

Classification

This activity is to help students to recognise characteristics statements (or words) and they are asked to classify them under headings.

The categories can be given – this is a familiar activity for aspects such as types of industry. But using categories such as ‘causes’ and ‘effects’ can encourage students to apply these themselves to other contexts in geography.

A more challenging approach is where students devise their own categories and this is particularly appropriate for older students. The downside is that they may choose categories that are weak and you have to decide whether to intervene at this stage or make it part of the learning experience. But if students have devised the categories they are more likely to remember them.

Some hints on managing classification

- Print out the ‘cards’ onto different coloured paper, which makes sorting them back into envelopes easier! Number the items so you can easily see if you have a full set.
- Work in small group, or pairs.
- Plan the grouping in advance so the students can support each other.
- Launch the idea of classification using everyday things – animal, vegetable mineral?
- Encourage students to justify their classification groups as they go along – you can draw on this when there are disagreements in the plenary.
- Give a realistic time scale for the activity to allow serious discussions
- Be prepared to help groups who are floundering.

Reference

- Leat, D. (1998) *Thinking through geography*. Cambridge: Chris Kington Publishing.

Case studies to illustrate classification

- Leat’s examples are: *Kanto earthquake 1923; hurricane; changing iron and steel location*
- [Flooding in Bangladesh](#) – an example from Pupilvision, Birmingham
- Further classifying activities can be found in the [Card sorting activities](#).

(Last updated May 2017)