

Class 1: Making Ideas Concrete

Why should you concretize?

Concretization is a cognitive need of benefits you can introspect. Concretization is necessary for making abstractions clear. A goal of this course is to provide experience monitoring for the “floating” feeling that signals the need to concretize.

What is concretization?

To concretize means to make concrete, to “give tangible or definite form to.” **Concrete** describes concepts that are relatively close to direct perception. **Abstract** describes concepts that are relatively far from direct perception, i.e., concepts that require a chain of conceptualization to grasp. Giving examples is a form of concretization. *An example is a concrete, specific instance of an abstraction.* **Specific** means narrow in scope. The opposite is general, i.e., wide in scope.

How do you concretize?

We are adapting a general procedure to concretization. The technique is thinking on paper using general questions as a starting point. The general question-stems are: **who, what, where, when, how, why, and as opposed to what.**

Thinking on paper consists of writing out your thinking in a series of complete questions and answers. The key to thinking on paper is to monitor for your **goal**. Start by writing down your goal, then keep monitoring and nudging your thinking to ensure you are moving toward your goal.

Here are specific steps for giving examples. Write down everything as a dialog with yourself.

- 1) **GOAL:** Name your goal, i.e., to give examples of X.
- 2) **QUESTION:** Make up a specific question, starting with one question-stem. Choose one that seems to help you think of a concrete example of X. Write out the question as a full sentence.
- 3) **ANSWER:** Answer the question as concretely as you can.
- 4) **MONITOR:** Ask yourself, does this help me to give an example or a part of what I need for my example? If so, follow through on your idea to make a completely concrete, specific instance of X. If not, use the same or another question-stem to formulate a new question.
- 5) **PROBLEMS:** If you go blank, ask an easier question. If you lack the knowledge to answer a question, try to identify what relevant knowledge you *do* have. If at any time you feel overwhelmed by too many ideas, just pick one idea to pursue.

Homework for Class 1

Concretize how the internet has changed the culture of your country. Spend 15 minutes thinking on paper, using the techniques from class to generate a variety of examples.

Submitting Homework on the Member Forum: I have started a topic on the HBL Member Forum to discuss the homework. A link to this PDF will be on that topic. If you would like feedback from me on your answers, please make a submission as follows: Turn in the one question that was most helpful to you, and one good example (one fully concrete, specific instance).

Homework submitted by one week from today will definitely get written comments from me.