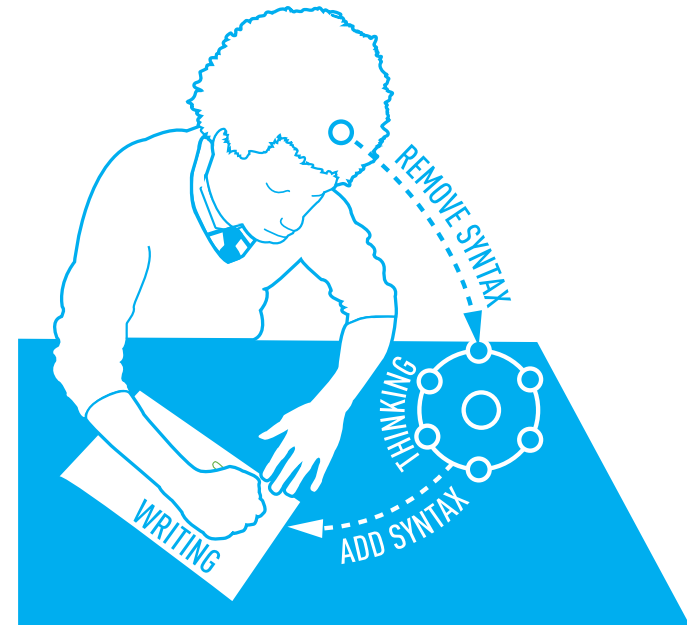


Literacy with HOW2s

The Graphic Organiser and Manipulative HOW2s offer a unique approach to developing literacy skills. Their direct access to meaning and understanding are launch pads to better writing.



“Language is a system which relates to what is being talked about (content) and the means used to talk about it (expression).”

— MOHAN, B., 1986, LANGUAGE AND CONTENT, ADDISON WESLEY

1

Literacy across the curriculum

We’ve been trying to convince subject teachers that literacy is their responsibility for a while now. Yet, all too often, they’ve continued to see content and its expression as being separate. They’re not.



SUBJECT TO LANGUAGE

*“Biology is not plants and animals.
It is language about plants and animals.*

*History is not events. It is language
describing and interpreting events.*

*Astronomy is not planets and stars. It is a
way of talking about planets and stars.”*

— POSTMAN, N., 1990,

TEACHING AS A CONSERVING ACTIVITY, DELACORTE

Neil Postman’s quote opposite makes it very clear that subjects are nothing without language. Strip away their words and you’ve taken away the subject.

When you realise and accept this fact, you understand the impossibility of separating subject content from its language. The two are inextricably intertwined.

And when the significance of this sinks in, it becomes abundantly clear that subject teachers — whether they think they are or not — are teachers of literacy.

The central question then becomes how to support them with techniques and tools to address the development of both subject knowledge and literacy skills.

GRAPHIC ORGANISERS

Graphic Organisers are a proven solution to this challenge. By giving learners direct access to the meaning of subject content, they help bypass the wall of complex syntax found in textual explanations that exclude so many.

The visual-spatial structure of graphic organisers use words, not sentences, to reveal essential concepts and meaning. Text structures, by contrast, are sequential patterns, glued together with syntax. Stumble over the syntax and access to its meaning is denied.

By temporarily avoiding the challenge of syntax, learners establish meaning. From this platform of personal knowledge, they are enabled and motivated to express it to others in dialogue — naturally adding syntax to their explanations. A rehearsal for writing.

“To write well, one must first think well.”

2

— BUCKNER, J., 2004, EMPOWERING STUDENTS FROM THINKING TO WRITING, IN STUDENT SUCCESSES WITH THINKING MAPS (HYERLE, D.), CORWIN PRESS

Making thoughts visible

Clear writing comes from clear thinking. But how can learners think clearly when their thoughts are not visible to them? What, then, are the implications of making students' thoughts visible?



THOUGHTS ARE INVISIBLE → MAKE THEM VISIBLE → MANIPULATE THEM → COMMUNICATE THEM → WRITE THEM UP

THOUGHTS ARE INVISIBLE, ABSTRACT AND PRIVATE

Teachers exhort their learners to think more clearly and more often. After all, they can soak up all the writing tips you give them, but without any content to write about, they're redundant.

So long as thoughts remain hidden from view, learners of all standards think less clearly. And, to compound the difficulty, they do so in private — away from the shared observation necessary for effective formative feedback.

MAKE THOUGHTS VISIBLE, CONCRETE AND PUBLIC

Extracting essential concepts in keywords, reveals the meanings often concealed in the complex syntax of text.

But when freed of syntax, ideas become apparent and solid. They can be manipulated into different permutations, communicated to others, appraised and re-jigged.

Becoming public in this way, thinking changes from being obscure and fleeting to ordinary and practical.

MANIPULATE THEM

MANIPULATE THOUGHTS INTO KNOWLEDGE STRUCTURES

If you consider thinking to be the organisation of thoughts, then making them visible and concrete turns the whole process into a practical and engaging activity.

As learners organise their connected ideas, they build new frameworks that become internalised as understanding. And they serve as plans for their writing. Clear thinking for clear writing is not just a motto — it's a description of what happens.

COMMUNICATE THEM

REVIEW THEIR MEANING AND REHEARSE THEIR EXPRESSION

With their thinking organised and captured, learners talk through their graphic organiser plan to a partner.

By doing so, they check to see if it makes sense and tweak any adaptations needed.

By turning their keywords into sentences, they replace the missing syntax. Now, the cycle is complete and makes them ready for writing up their plan.

WRITE THEM UP

USE AS A PLAN BEFORE, DURING AND AFTER WRITING

Having constructed their plan with such diligence, signifies much more to the learners than their usual attempts. Instead of being either forgotten or simply copied out, these plans become their navigation aids throughout the writing process.

With clarity of thought gained, learners can now turn their minds to the best linguistic expressions appropriate to the content.

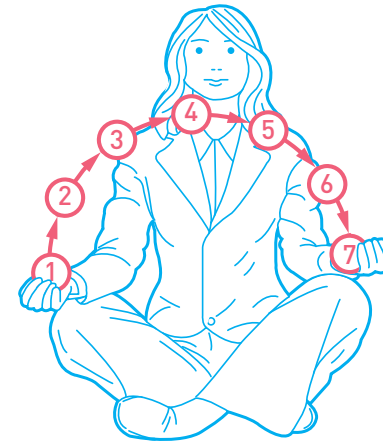
“Style models, genres, all these things have been important, but they still assume that the thinking is just there.”

3

— JEFFRIES, M., 2000, IN LET'S THINK LATERALLY (CONSTANTINE), TIMES EDUCATIONAL SUPPLEMENT (2 JUNE)

Manipulating thoughts

Thinking is very difficult to teach while it remains invisible. Yes, you can comment on the result of thinking — but by then it's a post mortem. With thoughts made visible, however, you can teach a step-by-step process anyone can follow.



COLLECT

GATHER MANY THOUGHTS ON THE TOPIC AT HAND

Generate ideas, pushing beyond the immediate and obvious content.

Collect a wide range of ideas from memory, imagination and sources, enquiring into their meaning and relevance, and connecting them to the topic in question.

⑤ CULL

EDIT THE THOUGHTS DOWN TO THE MOST RELEVANT

Evaluate the collected ideas in relation to given criteria. Rank the relevance of the ideas, ordering them by importance.

Cut out any duplication of ideas and any irrelevant ones.

⑤ CHUNK

GROUP THOUGHTS BY THEIR COMMON ATTRIBUTES

Identify themes by searching for similarities between the range of ideas.

Experiment trying out several types of groups.

Check that your groups are consistent with and relevant to the topic under focus.

⑤ CONNECT

LINK THOUGHTS ACCORDING TO THE TYPE OF REASONING USED

Organise the ideas into patterns consistent with one of the four major types of reasoning:

- Define
- Compare
- Sequence
- Cause & effect.

⑤ CHAIN

SEQUENCE THE THOUGHTS READY FOR COMMUNICATION

Transform your spatially organised thinking back into linear format. Consider the priorities and the lines of argument you will present.

⑤ COMMUNICATE

REVIEW THEIR MEANING AND REHEARSE THEIR EXPRESSION

Explain and discuss your graphic organiser to check that it makes sense to another person. By talking it through, you will be adding the missing syntax to your sentences. You will transform your thinking from spatially-connected words, to the sequential sentences format needed for writing.

“Diagrams are ideal for helping them to see the relevant structure.”

— LUNZER, E. & GARDNER, K. 1984, LEARNING AND THE WRITTEN WORD, OLIVER & BOYD

Knowledge frameworks

Knowledge frameworks integrate content understanding with literacy skills. Their four types of reasoning correspond with the major text genres and any subject content.

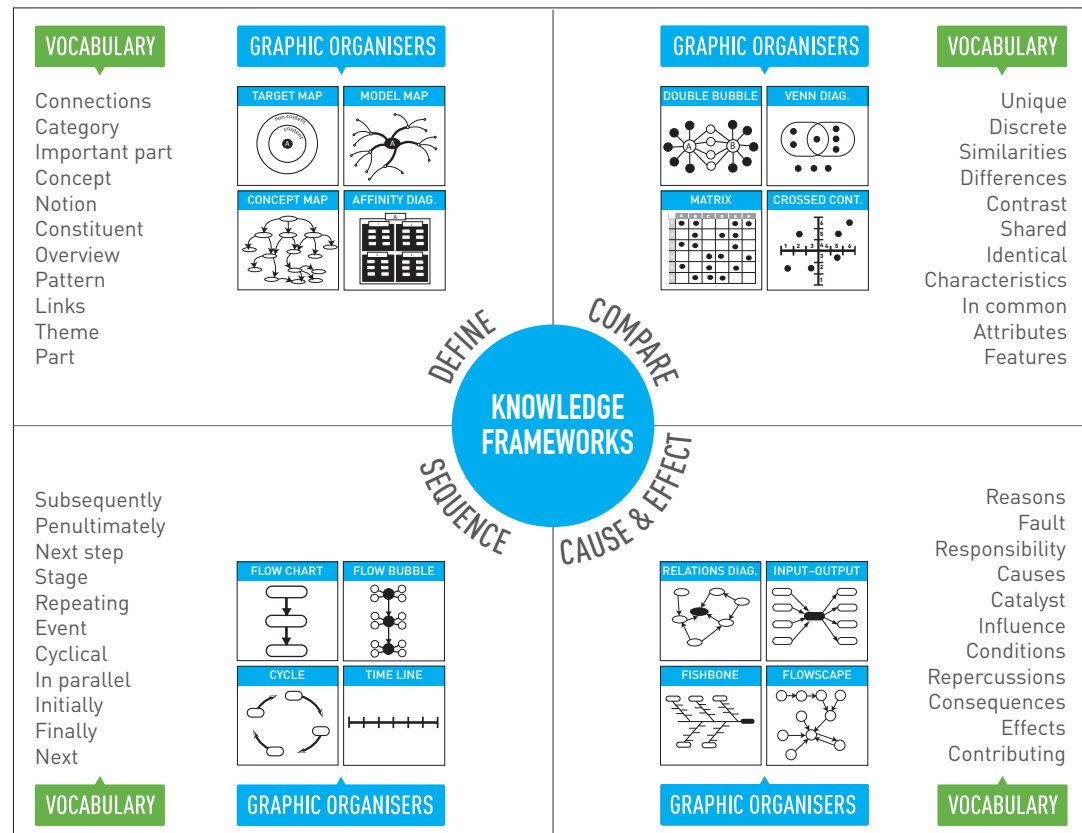
SUBJECT TO LANGUAGE

Knowledge is structured information. The very act of organising information into a structure is an act of meaning-making.

The number of ways to do this is covered by the four major methods of reasoning. Every single graphic organiser can be grouped according to these four types.

Being visual and comprising of keywords only, these graphic organisers have lower linguistic demands than a piece of text. As a result, all learners are able to create such frameworks in preparation for meaningful writing.

And being central to how we think, these four types capture all, and any, subject content. Subject and its expression are therefore integrated for the development of literacy skills.



“When you put a visual model in the centre of the teaching process, the boundaries between literacy, learning and thinking skills begin to seem increasingly artificial.”

5

— PALMER, S., 2002, FOREWORD TO EYE Q AND THINKING SKILLS (CAVIGLIOLI, HARRIS & TINDALL), NETWORK EDUCATIONAL PRESS

Thinking and dialogue at the centre

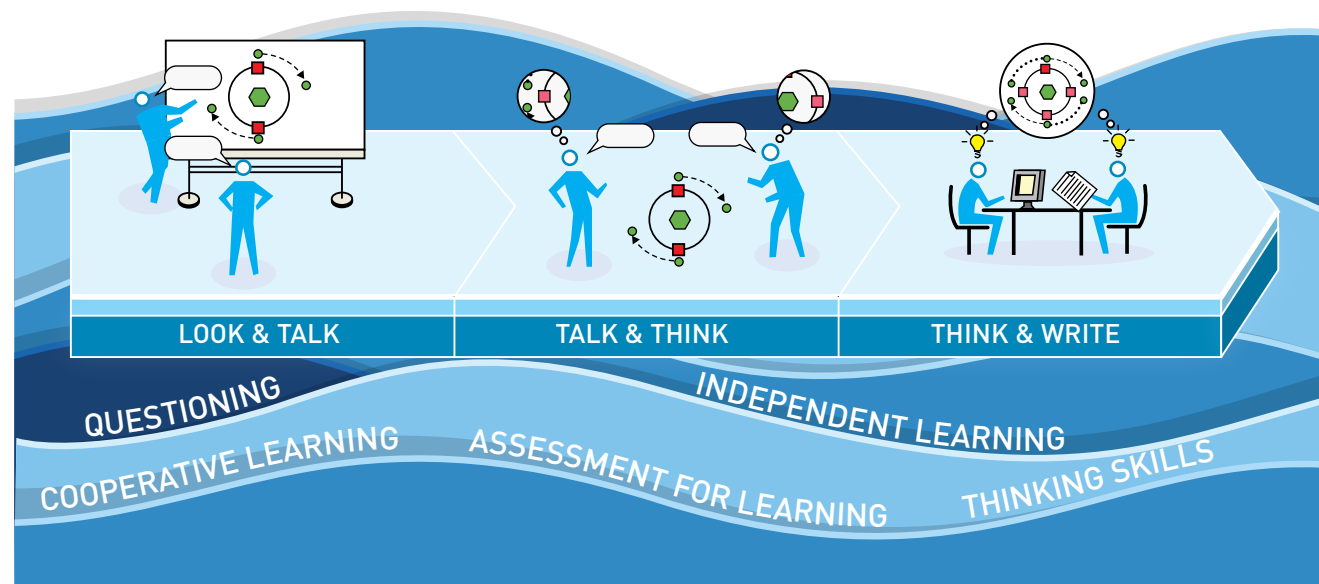
It's a mistake to think of graphic organisers as a separate and distinct teaching strategy. They are knowledge and literacy tools whose benefits are pertinent to all teaching methods.

PLATFORM FOR LEARNING

Learning is based around dialogue. But the required level of sustained focus doesn't happen naturally with learners. Graphic organisers are highly effective as speaking and listening frameworks. As such they are tools that can enrich all other teaching approaches.

Cooperative learning has promised much in terms of learning but often disappoints by being insufficiently rigorous. It's certainly good for engaging learners. That, alas, doesn't necessarily make it productive. However, with graphic organisers at the centre as a focus, dialogue and learning are transformed.

Equally so with assessment for learning. Seeing thinking processes offers the ultimate formative assessment opportunity. And similarly so for independent learning, thinking skills and so on.



“Writing’s easy when you do the thinking first.”

— MONTELL, 2007

6

Montell’s 30-minute transformation

Graphic organisers are very effective. Below is a record of a teaching assistant using it in a literacy surgery with a Year 6 student. The whole process, from the initial limited piece of writing to the more elaborate version, took only 30 minutes.



See the 10 HOW2s in the Model Mapping Course for a thorough way to teach your students this approach to mapping.

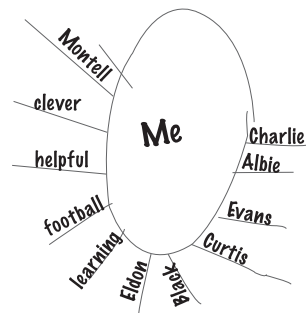
ORIGINAL WRITING

This was the initial piece of writing by Montell.

I am Montell and I am a 11 year old. I like football and learning. I am helpful and clever.

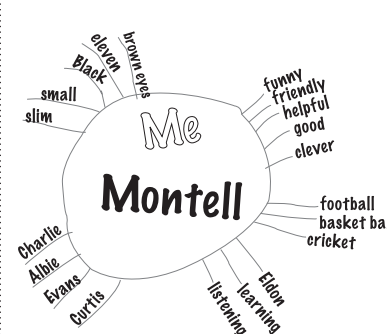
COLLECT IDEAS

A learning support tutor worked with Montell but these were all his ideas, listed in radial fashion.



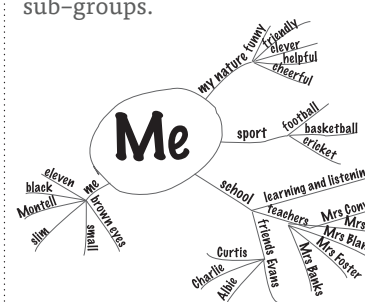
CHUNK IDEAS

Once his ideas were put in front of him, Montell not only started to organise them into groups, he also produced more ideas.



CONNECT IDEAS

The basic grouping of ideas was discussed. From this discussion, the structure of the map developed. And all the further sub-groups.



COMMUNICATE

Here is what Montell wrote after discussing his ideas throughout the process.

My name is Montell and I am 11 years old. I am slim and black and I have brown eyes. I am funny and friendly, clever and helpful. My favourite sports are football, basketball and cricket. I support Manchester United Football Club because they are the best football team in the world. I go to Eldon Junior School. My teachers are Mrs Conway, Mrs Ali, Mrs Bland, Miss Foster and Mrs Banks. My best friends are Evans, Albie, Charlie and Curtis.

“DARTs are strategies for processing texts. They encourage pupils to read a text carefully, to go beyond literal comprehension and to think about what they read.”

—DFES: PEDAGOGY AND PRACTICE: DEVELOPING READING

Comprehension with DARTS

DARTS stands for Directed Activities Related to Texts, the invention of Eric Lunzer and Keith Gardner in the 1980s. Manipulatives HOW2s are perfect for these activities.

TWO APPROACHES OF DARTS

1: Reconstruction

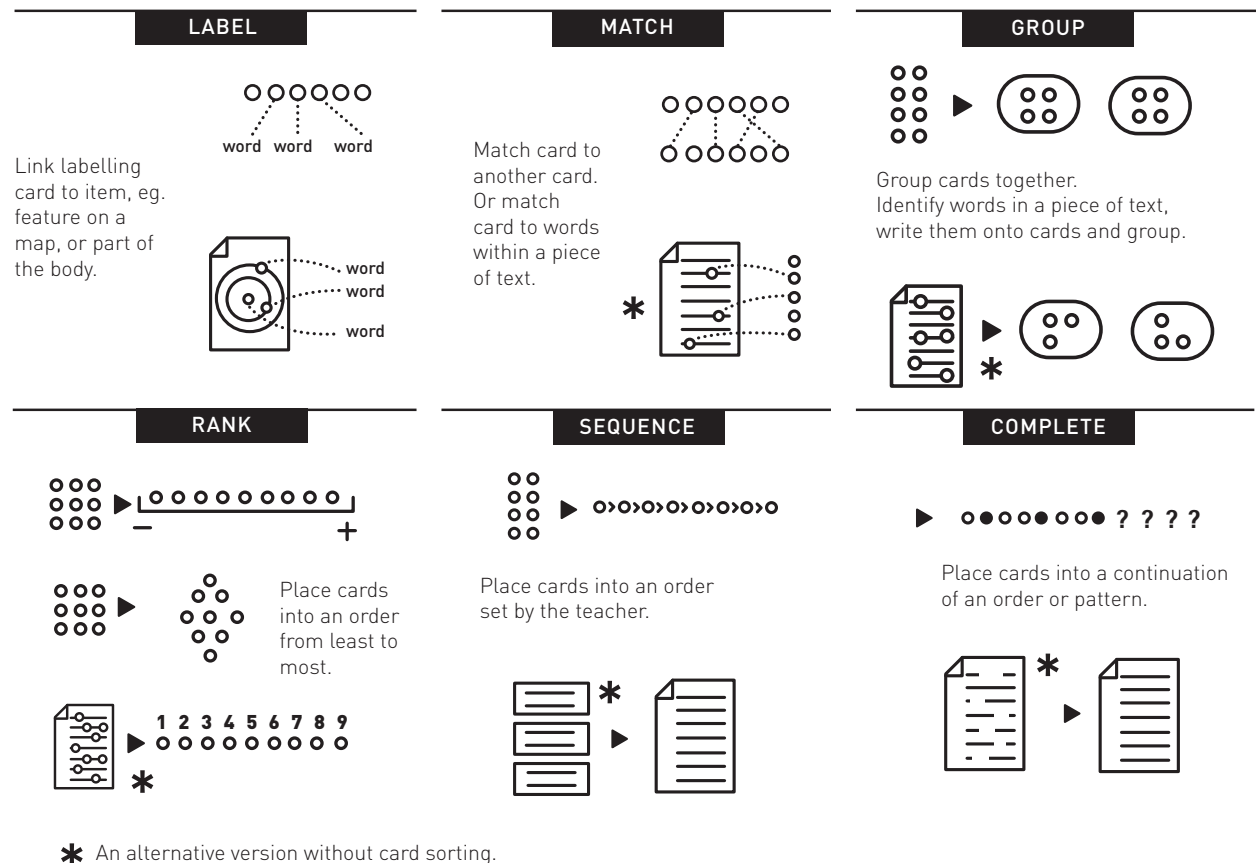
Students work with teacher-modified texts, completing or predicting to reconstruct them.

- Text completion: fill in missing words or sentences.
- Diagram completion: fill in missing parts
- Ordering text: sequence or categorise disordered text
- Prediction: predict the next part(s) of a text

2: Analysis

Students work directly on unmodified texts, identifying different parts and representing them in different formats.

- Underlining or highlighting: search for target words
- Labelling: label segments of text
- Segmenting: cut up units of text
- Diagrammatic representation: construct diagrams and extract information.



“Without specific techniques to provide direction, we fall back on vague platitudes”.

— LEMOV, D., 20120, PRACTICE PERFECT, JOSSEY-BASS

8

Get going with Literacy HOW2s

You’ll find all 150+ HOW2s in the Library. Those most pertinent to literacy have their own Collection, divided into four sections.

THE HOW2 FAMILY

Aside from the graphic organisers, the other HOW2s also have much to offer the development of literacy.

Assessment for Learning develops the powers of metacognition — the self-monitoring of good writers.

Cooperative Learning develops speaking and listening, especially when framed by graphic organisers.

Independent Learning provides the scaffolding needed to develop independent writing skills.

Manipulatives, cousins of graphic organisers, are particularly powerful in interpreting texts.

Questioning strategies stimulate and help focus learners.

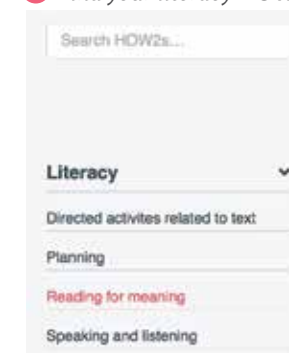
Whole-Class Teaching offers opportunities for the teacher to model both the writing and reading processes.



The screenshot shows the 'Library' section of the HOW2s website. The main heading is 'Reading for meaning' with a sub-heading 'Develop vocabulary and help learners to understand text.' Below this, there are three resource cards, each with a 'SET YOUR STATUS' dropdown menu and a progress indicator (0, 1, 2, 3, 4).


- GOs as Advance Organisers:** Learners are shown and given the big picture or map of future learning.
- iRead:** Learners are methodically taught how to find meaning within text.
- Visual Instruction Plan: Content:** A visual record of what to do and how to do it bridges the gap between teacher instruction and independent work.

1 Find your literacy HOW2



The screenshot shows the search bar with the text 'Search HOW2s...' and a dropdown menu for 'Literacy'. Below the dropdown, there are three filter options: 'Directed activities related to text', 'Planning', and 'Reading for meaning' (which is highlighted in red). There is also a 'Speaking and listening' option.

2 Set your status for it



The screenshot shows the 'SET YOUR STATUS' dropdown menu with three options: 'CONSIDERING IT' (red), 'WORKING ON IT' (yellow), and 'EMBEDDED IT' (green). There are also three small colored circles (red, yellow, green) next to the dropdown.

3 Search the Skills Exchange for a study buddy



The screenshot shows the Skills Exchange interface with three large colored boxes representing the number of HOW2s assigned to each status:

- 33** CONSIDERING IT STATUSES ASSIGNED TO 30 HOW2S
- 24** WORKING ON IT STATUSES ASSIGNED TO 21 HOW2S
- 39** EMBEDDED IT STATUSES ASSIGNED TO 33 HOW2S