

STRATEGY GUIDE

Inquiry Charts (I-Charts)



Grades 3 - 12

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Strategy Guide Series Inquiry-Based Learning

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ABOUT THIS STRATEGY GUIDE

This guide introduces I-Charts, a strategy that enables students to generate meaningful questions about a topic and organize their writing.

RESEARCH BASIS

The Inquiry Chart (I-Chart) strategy is one that allows students to examine a topic through integrating prior knowledge on the topic with additional information found from a variety of sources. The I-Chart strategy is organized into three steps, each of which consists of activities meant to engage and aid students in evaluating a given topic: 1) Planning, 2) Interacting, and 3) Integrating/Evaluating.

I-Charts can be used with individuals, small groups, or the entire class, and are meant to strengthen reading skills and foster critical thinking. This strategy can be used to differentiate instruction for each student's needs, and can also be used as an assessment tool to measure student understanding of a given topic.

Assaf, L., Ash, G., Saunders, J. and Johnson, J. (2011). "Renewing Two Seminal Literacy Practices: I-Charts and I-Search Papers." *English Journal*, 18(4), 31-42.

Hoffman, J. (1992). "Critical Reading/Thinking Across the Curriculum: Using I-Charts to Support Learning." *Language Arts*, 69(2), 121-127.

STRATEGY IN PRACTICE

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- Before beginning this strategy, decide on a topic that students will be exploring and collect appropriate resources (books, magazines, websites, etc.). Or, if you choose to have students self-select a topic, arrange for time to be spent in the library or in a computer lab with internet access.
- Provide each student with a blank copy of the [I-Chart Printout](#) and assist with topic selection or provide a pre-selected topic. Have a class or group discussion about the topic(s) that students will be working with. You may choose to have a formal discussion, complete with an organizer such as a [K-W-L Chart](#), or you may have an informal discussion where students simply share their thoughts aloud.
- Students will now begin the first phase of the strategy, **Planning**, in which they will:
 - Identify the topic
 - Form questions
 - Construct the I-Chart (or use provided [printout](#))

- Collect materials needed for inquiry
- During the second phase of the strategy, **Interacting**, students will:
 - Explore prior knowledge
 - Share interesting facts
 - Read and reread
- As a class or individually, instruct students to begin forming questions about their topic(s) (this can be an extension of the “W” column on the [K-W-L Chart](#), if you chose to use this organizer). These questions are placed in the top row of the [I-Chart Printout](#), one for each column (Question 1, Question 2, etc.).
- Allow time for students to begin phase 3 of the strategy, **Integrating/Evaluating**. During this phase, students will:
 - Research
 - Compare
 - Summarize
 - Report
- Students should spend time during this phase researching the questions that they wrote in the top row of their [I-Chart Printout](#), or things they “want to know.” As they find information about their questions, they should record their findings from the different sources.
- After gathering information from multiple sources to answer each of their questions, students should use the “Summary” row as a place to write a concise sentence or two about what they learned about each question while researching.
- Ask students to resolve competing ideas discovered during their research or develop new questions to explore based on any missing or conflicting information.
- Once students’ I-Charts are complete, they can be used to help organize their writing for an informational essay on the topic they chose to research, as well as other research-related projects.

RELATED RESOURCES

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LESSON PLANS

Grades **K - 2** | Lesson Plan | Standard Lesson

[Creating Question and Answer Books through Guided Research](#)

This series of activities is designed to teach research strategies. Students use KWL charts to guide their inquiry and publish their results in a collaborative question and answer book.

Grades **3 - 5** | Lesson Plan | Standard Lesson

[Critical Perspectives: Reading and Writing About Slavery](#)

Students critically explore the moral issue of slavery through reading fiction and nonfiction children's literature about the Underground Railroad, and they extend their understanding through creative writing projects.

Grades **K - 2** | Lesson Plan | Unit

[Weather: A Journey in Nonfiction](#)

Questions about weather clear up when students use what they learned from their books to create a presentation to share with the rest of the class.

Grades **K - 2** | Lesson Plan | Standard Lesson

[Adventures in Nonfiction: A Guided Inquiry Journey](#)

Students are guided through an informal exploration of nonfiction texts and child-oriented Websites, learning browsing and skimming techniques for the purpose of gathering interesting information.

Grades **K - 2** | Lesson Plan | Unit

[Investigating Animals: Using Nonfiction for Inquiry-based Research](#)

Inspired by their curiosity about animals, students work together to research an animal of their choice and present the information they gather to an authentic audience.

Grades **6 - 8** | Lesson Plan | Standard Lesson

[Inquiry on the Internet: Evaluating Web Pages for a Class Collection](#)

Students use Internet search engines and Web analysis checklists to evaluate online resources then write annotations that explain how and why the resources will be valuable to the class.

Grades **6 - 8** | Lesson Plan | Unit

[Investigating the Holocaust: A Collaborative Inquiry Project](#)

Students explore a variety of resources as they learn about the Holocaust. Working collaboratively, they investigate the materials, prepare oral responses, and produce a topic-based newspaper to complete their research.

STUDENT INTERACTIVES

Grades **3 - 12** | Student Interactive | Organizing & Summarizing

[Essay Map](#)

The Essay Map is an interactive graphic organizer that enables students to organize and outline their ideas for an informational, definitional, or descriptive essay.

Grades **3 - 6** | Student Interactive | Inquiry & Analysis

[Animal Inquiry](#)

Supporting inquiry-based research projects, the Animal Inquiry interactive invites elementary students to explore animal facts and habitats using writing prompts to guide and record their findings.

Grades **3 - 8** | Student Interactive | Organizing & Summarizing

[K-W-L Creator](#)

This tool allows students to create an online K-W-L chart. Saving capability makes it easy for them to start the chart before reading and then return to it to reflect on what they learned.

PRINTOUTS

Grades **3 - 8** | Printout | Graphic Organizer

[K-W-L Chart](#)

This K-W-L Chart, which tracks what a student knows (K), wants to know (W), and has learned (L) about a topic, can be used before, during, and after research projects.

Grades **3 - 12** | Printout | Graphic Organizer

[I-Chart](#)

This printout assists students with generating meaningful questions about a topic and organizing their writing by using a structured guide while researching.

Grades **3 - 8** | Printout | Graphic Organizer

[K-W-L-S Chart](#)

This printable extends the familiar K-W-L's means of organizing students' prior knowledge, formulating inquiry questions, and recording new learning by adding space for questions for further inquiry.

PROFESSIONAL LIBRARY

Grades **K - 8** | Professional Library | Journal

Nonfiction Inquiry: Using Real Reading and Writing to Explore the World

Nonfiction is the genre most likely to spur children’s passion and wonder for learning. This article discusses way to motivate children to read nonfiction.

Grades **K - 5** | Professional Library | Book

Beyond Reading and Writing: Inquiry, Curriculum, and Multiple Ways of Knowing

The authors offer theory-into-practice techniques, insight into how such a curriculum actually worked on a day-to-day basis, suggestions on how educators can better support and understand their students, and, insights the authors gained by undertaking this inquiry.

Grades **K - 6** | Professional Library | Book

Planning for Inquiry: It's Not an Oxymoron!

Planning for Inquiry shows you how to get an inquiry-based curriculum started, how to keep it going, and how to do so while remaining accountable to mandated curricula, standards, and programs.

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