Pick a category: Facilitator Guide

🎯 Purpose

Pick a category is an interactive learning activity that encourages students to classify information into the correct categories. By organising concepts, learners develop a deeper understanding of relationships between ideas while reinforcing key knowledge through active learning.

The activity promotes discussion, critical thinking and collaborative problem-solving, making it ideal for teaching and revising Health and Life Sciences topics.

📚 Learning Outcomes

By the end of the activity, students should be able to:

- Classify information accurately.
- Recognise similarities and differences between concepts.
- Apply subject knowledge to make informed decisions.
- Justify why an item belongs in a particular category.
- Develop confidence through discussion and peer learning.

⚙️ Before You Start

Create Your Activity

1. Decide on the learning objective.
2. Create the category headings.
3. Enter the items that students will sort.
4. Check that each item belongs to only one category.
5. Include a few challenging items to stimulate discussion.

Good distractors or closely related concepts encourage richer conversations and deeper learning.

How to Play

Step 1 – Introduce the Topic

Explain the learning outcomes and introduce the categories students will be using.

Step 2 – Explain the Task

Students sort each item into the category they believe is correct.

The activity may be completed:

- Individually
- In pairs
- In small groups
- As a whole-class competition

Encourage discussion before placing each item.

Step 3 – Review the Answers

Once all items have been sorted:

- Review each category together.
- Discuss why each answer belongs there.
- Address any misconceptions.
- Encourage students to justify their decisions.

The discussion is often the most valuable part of the activity.

Example Activity

Topic: Microbiology

Category	Example Items
Bacteria	*Escherichia coli*, *Staphylococcus aureus*, *Salmonella*
Viruses	Influenza, HIV, Norovirus
Fungi	*Candida albicans*, *Aspergillus*
Parasites	*Plasmodium*, *Giardia*

Students sort each organism into the correct category before discussing their reasoning.

💡 Facilitator Tips

Encourage learners to explain **why** they placed each item in a particular category.

Useful prompts include:

- What evidence supports your choice?
- Could this belong somewhere else?
- What features helped you decide?
- Which items caused the most uncertainty?
- What misconceptions might this reveal?

Where possible, allow other groups to challenge or support each classification before revealing the correct answer.

🎓 Teaching Ideas

Category Sort can be used for:

- Revision sessions
- Interactive lectures
- Team-Based Learning (TBL)
- Problem-Based Learning (PBL)
- Clinical skills teaching
- Laboratory teaching
- Formative assessment
- Exam preparation
- Icebreaker or recap activities

🗣️ Debrief Questions

Discuss the activity using questions such as:

- Which items were easiest to classify?
- Which generated the most discussion?
- Why were some categories more difficult?
- Were there any common misconceptions?

- How does accurate classification support clinical decision-making?

Encourage students to reflect on how organising information improves understanding and recall.

⭐ Educational Benefits

Category Sort supports active learning by combining:

- Active retrieval practice
- Concept organisation
- Critical thinking
- Collaborative learning
- Peer instruction
- Immediate formative feedback
- Clinical reasoning

By requiring students to classify information rather than simply recall facts, the activity helps learners build meaningful connections between concepts, improving long-term understanding and application within Health and Life Sciences.