The Culture Wheel
A Graphic Organizer for Cultural Studies

This is a simple and quick way to organize common traits that cultures share. Most anthropologists will divide cultures into two main groups: complex and simple. Simple cultures tend to have less technology and used to be called “primitive.” Although different on the surface because of their many variations – complex cultures still have the same basic traits as simple cultures.

Common elements:

1. Economics – The way they make their living
   a. Technology, tools, machines and skills
   b. Forms of money
   c. Division of labor
2. Religion and beliefs – attitudes towards the unknown
   a. Mystical beliefs and superstitions
   b. Recognized/organized religions
   c. Religious practices
   d. Myths and legends
3. Social institutions – systems of organization and control
   a. Family and marital organization
   b. Child rearing
   c. Rites of passage
   d. Educational systems
   e. Means of conflict resolution (laws, customs, war)
4. Art – means of expression
   a. Music, drama, dance, paintings, sculpture
   b. Architecture
   c. Folklore
5. Language – means of communication
   a. Verbal
   b. Non-verbal
6. Basic necessities - food, clothing, and shelter
   a. Types and taboos
   b. Types of production
   c. Animal use
   d. Clothing types and adornment
   e. Shelter ideology
   f. Transportation
7. Recreation – use of leisure time
   a. Types of games (purpose of games?)
   b. Leisure ideologies
8. Government and authority
   a. Who governs
   b. How are people governed