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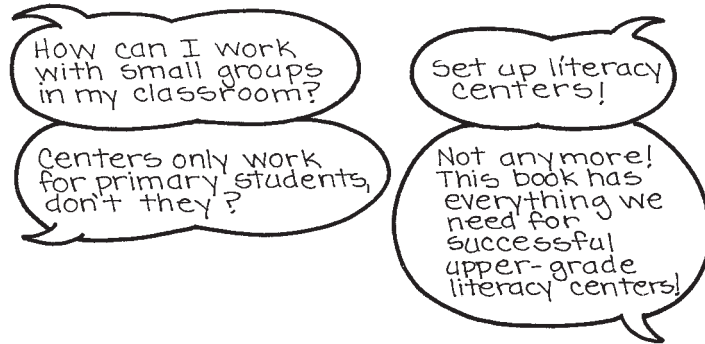


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# Introduction

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Use *Literacy Centers* to make guided reading, literature circles, and small-group and one-on-one instruction manageable in your classroom. Have students complete meaningful independent work and still have time to meet individually with each student. Give students the opportunity to apply and extend their learning through independent and collaborative activities. Literacy centers are time effective and brain compatible. They provide additional opportunities to cover the curriculum while also increasing the probability your students will learn the material.

Literacy centers are a powerful way for students to use their skills collaboratively and independently. Research shows that teaching practices typically thought of as appropriate primarily for early-childhood education are proving to be effective teaching practices for any age, including adults. Literacy centers provide students with the opportunity to cover multiple objectives in a single class period that would have taken several class periods to cover separately. Well-constructed literacy centers are also a way of actively involving students in the learning process, thus, increasing their understanding.

Current brain research has revealed many ways in which literacy centers in your classroom support student learning. Consider the following:

**The brain searches for meaning.**

Literacy centers create an enriched classroom that positively impacts the functioning ability of the brain. They contain a multitude of resources and are a visual reflection of the thinking and learning that is taking place within the walls of that room.

**Learning experiences should be relevant and meaningful.**

Students apply what they have learned in authentic ways in literacy centers.



# Creating the Foundation of Literacy Centers

There are four basic components to remember when implementing literacy centers.

**Learning—Students have the right to become proficient readers and writers. Teachers have the responsibility to ensure that they are meeting each student’s individual needs.**

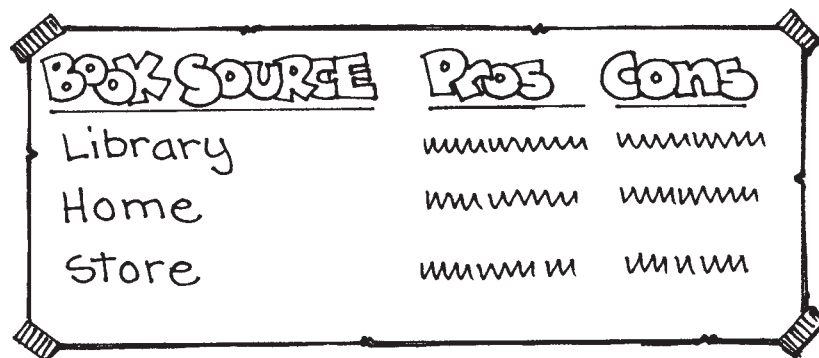
Use small-group instruction to provide opportunities for students to grow as readers and writers and extend their learning in creative and challenging ways.

**Decision making—Students have the right to make choices. Teachers have the responsibility to provide choices and educate students about making appropriate choices.**

Provide students with opportunities to practice the life skill of decision making by incorporating choices within the literacy centers. Giving students choices also allows for flexibility, piques varied interests, and increases motivation.

**Ownership—Students have the right to share ownership in the classroom. Teachers have the responsibility to help students establish ownership of the classroom.**

Have discussions with students about the design, makeup, and tone of each center. Get input from them on the location of the center, the materials needed, the subjects, and options for creating a cozy environment. Sharing ownership of the centers teaches students to share and respect the contributions of others.



**Independence—Students have the right to be independent learners. Teachers have the responsibility to teach independence rather than dependence.**

Prepare students for our rapidly changing, technology-based society by teaching them to be active learners who can think for themselves. Present opportunities for students to gain independence in finding resources, solving problems, and determining strategies by creating a classroom environment with established routines and a variety of materials and resources.

# Managing Literacy Centers

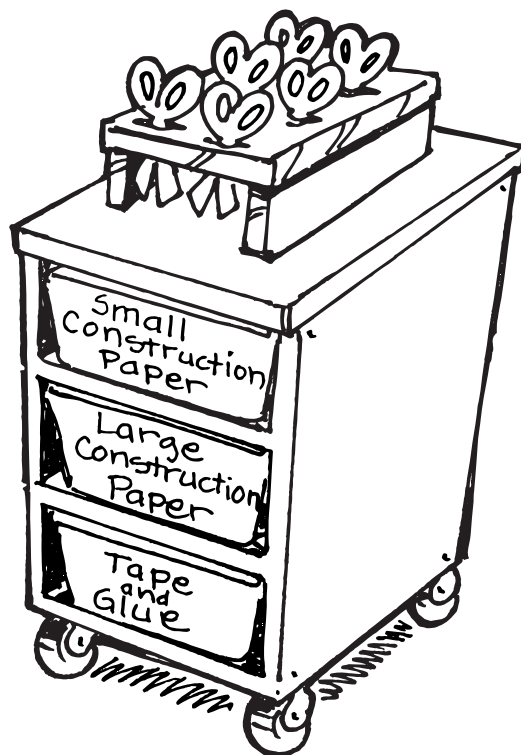
## Determining Center Content

Your first job will be to determine what centers you will create in your classroom. Begin by reviewing the curriculum objectives you want students to master. List all the content you have covered to this point in the school year, and make a note of the information you will address in the near future. Use this list, along with the center descriptions provided in this book, to determine what the literacy centers in your classroom will look like.

## Placing Centers in the Classroom

Literacy centers are endlessly adaptable to every variety of space and classroom layout. Create a print-rich environment, and pull from the following suggestions as you design your room:

- Have students bring center activities to their seats to be completed.
- Group centers according to noise level—quiet centers in one area and noisy centers in another area.
- Place the small-group instruction area near quiet centers.
- Display written directions for each activity.
- Build centers around already existing areas in your classroom. For example, make the reading center a part of your classroom library, and use magnets to post center menus, directions, and student work on file cabinets.
- Take advantage of movable furniture. Use bookshelf or cabinet space as a divider, and locate centers on both sides of the divider.
- Make the most of a small space by using fishing line and/or dowel rods to hang shower curtains or wooden lattice to form a room divider.
- Post center menus (see page 7) on walls above shelves with center materials.



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### Establishing Rules and Procedures for Centers

Clearly establish the organization and management of your centers. Preteach your expectations so your students will be comfortable and successful in the centers. Use these guidelines for every procedure you want your students to follow:

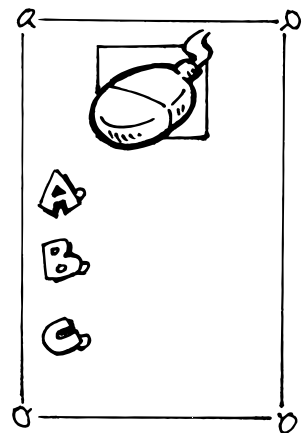
1. Explain and model the procedure.
2. Have a volunteer model as you narrate.
3. Correct any mistakes.
4. Have the class do the procedure under your guidance.
5. Correct mistakes.
6. After the class is successful together, have students do it independently.
7. Encourage frequent self-evaluation.

Tell students that while center time is an active time in the classroom, the purpose is to learn and they are responsible for that learning. When a procedure isn't working, problem-solve together to establish center routines that work for you and your students. Remember, only include activity options that students can successfully complete on their own. Do not put a new activity at a center without first introducing it to the class.

### Directing Traffic

The next question is how to direct students through the centers smoothly. The following suggestions show how to present available activity options for each center and direct students through each center in an organized way.

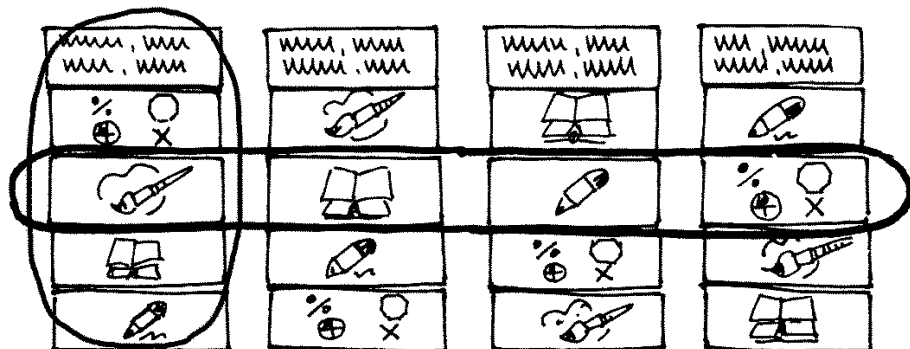
- Photocopy the appropriate icon (see pages 100–104), cut it out, and glue it to the top of a long piece of tagboard. Laminate the tagboard to make a menu board. Use this procedure to create a menu board for each center. Hang the menu board above or next to the center space. Use a washable marker to record on the menu board the activities for that center. Add new activities or wipe away those that are no longer a part of the center.



- Organize students into center groups. A maximum of five students per group is preferable. (You may wish to frequently change the center groupings to allow students to work with a variety of classmates.) Write the names of the students in each group on a piece of card stock. For each group, photocopy on card stock a set of the icon reproducibles (pages 100–104) for each center you will be using. Use the icons to create cards that are the same size as the group name cards.

Emily, Jack, Liam, Matt	Becca, Steph, Chester, Willis	Hannah, Wesley, Robyn, Emmett	Max, Sydney, Lacey, Alex

- Next, place the group name cards on a wall or in a pocket chart to create columns. Under each group, arrange the center icons vertically to represent the series of centers, or the path, that students will visit in one day. Each column of the work board tells the order in which an individual group will visit centers that day. Each row of icons indicates where all students will be at any given time. Place centers so students are evenly distributed throughout the room. As you plan the path, consider the time it will take for students to complete activities, and adjust the number of centers accordingly. Each day, move each group's name card one column to the right until all groups have visited each path.









### **Providing Time to Share**

At the end of each day's center time, provide a five- to ten-minute sharing period. Track students who participate in sharing time with the Status of the Class reproducible (page 106). Regularly vary the format for sharing to make the time more interesting. Ask student volunteers to share their work or activities from a particular center, or present students with open-ended questions to answer. Include questions about center content as well as questions about how students evaluate their work habits—both individually and in groups.

You can also use this time to have students give Book Talks, summaries, or reactions to books they have read. Use the Book Talk reproducible (page 107) as a sign-up sheet to plan for student presentations. Give students examples of different ways to talk about books by modeling several Book Talks. Invite them to talk about their favorite part of the book, give a summary, or tell their opinion of the book using supporting details.

### **Managing Student Work**

There are several options for managing work produced in centers. Here are just a few to consider:

- Give each student an inexpensive clipboard to use during center time, or have clipboards available at certain centers.
- Use center folders with one side designated for finished work and the other side for unfinished work. Collect the folders at the end of each center cycle.
- Place a storage crate in a central location. Label a hanging file folder for each student. Place two manila folders in each hanging file folder. Label one manila folder *Work in Progress* and the other folder *Finished Work*. Frequently review the work in each folder for each student.
- Keep two trays at each center—one for finished work and one for unfinished work. Collect the finished work at the end of each day for grading.
- Provide students with a center checklist that they can update each day at the end of center time.
- Use the Checklist (page 108) to implement the crate or trays methods described above. List your students' names down the left-hand column. Then, write across the top the names of the centers for which a product will be due. Collect student work, and check off what has been completed and/or record the grade or rubric number the student earned. Use this checklist to monitor student progress.





# Assessment and Accountability

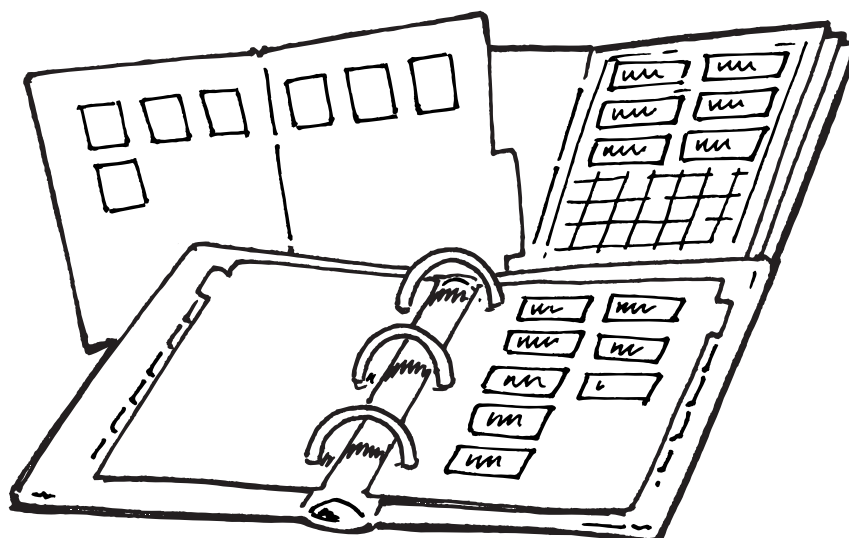
Hold students accountable for their learning and their time on task during centers. Build accountability into literacy centers in a variety of ways to ensure student progress. Monitor this progress and facilitate academic growth by using various forms of assessment. Gear the assessments to complement your school or district grading requirements. Select from the following suggested ways to hold students accountable.

## Anecdotal Records

When you are not working with small groups, walk around and make notes about what students are doing. Make notes about work habits, social behaviors, and academic skills. Date the notes as part of a profile for each student. Share your observations with parents at conference time. Here are some ways to manage anecdotal records:

**Sticky Notes**—Photocopy the Anecdotal Records reproducible (page 110), and glue it to a file folder. Glue a second copy on the facing side of the folder if you have a larger class. Write a student's name at the top of each square, and laminate the folder. Place a small sticky note in each square. Record your observations on the notes, and at the end of the day, transfer them to the appropriate individual file folder.

**Computer Labels**—Print out a sheet of labels with each student's name on a label. Put the sheet on a clipboard. Record notes for students on their label, and then peel it off, and place it on the appropriate notebook divider, grade-book page, or the inside of that student's file folder. This method allows you to keep notes in chronological order.





**Visual Rubric**—Develop a generic, visual rubric system that is applicable to many situations. For example, try an ice-cream sundae rubric.

- A “1” rating is like an empty bowl. The student did not give much effort and the product is incomplete.
- A “2” rating has the ice cream in the bowl. The student showed some effort, but the product is either incomplete or leaves a lot to be desired.
- A “3” rating puts a topping on the ice cream. The student gave a very good effort and the product is complete.
- A “4” rating has all the sundae elements plus all the extras. This student put forth his or her very best effort and the result is excellent.



**Work Habit Rubric**—Let students help develop a rubric to assess work habits. In the example below, the expectations were suggested as the class established the norms for each center. The class agreed that they should be held accountable for the elements listed on the rubric scale.

## Work Habits

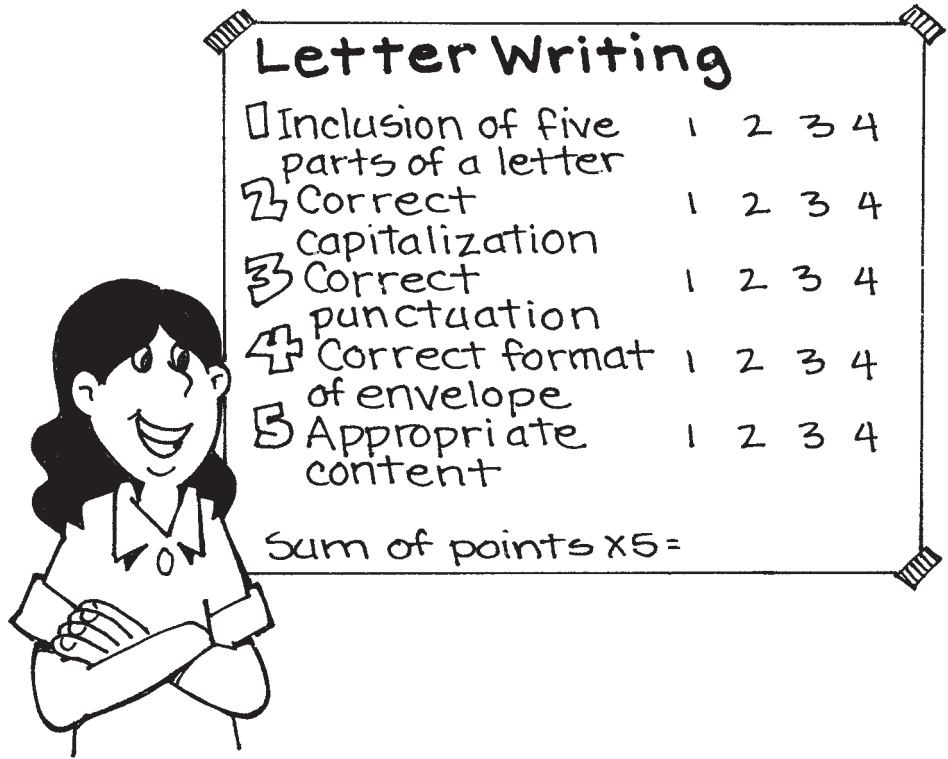
Expectation	Day 1	Day 2	Day 3	Day 4	Day 5
Number of activities I completed:					
* I put things away in each center I used.					
* I took care of the materials and supplies.					
* I was cooperative and shared materials.					
* I used my time well and was on task.					
* I completed all required work.					
* Rate your performance.					

Rate your performance as follows:

1—Not much of an effort, little success	3—Very good effort, but not my best
2—An okay effort, I tried	4—My very best effort

Have students fill out the rubric daily during share time. Invite them to assess five specific criteria on a scale of 1 to 4 over a five-day period.

**Product Rubric**—Use rubrics to assess the products that students create at the centers. Again, include students in the creation of the rubric to make the assessment more meaningful.



Criteria	1	2	3	4
1 Inclusion of five parts of a letter				
2 Correct capitalization				
3 Correct punctuation				
4 Correct format of envelope				
5 Appropriate content				

Sum of points x5 =

**Journal or Diary**

Journals and diaries provide another way for students to assess their work. These tools enable students to reflect on their learning in a way that is personal and meaningful to them. Have students write on the Centers reproducible (page 111) a brief summary of what they did in each center they attended on a given day. Have students record this information before they leave each center. Ask students to make a circle in the slot of any assigned center they did not attend.



# Centers



*Literacy Centers* begins with centers that focus on writing skills. Next, there are centers that use reading and writing skills together, followed by reading-focused centers. Finally, a variety of content-oriented centers are introduced. Each literacy center is organized using the following information:

## **Primary Objective**

This section defines the overall objective of the center.

## **Student Icons**

This icon 😊 represents the suggested maximum number of students to have at the center at one time. If you have additional resources available in your classroom—such as more than one computer for the computer center—you may be able to exceed the suggested number.

## **Center Icon**

Look for the center icon at the bottom of each page to quickly find a center.

## **Setup**

Here are ways to organize the center, including where to locate the center and how to arrange your materials.

## **Management**

In this section, you will find ways to manage students and materials at the center. These suggestions maximize student performance.

## **Additional Tips**

This section offers tips to integrate additional content into the center, combine centers together, and make the center run more efficiently. Some centers do not require additional tips.

## **Resources**

Some centers have an added section that lists books, teaching resources, software titles, and Internet Web sites to use in planning, building, and running the centers.







## Activities

This section provides suggested activities for the center. Choose those that meet your current needs, or adapt activities to better suit your students. Or, use these ideas to think of your own original activities. The activities are organized by the following learning modalities:

**Verbal/Linguistic**—all forms of working with language, including the ability to read, write, speak, listen to, and understand the words of another person and what they intend to communicate.

**Visual/Spatial**—everything we see: all shapes, patterns, designs, colors, and textures; both concrete and in our imagination, including our capacities to visualize and dream. This also includes the relationships and placement of objects in the space/time continuum.

**Bodily/Kinesthetic**—the full range of movement that is possible in and through the body, including that which has been achieved with the body.

**Logical/Mathematical**—the pattern-seeking intelligence. This initially involves a manipulation of and play with a variety of concrete objects in the world around us. At the Pure Math and Symbolic Logic level, there is a focus on rational patterns, harmonious designs, and logical-analytical processes.

**Interpersonal**—human relationships, collaboration with others, and learning from and about other people.

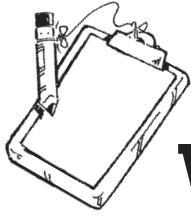
**Intrapersonal**—the ability to reflect on the self and to learn from our reflection.

**Musical/Rhythmic**—the whole realm of sound and vibration; sounds and vibrations from the natural and/or humanly created environment, from machines, from musical and percussion instruments, as well as those produced by the human vocal chords.

**Naturalistic**—recognition, appreciation, and understanding of the natural world.

Not all centers have activities for all modalities. Select from the different types of activities to provide students with diverse learning choices.





# Write around the Room

## Primary Objective

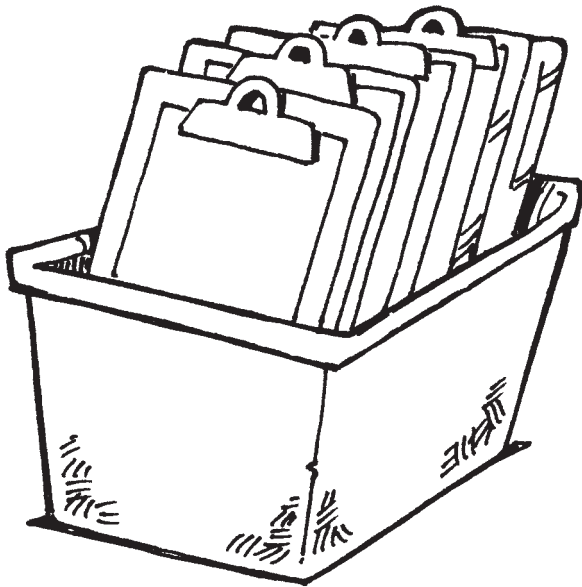


**Students will locate and record spelling patterns and develop new vocabulary.**

Have students read and record print found in their classroom environment, including available books. Plan tasks based on students' needs and ability levels. Use this center to follow up direct instruction from whole-class lessons.

## Setup

- No additional space is required for this center. Have students complete the activities as they move quietly around the room or are seated at their desks.
- Eliminate time lost to searching for materials by using yarn to connect pencils or pens to clipboards.
- Provide students with clipboards on which to write as they move about the classroom. Store the clipboards on hooks or nails or in a basket or a plastic tub.



## Management

- Clarify with students whether or not they may work with a partner.
- If you invite students to work in pairs, be clear with them about how much talking is appropriate to complete the activities.

## Additional Tips

- Use the lists students develop at this center to prepare word sorts for the Pocket Chart Center (pages 51–54) or the Word Work Center (pages 41–46).
- This center can be incorporated into the Word Work Center.



# Activities

## Verbal/Linguistic


- Have students locate and record words that
  - rhyme
  - contain a targeted “chunk” (e.g., *-tion*)
  - have the same vowel sound
  - have the same vowel pattern
  - have a specific number of syllables
  - contain prefixes or suffixes
  - are synonyms
  - have more than one meaning
  - are homonyms
  - are antonyms
  - are different parts of speech
- Give students the Word Families reproducible (page 115), and invite them to discuss how each word in a given word family (e.g., *aud*) is similar to and different than the other words in that family. Challenge them to think of two new words for each family. Then, have them choose a word, define its root word, and generate four more words with the same root word. Invite pairs of students to share the words they generated and tell the meaning of their root word. Have students use a dictionary to check their guesses.

## Bodily/Kinesthetic

- Give students a copy of the appropriate Scavenger Hunt reproducible (page 116 or 117). Have students sort words by their function (e.g., writing *sink* under the *Nouns* category) on the Scavenger Hunt for Word Use reproducible (page 116). Fill in the name and category heads of the content area, unit subject, or theme (see illustration) on the Scavenger Hunt by Topic reproducible (page 117) and then make copies



for students. Have students locate words in the classroom that fit each category. For both reproducibles, ask students to list a specific number of words, and then challenge them to find additional words.



### Scavenger Hunt by Topic

Name Nolan Start Date Sept. 13

**Directions**  
Find and record examples for the categories shown below.


Topic Ancient Explorers

Explorer by Land	Explorer by Sea	What They Were Looking For
What They Found	Who They Found	Famous Mistakes

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- Cut small index cards into five 3" (7.5 cm) long pieces. Have students copy the words from a classroom word list onto the index card pieces. Invite them to sort their words according to your suggested rule or pattern (or to discover their own patterns in the group of words). Have students record their results on the Word Sort reproducible (page 118).



### Word Sort

Name Dominic Start Date March 2

**Directions**  
Sort your cards into two groups. Describe the pattern you used to sort your words. If you have extra cards, sort them on the back. Glue your finished sort to the paper. Use the back if you run out of room.

**Pattern #1** These words start with re-. Part of the meaning of these words is to do it again.      **Pattern #2** These words start with ultra. Part of the meaning of these words is extraordinary.

reconstruct	ultrahip
readjust	ultrafast
rename	ultraclean
reemerge	ultrasmart
reattach	ultraprecise
reutilize	

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