

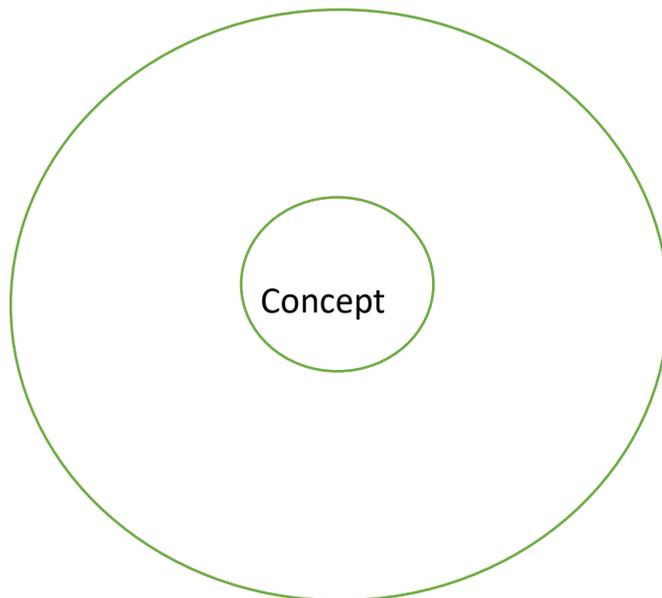
Challenging Learning at Home Strategy Reference Guide

Use this guide as reference for strategies that may be referenced in the *Home Learning Activities*. All Challenging Learning activities are designed to promote and encourage thinking. Note how the strategies and activities are not focused on a right answer or one way of thinking. Have fun with your child as you push their thinking and help them develop as a learner.

Concept Target

A concept target can help your child how to associate vocabulary words with concepts and decide on relative association between the words and the concept. It also creates a deeper understanding of the concept.

When completing a concept target activity, use a Concept Target like the one shown below to evaluate how close each associated word is to the center concept. Write each vocabulary word in the circle. The closer it is in sharing the same definition as the intended concept, the closer it is positioned to the target circle. The further away it is from sharing the same definition, the closer to the outer ring it goes. If you feel it does not relate to the definition at all it should go outside of the outer circle.

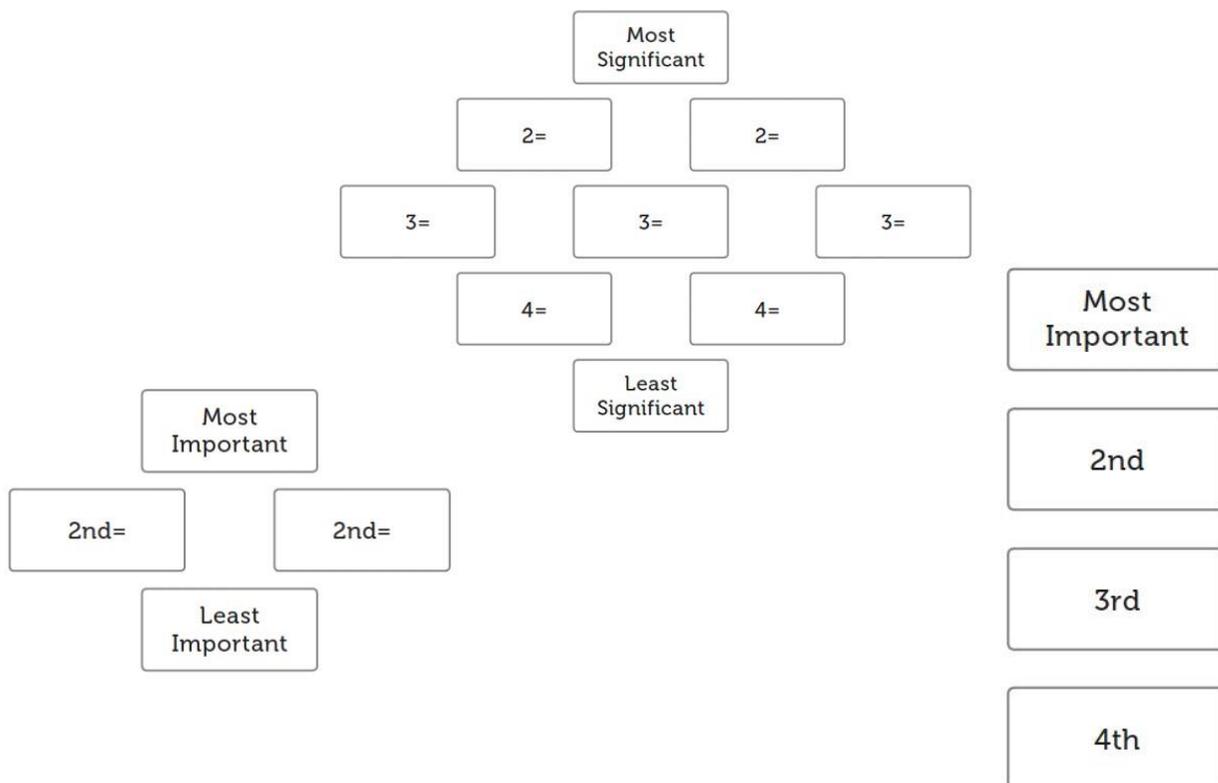


Diamond Ranking/Linear Ranking

Diamond ranking is a way for children to sort through the many ideas they have come up with when they are exploring concepts and trying to make meaning. The diamond ranking strategy encourages active participation. It will help your child to prioritise the information, clarify their thoughts and create reasons and reflections.

To do a diamond ranking, you need a group of cards (or cut up pieces of paper) with a word or phrase that is related to the concept. Before diamond ranking, your child could group the characteristics into different categories. For example, common and unusual factors; relevant and irrelevant; what adults believe and what children believe; wants and needs; always true, sometimes true and never true. It is best not to give these categories to your students but instead to ask them to come up with their own.

Now, focusing on the question that you have posed about the concept, ask your child to place the characteristic they think is most important or significant to the question or concept at the top. Then two that are equally important/significant but not the most under that one, then the least important/significant on the bottom as shown in the figure below. You can make it more challenging by using more cards and adding additional rows as seen in the middle figure below. Finally, you can even start with a *linear ranking* (similar to an opinion line described later)



Dinner Table Conversations

Use questioning sequences at any time to engage in dialogue; at the dinner table, in the car, before bed, etc.... Start with the main question and use the follow up questions to continue exploring the concept. Be sure to question each other's answers. You are not looking for a quick answer, you are building new ideas by questioning your own assumptions and thinking. For dinner table conversations, you will start with a concept and a question and then keep questioning the answers. A motto at Challenging Learning is *No question answered and all answers questioned.*

Concept: Value

Main Question: What is something you value?

Follow Up Questions:

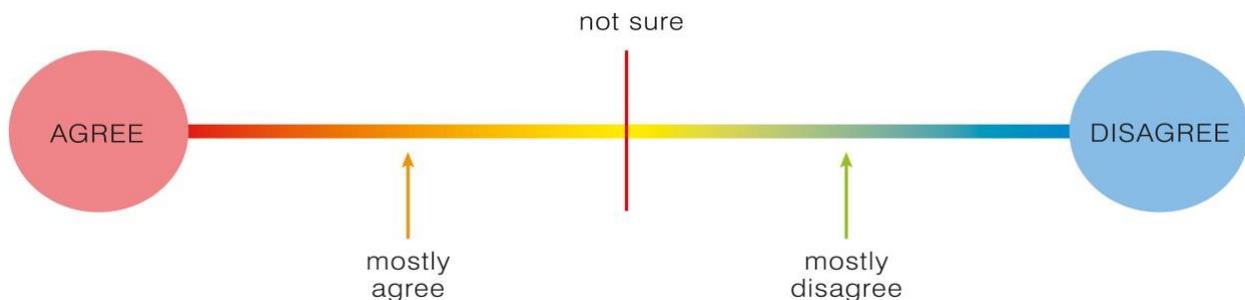
- What makes it valuable?
- Will it always have value? When might it stop being valuable?
- Do you think everyone values it?
- Does something have to cost a lot to be valuable?
- Does the value change over time? How does it change?
- What are some things that have value to some people but not others?

Odd One Out

In Odd One Out, you look at 3 objects or pictures and discuss which one does not belong with the other two and why. Odd One Out helps to build sorting, classifying and reasoning language. Make it a challenge to find as many reasons as possible to make each object or picture the odd one out and always ask for details. Pick random objects without a "right answer". Keep asking questions and trying to find as many reasons as possible to make each item the odd one out.

Opinion Line

Opinion lines can be used to explore relative agreement or disagreement. A question is posed, or statement is shared, and then each person is asked to pick a spot on a continuum like the one below.



The following question stems can be used to encourage dialogue:

- Why do you feel that way?
- What do you mean by.... (choose a word from their answer)?
- What assumptions are you making in saying that you disagree?
- How could you change the statement/question so that you would move to the other end of the line?
- What made you choose mostly agree and not agree? Or mostly disagree and not disagree?

Alternate use of Opinion Lines

Choose two extremes; for example, *fair and unfair* and write each word on a piece of paper and place the two pages 2-3 meters apart. Choose 10 games from around the house and place them in order between the extremes. Use the following question stems to increase dialogue:

- How is this game more/less fair than this game?
- What makes this game the most fair?
- How could you make this game more fair?
- How do you decide if a game is fair? What does it mean to be fair?
- If there are no winners and losers, could a game be unfair?
- If you always win a game, can it be fair?

Scavenger Hunts

Scavenger hunts can be used as you explore concepts as a way to get your child thinking on their own about the concept. They do not require any preparation and can be used when you are just starting to explore a concept or after you have already spent time exploring a concept. For example, if you are talking about numbers, you can send your child off to find 10 items that have numbers. Once they find the items, don't forget to deepen their learning by asking questions and engaging in dialogue about them. You can follow up with questions like:

- How are numbers used differently on these items?
- Do numbers always represent a quantity? What else to they represent?
- Can you think of other items in the house that may use numbers in a different way?
- If a number is spelled out is it still a number?

You can also use scavenger hunts to explore more abstract concepts, like useful. Have your child find 10 items that are useful. Follow up with questions like:

- Why did you choose this item?
- Is this item always useful? Do you have any items that are only useful part of the year?
- Would this be useful to everyone?

Sorting & Classifying/Venn Diagrams

Sorting & classifying is something we all do consciously or unconsciously to organize information and ideas. Engaging in sorting and classifying helps your child make sense of the world. This can be done with objects, numbers, books, shapes, words, etc... The idea is that you have a group of something and ask your child to sort them into sets. The key to this strategy is that you keep asking them questions to encourage them to explain their thinking, their reasoning. Ask them why they put something in a particular set and when they answer, try to think of a counterexample or a reason for them to re-consider.

One way to sort into sets is to use **Venn Diagrams**. To do this, think of two concepts (for example pets and wild animals) and collect pictures or words of animals. Lay out two rings, or identify two spots for placing the pictures or words, label one pet and the other wild animal. Ask your child to sort the pictures or words. If they notice some that could be a wild animal AND a pet, set them aside and then talk about the need for a 3rd category- animals that can be pets OR wild. You can use three separate rings or you can overlap them to create the common space.

