

The Easy Way to Differentiate

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The buzz-word year after year seems to be *Differentiation*. But how can you REALLY fit it into your lesson plans with all the other demands you're dealing with, including the new Common Core Standards?

Start simple by offering [graphic organizers](#).

Many of my students in middle school tell me that when they get to middle school, all those cool organizers (with related pictures) disappear. The students are required to "just take notes." I've heard the same echoes from my fellow teachers and their students in high school: "How boring is that!"

As a user of [creative note-taking](#), the lack of graphic organizers at the middle/high school or college level did not bother me, but I know middle and high school students crave it. Most students remember by "seeing"-they are visual learners.

There are very few students that can remember just verbal instructions or can actually take notes continually as someone (the teacher) is lecturing. Yes, of course, by the time they are in college, they need to have that skill in tow, but until then, **they are learning the skill**. Let's give them a way to ease into it rather than "cutting off the graphic organizer umbilical cord" after elementary school.

And please, let your students doodle in their notes! Even if you don't "subscribe" to creative note-taking. I know I wouldn't remember half the lectures I heard if I weren't allowed to draw as I was listening. As a matter of fact, here are [notes I took during a teacher in-service...](#)

Steps to creating unforgettable graphic organizers for your students:

1. Print/download a boring G-O.
2. Print/use clip art to add a photo/picture related to the topic.
3. Tape/paste the picture onto the G-O.
4. Voilà- a new and improved G-O your students will appreciate.

Here's a [very simple one](#) I made for comparing and contrasting *Anne Frank* and *Number the Stars* using a Venn-Diagram template from [Education World](#).

We'd love to hear what type of graphic organizers you are using in middle and high school-leave your comment below.