

KAPLAN'S DEPTH AND COMPLEXITY TOOLS



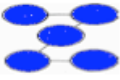

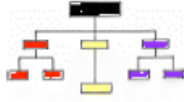






Depth and complexity tools were developed by Professor Sandra Kaplan following extensive research into what types of knowledge distinguished experts in a field of study from those with only a surface level of knowledge. Broadly speaking, expert knowledge can be categorized in two ways – depth: deep understanding of the content of the field; and complexity: scholarly insights into the connections across time, people and disciplines.

Deep understanding is achieved by investigating language, details, patterns, rules, trends, unanswered questions, ethics, and big ideas which form the content of the topic.

Complex understanding is achieved by investigating how the topic/field has changed over time, different perspectives held, and how the topic links to and connects with other disciplines.

To enable teachers and students to quickly identify the types of thinking needed, a set of icon prompts were developed to accompany the tools. (See next page for the icons and summary of each tool.)

Depth & Complexity Iconic Prompts

	Icon	Definition	Example
Language of the Discipline		What vocabulary terms are specific to the content or discipline?	Tools Jargon Icons Acronyms Special phrases Terms Slang Abbreviations
Details		What are the defining features or characteristics? Find examples and evidence to support opinions and ideas.	Parts Factors Attributes Variables Distinguishing Traits
Patterns		What elements reoccur? What is the sequence or order of events? Make predictions based on past events.	Predictability Repetition
Trends		Note factors (Social Economic, Political, Geographic) that cause events to occur. Identify patterns of change over time	Influence Forces Direction Course of Action Compare, Contrast and Forecast
Rules		What structure underlies this subject? What guidelines or regulations affect it? What hierarchy or ordering principle is at work?	Structure Order Reasons Organization Explanation Classification "Because..."
Ethics		What moral principles are involved in this subject? What controversies exist? What arguments could emerge from a study of this topic?	Values Morals Pro and Con Bias Discrimination Prejudice Judging Differing Opinions Point of View Right and Wrong Wisdom
Big Ideas		What theory or general statement applies to these ideas? How do these ideas relate to broad concepts such as change, systems, chaos vs. order, etc? What is the main idea?	Draw conclusions based on evidence Make generalizations Summarize Theory Principle Main Idea
Unanswered Questions		What information is unclear, missing, or unavailable? What evidence do you need? What has not yet been proven?	Missing Parts Incomplete Ideas Discrepancies Unresolved issues Ambiguity
Changes over Time		How are elements related in terms of the past, present, and future? How and why do things change? What doesn't change?	Connecting points in time Examining a time period Compare and Contrast
Across the Disciplines		Relate the area of study to other subjects within, between, and across disciplines.	Connect Associate Integrate Link Ideas Cross-Curricular study
Multiple Perspectives		How would others see the situation differently?	Different roles and knowledge Opposing viewpoints