



### SI-18 Five Easy Ways to Structure Knowledge

Success comes from building a solid foundation before you add the complex upper stories. Part of the fun and creativity of teaching is to think about the different ways you can organize the body of knowledge you teach. Successful instructors think as much about what they are teaching as they do about how to teach it.

Choosing the optimum knowledge structure on which to base your teaching takes thought and experimentation. It can be a complex decision given some learners prefer learning an overview first and then progressing on to the finer details once they understand the world view. Other learners prefer to learn from the opposite direction. They would rather learn the details, and then later synthesize these details into a meaningful whole.

Some learners might do better with a time, distance, or solidity approach. I'm sure you have experienced how a timeline can bring easy understanding to a complex series of events and create a gestalt, aha! experience when learning. Choosing the best structure can make a significant difference in the learning outcome.

There are five common ways to structure knowledge. If you teach for success, you should have these structures clearly in mind, ready to help learners progress more rapidly through your course material. Be ready to change structures on the fly during class. You'll know a change is warranted when students are disconnecting and seem more confused than enlightened.

## TFS e-Mentor Success Insights

Here are five fundamental and reversible organizational formats:

- Complexity—simple to intricate
- Time—chronological order
- Distance—near to far
- Solidity—concrete to abstract
- View—big picture to small details

An excellent active learning project might arise from assigning five groups of students to organize the same chapter or module in the five different knowledge-structure modalities. After a summary is presented of each structure, the class could vote on which gives them the most comprehensive understanding.

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