

Build Connections for Classrooms: Facilitation Guide

HOW TO USE

Before using Build Connections, students should understand the *purpose* and unpack examples. We recommend this sequence:

1. Prep Activity
Includes student stories, or you could develop your own.
2. Animation
www.characterlab.org/build-connections
3. Examples (Student + Teacher)
4. Student Activity

FAQ

HOW SHOULD I PREPARE TO LEAD THIS ACTIVITY?

Before you lead it with students, try the activity yourself. While you practice, reflect on your own process and the type of thinking you use. This will help you model the activity and coach students.

WHAT HELPS STUDENTS BUILD THE STRONGEST CONNECTIONS?

Students will grow from practice. But if they seem stuck, keep in mind these tips:

1. Students might feel “locked in” to the first connection they make. Encourage them to branch out and be creative.
2. Connections can start with personal interests OR class content. Encourage students to approach it from both sides.
3. Connections might be important now or in the future. Consider both when brainstorming.

WHAT SHOULD I DO AFTER THE ACTIVITY?

Reviewing student responses is a great opportunity to learn more about students and to see what content is meaningful for them.

If you give feedback on their connections, focus on helping students elaborate or clarify.

Going forward, you could use student connections in lesson openers and examples.

HOW CAN THIS ACTIVITY BE EXTENDED?

These student connections are great starting points for individual research and project-based learning. Encourage students to pursue and deepen their connections.

You can also deepen connections by having students write a letter to someone else who would benefit from the connection.

WHAT IS MOST IMPORTANT AS I ADAPT THIS FOR MY CLASSROOM?

The core of Build Connections is making space for students to reflect on how school can connect to their own passions. Details might change, but at the end of the day, if students make school meaningful on a personal level—or even just start this process—this activity will be a success.

Not every student will make a connection every time, but just offering the activity can benefit students.

SAMPLE SCRIPT

Try saying something like this to the class. Give sufficient wait time between steps.

1. *First, we’ll brainstorm things that are important and interesting to you. List them in section ①. Think about what you do for fun, what you like to learn about, or what you want to do in the future.*
2. *Now we’re going to think about the things you’ve learned in this [unit/lesson]. In section ②, list major topics you remember. Include specific vocabulary and details.*
3. *Next we’ll think about POSSIBLE connections. This section can be challenging at first, so be patient. Looking at columns ① and ②, think about how parts of your life in the first section might connect to the content in the second section. Draw a line when you think of a possible connection and try to think of more.*
4. *Review the connections you brainstormed and pick one that feels significant to you. Summarize it in section ④. The more specific you can be, the better.*
5. *Now, think more about your connection and how it’s important to you. It could be important now or in the future. In section ⑤, summarize why it’s important.*
6. (Optional, recommended) *Now we’re going to share our connections with each other. This is a chance to learn about each other and think more about the content we’re learning. (Use discussion structures that make the most sense for your classroom.)*