrelationships. Keep it simple at first. Avoid trivial or ambiguous relationships, which tend to backfire by focusing students on superficial kinds of learning. Although probably most useful in introductory courses, this technique can also be used to help develop basic study skills for students who plan to continue in the field. The grids can be used as homework or to generate group-based online or in-class discussions.

Example of Categorizing Grid

Sample provided courtesy of Robert Mitchell (Biology).

Divisions of Aorta	Primary Branches	Subdivisions	Region or organ supplies
Ascending aorta			
Arch of the aorta			
Thoracic aorta			
Abdominal aorta			

Source: http://www.psu.edu/celt/CATs.html. Penn State Center for Excellence in Teaching and Learning. *An Introduction to Classroom Assessment Techniques* by Diane M. Emerson, Kathryn M. Plank, and R. Neill Johnson.

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