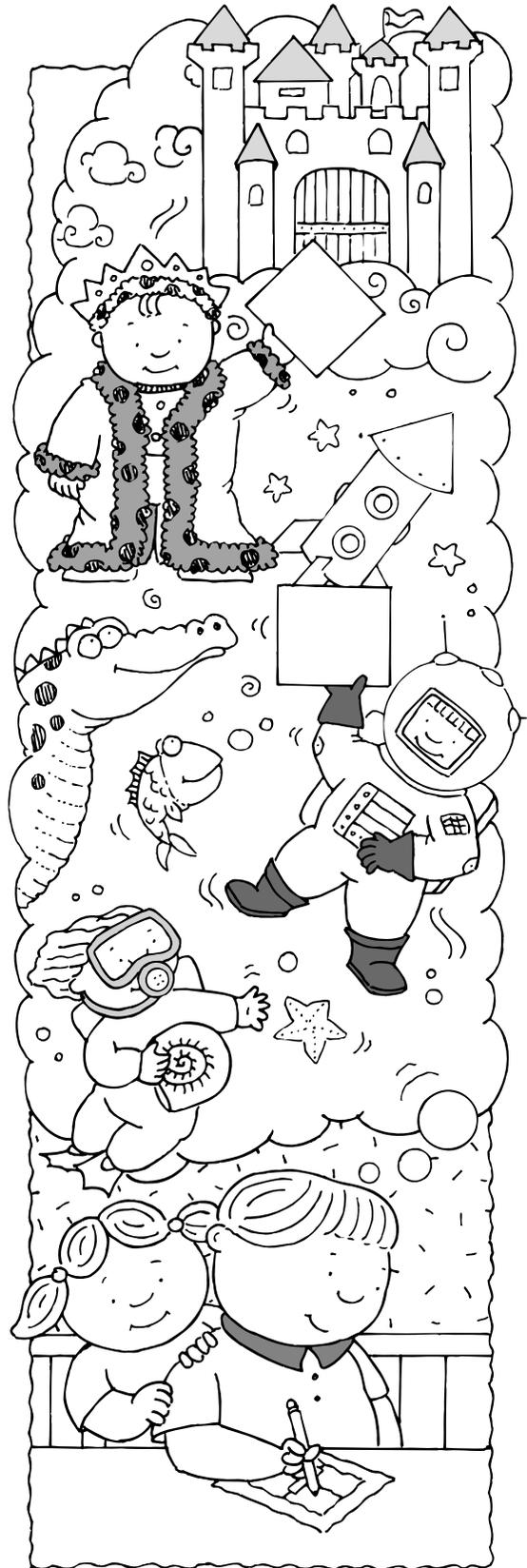


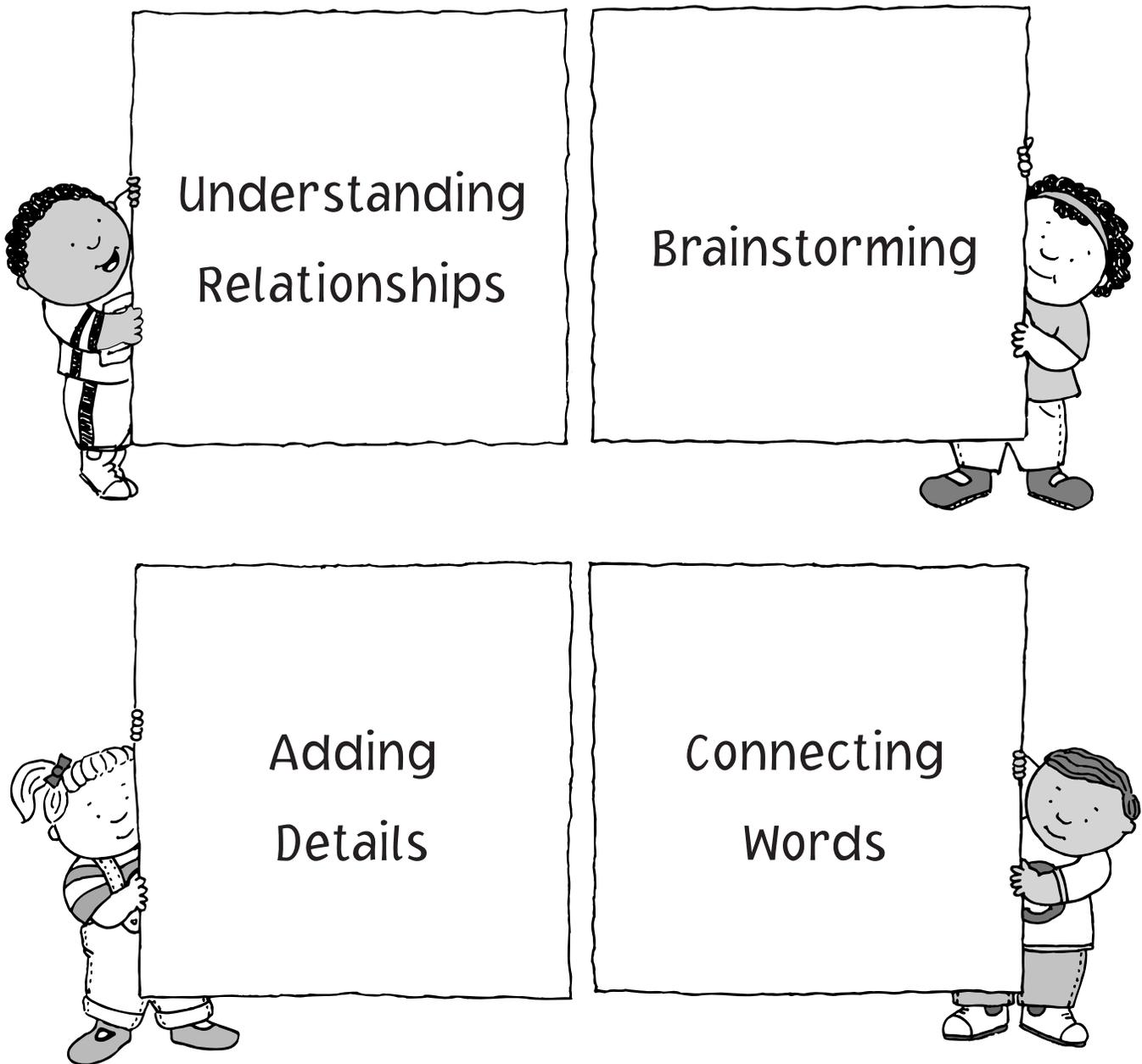
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# Section 1

## Getting Organized Learning the Four Square

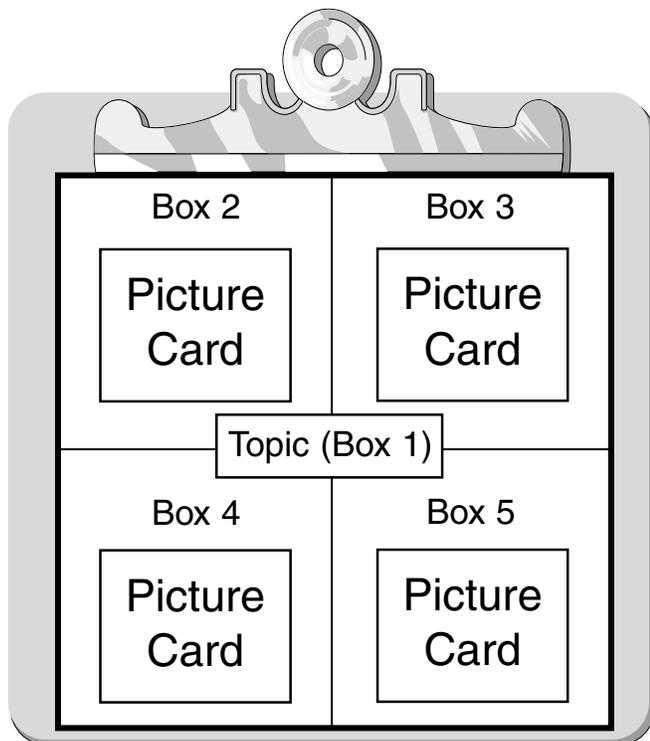


# Step 1

## Categorizing

### *Understanding Similarities*

Before writing takes place, a thought process must occur. If our desired outcome is a focused, organized and detailed composition, we must begin with even the youngest of our children to explore the relationships between ideas and objects. Reasoning is developed by classifying and categorizing the items in our everyday world. This reasoning can be developed into that prewriting thought process.



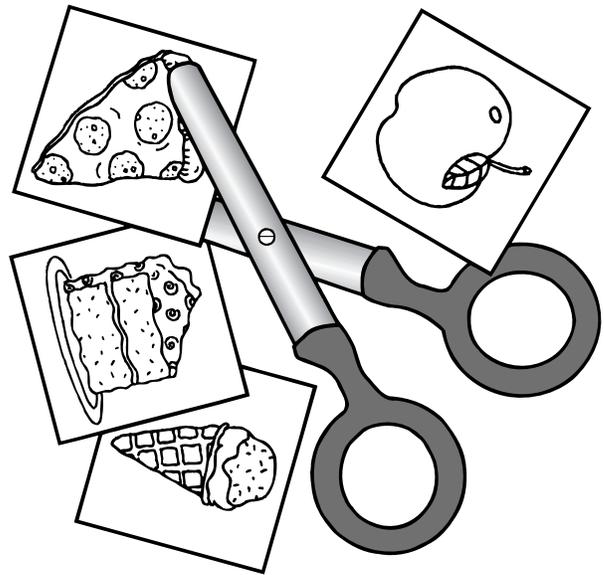
The initial activities in categorizing are best done using actual manipulative materials. A “brown bag” activity can be performed. In this activity the students are given bags full of random items. There may be toys, books, pencils, food or other common things. The students are then challenged to separate the items into different groups. Each group must have something that is the same about all items in the group. Sometimes a little modeling and coaching are necessary, but most children happily sort the items on the criteria of color, size or use.

*The four square for use with picture card manipulation activities*

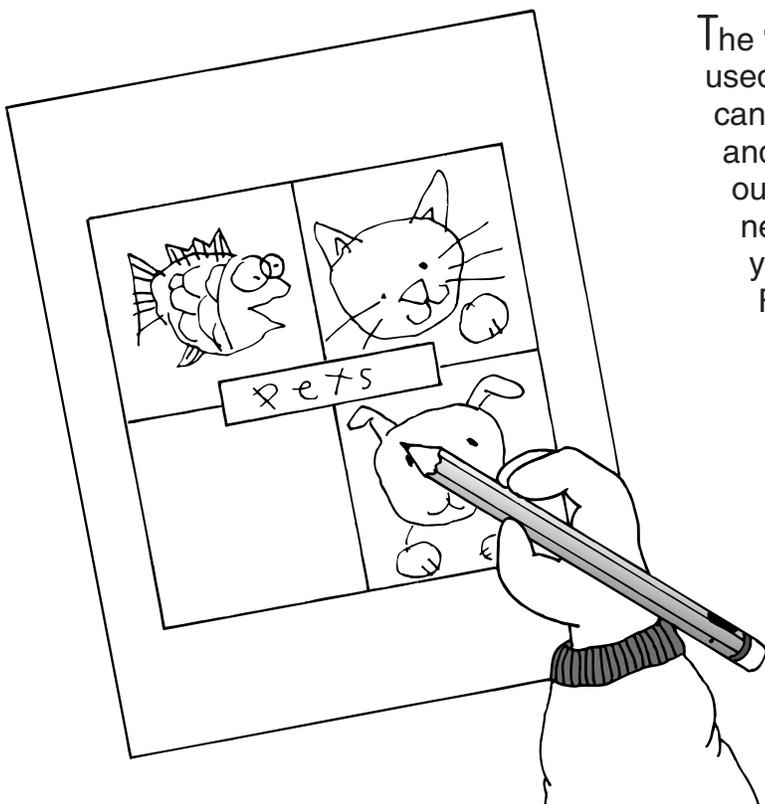
After several repetitions with real items, this activity can then be done with picture cards. This moves the activity up one level of abstraction and towards producing written thought. At this stage the four square organizer can be introduced and used on a felt board or magnetic board with the appropriate backing on the picture cards.

We can introduce the four square early in the instruction of writing and prewriting to prepare students for its later use. Also, the four square will become a familiar and friendly format for organization and classification.

Once students have achieved mastery in the picture card exercise, they are ready for the more abstract cut-and-paste activity on the following pages. There is an additional level of abstraction involved, so it is important to allow students to develop the skills with the manipulative materials.



After practice with cut-and-paste activities, the students can be moved to a “blank four square” worksheet or journal page. The topic is written in the middle and the students must draw the items in the outer boxes. Encourage labeling of their pictures, and allow any spellings that they come up with at this point. It is recommended that the conventional spelling be penciled in because students often do not remember what they themselves have drawn or written.



The “blank four square” can be successfully used as a daily journal page. The students can copy the word that goes in the center and complete the categorization in the outer boxes. Topics for this activity are nearly limitless. Pages can be done as you study shapes, numbers and colors. Four squares can be completed on a letter being studied by simply drawing four items that begin with the letter sound. Common items can be classified by writing toys, foods, animals, sports or other popular topics in the center.

These activities are fun and non-threatening and should be within the ability of children with the least amount of early childhood literacy training.