

CONCEPT ATTAINMENT MODEL

What is the Concept Attainment Model?

The Concept Attainment model is an instructional strategy founded on the works of Jerome Bruner. Built on the principle of concept formation, the Concept Attainment model promotes student learning through a process of structured inquiry.

The model helps students to understand and learn concepts by identifying attributes or key features through a process of analysis, comparison, and contrasting of examples. Two sets of examples are used in this strategy – *Yes (examples that have attributes of the concept)* and *No (examples that do not have attributes of the concept) examples*.

Concept Attainment Model in Practice

Introduced as a whole-class activity, this instructional strategy can be implemented using the following steps:

Preparation:

- Choose a concept with well-defined attributes.
- Prepare “yes” and “no” examples. Some of the yes examples should have a high attribute value (meaning it should be a clear representative of the concept)

In the classroom:

- Introduce and explain the strategy.
- Draw two columns on the board and title them as “Yes” and “No.”
- Present each example and write them in the appropriate column. Start with three examples in each column.
- Instruct students to analyze and compare the examples, within the group (find similar attributes in the “yes” group) and between the groups (find how “yes” and “no” examples differ from each other). Write the attributes listed by the students on the other side of the board.
- Add three more examples to each column. Instruct students to refine the attribute list by analyzing the additional examples.
- Ask students if they are able to identify the concept, but not to say it out aloud. Students who have identified the concept can be encouraged to add more “yes” examples to the column. Encourage other students to examine the student-generated examples to identify the concept.
- Teachers can assist by modeling the thought process to help other students identify the concept. Once identified, help students define it using the list of identified attributes.
- To test for understanding, have students suggest more “yes” and “no” examples of the concept with explanations. Or, teachers can present students with examples and instruct them to categorize them as “yes” or “no”.

Practicing the Strategy

Divide the class into small groups or pairs and provide them with Concept Attainment Worksheets. (A sample is included at the end.)

Instruct students to find the essential attributes of a concept, identify the concept, and define it. An additional sheet with random examples can be included which students can be instructed to categorize. At the end of the session, each group can present and discuss their findings.

Teachers can combine the Concept Attainment model with the Carousel method, placing different concept worksheets at different workstations. Each group starts from one workstation and eventually visits each workstation identifying attributes and recording them. At the end of the carousel, groups return to their original workstations and using the information recorded, try to identify and define their concepts. Each group can then present their concept to the class, teaching using the Concept Attainment model.

The Concept Attainment model serves as a powerful teaching and learning strategy. For teachers, it is advantageous to use the model to introduce and teach new concepts through an active, student-centric, inquiry-based approach. Simultaneously, the model as a learning strategy helps students to:

- Link past knowledge with new information
- Critically analyze, compare, and categorize information

- Examine and understand a concept from multiple perspectives, strengthening understanding and retrieval of the concept.