

# Learning Window

## What is it?

A framework for transforming complex standards into classroom-level learning goals—specifically, knowledge goals, understanding goals, skill-acquisition goals, and dispositional goals/habits of mind

## What are the benefits of using this tool?

Standards are often too broad and complex to provide a clear focus for instruction and assessment, which is why it's so important to “unpack” and convert them into smaller, more specific learning goals/targets. A Learning Window facilitates this unpacking process by helping us determine what our students will need to know, understand, be able to do, and be like in order to achieve the standards in question. It does this by having us respond to five simple questions, each of which is framed within a pane or sill of a window-shaped organizer like this one:

What will students need to KNOW?	What HABITS OF MIND will I try to foster?
What will students need to UNDERSTAND?	What SKILLS will students need to develop?
What TERMS will students need to know?	

## What are the basic steps?

1. Identify the standards that you intend to address during an upcoming lesson or unit.
2. Begin to unpack them by scanning for useful information. Underline words or phrases that point to knowledge, understandings, skills, and habits of mind that students will need to acquire.
3. Use the questions on the reproducible Learning Window (p. 11) to help you complete the unpacking process. For help with the Habits of Mind pane, download the Habits of Mind reference page at [www.ThoughtfulClassroom.com/Tools](http://www.ThoughtfulClassroom.com/Tools).

*Note:* The Skills pane is typically reserved for *general* thinking/learning skills (see the upper panel of Figure 4 on p. 198 for examples). Content-specific (procedural) skills like adding fractions or using a pH meter should be listed in the Knowledge pane.

4. Refer to your completed Learning Window as you map out your lesson or unit. Use it to guide the development of assessments, assignments, and activities. (If you want, you can record lesson-planning ideas directly on your window.)
5. *Optional:* Use your completed Learning Window to generate a list of student-friendly learning targets. See the Student-Friendly Learning Targets tool (p. 12, especially Step 2) for guidance.

## How is this tool used in the classroom?

- ✓ To unpack standards, identify learning goals, and focus instruction/assessment

Teachers use Learning Windows to help them unpack their standards and design their lessons and units. Two sample windows are shown here; additional samples are available for download at [www.ThoughtfulClassroom.com/Tools](http://www.ThoughtfulClassroom.com/Tools).

**EXAMPLE 1:** Prior to developing a lesson on the interdependence of living things, a third-grade teacher used a Learning Window to unpack the standards that she wanted to address. She then used her completed Learning Window to develop and focus her lesson plans.

<p><b>Standards that I intend to address:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Science Standard, Big Idea 17A: <u>Plants and animals, including humans, interact with and depend upon each other</u> and their environment to satisfy their basic needs.*</li> <li>• Common Core Reading Standard RI.3.2: <u>Determine the main idea of a text; recount the key details and explain how they support the main idea.</u></li> <li>• Common Core Writing Standard W.3.2: <u>Write informative/explanatory texts to examine a topic and convey ideas and information clearly.</u></li> </ul>	
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<p><b>LEARNING WINDOW</b></p>	
<p><b>Lesson title:</b> Honeybees, Ants, and Plants...Oh, My!</p> <p><b>Purpose:</b> 1. To have students practice main idea identification skills while acquiring critical content knowledge 2. To address the Common Core's call for reading in all content areas (lesson is organized around an informational text called "Animals and Plants Working Together")</p>	
<p><b>What will students need to KNOW?</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Animals depend on plants for food and shelter.</li> <li>• Plants depend on animals for pollination, seed dispersal, and access to nutrients.</li> </ul> <p>(Students should be able to give specific examples for each point.)</p>	<p><b>What HABITS OF MIND will I try to foster?</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <u>Communicating with clarity and precision</u> I'll encourage students to focus on clarity and accuracy while writing their paragraphs.</li> <li>• <u>Thinking about thinking</u> I'll have students reflect on and describe the processes that they use to identify main ideas.</li> </ul>
<p><b>What will students need to UNDERSTAND?</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• That living things help and depend on each other (the main idea of the lesson/reading assignment)</li> <li>• That good readers try to identify main ideas both as AND after they read something – and that they look for details/examples to support those ideas</li> </ul>	<p><b>What SKILLS will students need to develop?</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <u>Identifying important information within a text</u></li> <li>• <u>Writing an explanatory paragraph</u> I'll have students write a paragraph about how living things help each other (main idea should be supported with details/examples from the text).</li> </ul>
<p><b>What TERMS will students need to know?</b></p> <p>basic needs, shelter, pollinate, interdependent, main idea, seed dispersal, explanatory paragraph</p>	

\*Next Generation Sunshine State Standards: <http://www.floridastandards.org>

**EXAMPLE 2:** After identifying the standards that she wanted to address during an upcoming exploration unit, a history teacher used a Learning Window to unpack those standards and design her unit. Before beginning the unit, she converted the information on her Learning Window into a list of student-friendly learning targets (not shown) and then shared those targets with students.

<b>EXPLORATION OF THE AMERICAS</b>	
<p><b>Content standards:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Understand the <i>causes and effects</i> of <i>European overseas exploration</i> and expansion in the 15th and 16th centuries.                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Analyze the <i>conditions/factors/motives</i> (political, economic, social, technological, religious) that stimulated exploration.</li> <li>Understand the <i>consequences and significance</i> of European expansion (e.g., the impact on <i>Native Americans</i>).</li> </ul> </li> </ul> <p><b>Common Core Standards:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Write <i>arguments</i> focused on discipline-specific content (WHST.6-8.1).</li> <li>Analyze a case in which two or more texts provide conflicting information on the same topic (RI.8.9).</li> <li>Conduct <i>research</i> to answer a question (W.8.7) and gather information from multiple print and digital sources (W.8.8).</li> </ul>	
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<b>LEARNING WINDOW</b>	
<p><b>What will students need to KNOW?</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Conditions/factors (political, economic, etc.) that stimulated exploration</li> <li>Technological advances (navigation, map making, naval engineering) that facilitated exploration and conquest</li> <li>Consequences of expansion, including impact on Native Americans</li> <li>Names, nationalities, motivations, and accomplishments of principal explorers</li> </ul>	<p><b>What HABITS OF MIND will I try to foster?</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Seeking out reasons, explanations, and evidence</li> <li>Considering different perspectives and viewpoints</li> <li>Evaluating the quality of ideas and information</li> </ul>
<p><b>What will students need to UNDERSTAND?</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>That one person's explorer can be another person's conqueror</li> <li>How technological innovations can impact the course of history</li> <li>That periods of exploration happen for a reason                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Why did the Age of Exploration happen when it did?</li> <li>Why was the time right for Columbus in 1492?</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<p><b>What SKILLS will students need to develop?</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Justifying positions with <i>evidence</i> Task: Did the times make Columbus, or did Columbus make the times? Take a position and support it in writing.</li> <li>Researching and reporting                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Gather relevant information from multiple sources.</li> <li>Take accurate notes, summarize key points.</li> <li>Quote or paraphrase properly; avoid plagiarism.</li> </ul> </li> <li>Comparing and hypothesizing Task: Compare the account of Columbus's character, actions, and achievements from our textbook with that in Howard Zinn's "A People's History of the United States." What are the differences? Why might they exist?</li> </ul>
<p><b>What TERMS will students need to know?</b></p> <p>cartography, mariner's astrolabe, caravel, New World, imperialism, Age of Exploration, Inca, Aztecs, 1492, conquistadors, colonialism, Columbus, de Soto, Cortez, de Leon, Pizarro, Prince Henry the Navigator</p>	