

A Blog for Busy Teachers

FREE LANGUAGE-BASED TEACHING STRATEGIES

Categorization Strategy: The Bucket (Sedita 2001)

To help students learn to categorize and see the relationship between objects, ideas, and concepts, teachers can use the idea of a “bucket” (Sedita 2001). Using a real bucket, a basket, a recycling bin, sheets of paper, a whiteboard, index cards, or any material that helps students visually separate information, teachers can ask students to engage in this multisensory activity as a means of helping them learn to group ideas, objects, or concepts together based on a topic. This will also help reinforce a student’s ability to identify a topic and corresponding or irrelevant details. In this activity, the bucket represents the topic or main idea and the strips of paper represent relevant objects, ideas, or concepts.

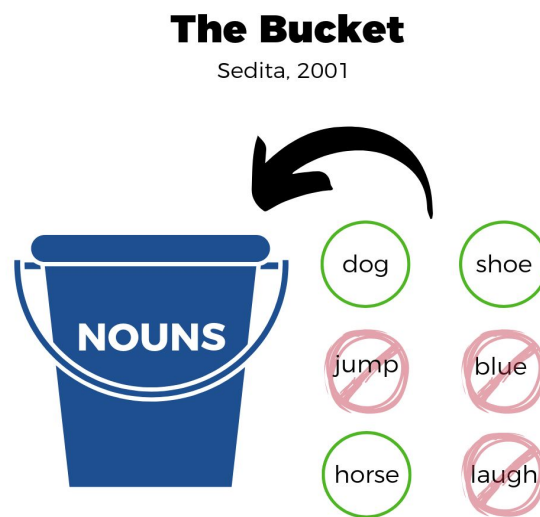


Figure 1. For example, if students are sorting parts of speech, first label the “bucket” with the topic “nouns”. Then give students pieces of paper with different words so that they can carefully debate which words are nouns and which are not. Finally, students place those that are nouns in the bucket.

Teachers should begin with basic and concrete ideas to help students master the skills of categorizing information. They should also be sure to always include items, ideas, or details that would *not fit in* the “bucket” to give students the opportunity to discuss why something wouldn’t fit. This activity provides an opportunity for teachers to discuss and engage with students’ critical thinking.

Sample Categorization Ideas:

- Objects and colors
- Odd and even numbers
- Feelings
- Wild animals vs. pets
- Regular and irregular polygons
- Dependent and independent clauses
- Thematic information from a novel (supports or doesn’t support a theme)
- Character from a story (fits or doesn’t fit a certain trait)
- Chemistry elements (gasses, halogens, metals)
- Historical events (part of an era or not)

Once students are adept at categorizing, teachers can then provide the details and have students define the bucket label. For example, a teacher could show students examples of dependent and independent clauses and students would then create a label for each of these sentence types. This alteration can lead to a valuable discussion about choosing a label that is not too broad or narrow for the bucket’s components.



Finding the Main Idea: Sample Exercises

Passage 1

Puggles make excellent pets. Even when they are very old, with their long ears and sweet faces, they are often mistaken for puppies. Bred from a pug and a beagle, puggles are full of energy and curiosity. They are also loyal and sweet dogs who love to snuggle and play. Chasing after a ball or looking for hidden treats are some of a puggle's favorite activities. They are also very intelligent, which means they are easily trained. Their fur is short, so they do not need much grooming, but they do need frequent, long walks to help their curiosity not get the better of them!

Topic: _____

Main Idea:	Details:
	1. _____ _____
	2. _____ _____
	3. _____ _____



Passage 2

Millicent debated her options. She wanted to join the club of popular girls, but she knew becoming part of the group would come at a cost. It seemed to her that the girls in the group were never lonely; however, these girls also seemed afraid to be themselves. Millicent valued her individuality and thought she might have to sacrifice it if she became a member of the group. Millicent also had close friends outside of the group and understood that she could no longer be friends with them if she joined. As Millicent reflected on the first week of school and all the events, she knew what she wanted to do. (Summarized from the short story "Initiation" by Sylvia Plath. Published: *Seventeen* January 1953: 64-5, 92-4.)

Topic: _____

Main Idea:	Details:
	1. _____ _____ _____
	2. _____ _____ _____
	3. _____ _____ _____

