Learning Skills Program - Counselling Services

Strategies for Organizing Information

Benefits

The act of organizing information produces several desirable outcomes:

- **It promotes active learning.**
  You are not just looking or rereading but sorting, comparing, contrasting and connecting.

- **Organizing demands comprehension.**
  You can't organize if you don't understand. Organizing forces you to move from rote learning of Knowledge to (at least) Comprehension.

- **Organizing points out missing information.**
  You are more likely to notice gaps when things are organized.

- **Organizing points out what you don't understand.**
  You are more likely to notice the limits of your understanding.

- **Organizing enables discovery of new relationships.**
  You are more likely to make connections or respond creatively.

- **Organizing provides variety.**
  You are less likely to get bored with diverse techniques.
Types of Organization

• **Piles**
  Items are grouped into categories. Piles are simple category groupings with, perhaps, older concepts at the bottom of the pile.

• **Lists with Headings**
  Items are grouped into categories and the categories are named. There may not be any order to the categories.

• **Files**
  Files are category groupings with names or labels that are sorted in some regular fashion (e.g., alphabetically; chronologically, etc.)

• **Outlines with Headings, Sub-headings**
  Items are grouped with hierarchical structure so that categories may have subordinate categories (headings and subheadings and sub-subheadings).

• **Hierarchies and Organizational Charts**
  These are Outlines turned on their side and usually more graphical in nature.

• **Concept Maps or "Mind Maps"**
  Items are connected to each other in a network with relationships indicated with lines, arrows or clusters.

• **Flow Charts**
  Items are sequenced to show processes or dynamic change. Special symbols can represent methods and functions (e.g., a diamond might represent a choice point).

• **Tables**
  Items are arranged in rows and columns, with the intersection or a row and column (cell) representing a relationship.

• **Graphs and Charts**
  Data or statistical units are presented in a Cartesian system showing the relationship between the ordinate (Y variable) and the abscissa (X variable) as a point, bar or curve.

• **Doodles**
  Doodles contain images (and words). Doodles can be simple (e.g., an icon) or complex (e.g., a cartoon).