

LOTUS BLOSSOM

OVERVIEW

Students can be apprehensive to take risks, or to consider ideas and connections that are outside of their immediate and current knowledge-base. The Lotus Blossom can be an effective tool to help stretch students' minds to look for additional supporting evidence for their arguments, or to encourage free association during a brainstorming process. Developed by Yasuo Matsumura, a Japanese business consultant, the Lotus Blossom is easy to create and use in a variety of ways.

LOTUS BLOSSOM ACTIVITIES

Lotus Blossom for Organizing Ideas

To use this technique to support students in expanding and organizing ideas, it's helpful to give or have students develop a main idea or theme before starting this exercise. For example, students doing research on NAFTA would start this exercise with a preliminary idea about exploring the connection between NAFTA and its effects on the U.S. Economy.

Steps of the process:

1. At the center of a piece of paper, prompt students to create a 3 x 3 matrix.
2. At the center of that first matrix, students write a main idea or concept. For example, students might simply write "NAFTA's effect on the U.S. Economy."
3. In the surrounding boxes prompt students to write related concepts, such as "trade, employment, product pricing, environment."
4. Each one of these related concepts then becomes a center point for 8 additional 3 x 3 matrices that surround it. Each of these matrices have additional supporting concepts.

Lotus Blossom to Encourage Free Association

This technique is also good as a generative tool to encourage free association. While the structure is the same, the prompt for this use of the lotus blossom is slightly different. For example, students who are exploring different ways that a classroom might be designed to support different learning styles might use this technique to explore a variety of components related to classroom environments and learning styles.

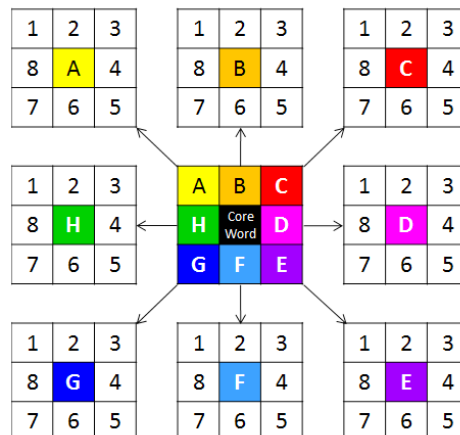


Image source: <http://www.andyeklund.com/brainstorm-technique-lotus-blossom/>

READINGS & RESOURCES

Barkley, Elizabeth F., Major, Claire Howell, and Cross, K. Patricia. *Collaborative Learning Techniques: A Handbook for College Faculty*. Jossey-Bass, 2014.

Bean, John. *Engaging Ideas: The Professor's Guide to Integrating Writing, Critical Thinking, and Active Learning in the Classroom*. Jossey-Bass, 2011.

See also: **Synthesis Matrix** at <https://think.dasa.ncsu.edu>

Steps of the Process:

1. At the center of a piece of paper, prompt students to create a 3 x 3 matrix.
2. At the center of that first matrix, prompt students to write their main concept—in this case, "Learning Styles"
3. In the surrounding boxes, prompt students to write different learning styles.
4. Each of these learning styles then becomes the center of the surrounding matrices. Those boxes are filled in with different ways that the learning style could be addressed, such as classroom design, configuration, or lesson plan.

Encouraging the students to think expansively helps them explore a myriad of ways to address an assignment problem.