

## Elementary and Middle School: Activating Prior Knowledge

### K-W-L

This strategy allows learners to share what they already know, determine what more they would like to learn, and then assess what they learned about a topic after the study is complete. Before instruction, students list facts previously learned about a topic that is new to the class. They place this information in the first column of a three-column organizer. This is labeled K, for what we Know. In the middle column, labeled W for what we Want to know, they list additional topics and questions to consider for study. After reading, listening, observing, and discussing, they complete the L column to demonstrate what they have Learned. The K-W-L gives students the chance to demonstrate knowledge that may be unique to them, allows them some input in what the curriculum will be, and holds the class and teacher accountable for reaching all of the learning goals.

At the beginning of a unit on volcanoes in Earth science, students complete the first two columns:

Know	Want to Know	Have Learned
Volcanoes can erupt.  They can spew lava (molten rock).  They can make island chains.	Are there any active volcanoes in Alaska?  Is there any way to predict eruptions?  What was the deadliest volcano ever?	

After the unit, students complete the last column.

Know	Want to Know	Have Learned
Volcanoes can erupt.  They can spew lava (molten rock).  They can make island chains.	Are there any active volcanoes in Alaska?  Is there any way to predict eruptions?  What was the deadliest volcano ever?	There are 34 active volcanoes just in Alaska.  Scientists use tremors and venting measurements to predict eruptions, but it is not very exact.  In Indonesia, almost 100,000 people died from a volcano in 1815.  Volcanoes cause mudslides, tsunamis, and starvation.