

Centre for English Teaching Specialization

Academic Skills for University Success

Mind maps

Mind maps

Mind maps start off looking very similar to brainstorming in that they are a graphical way of presenting knowledge or information. However, the creation of a mind map is often more controlled than that of a brainstorm. In fact, the ideas generated by a brainstorm can form the foundation for your mind map. Mind maps enable you to further explore and connect these ideas.

The purpose of a mind map is to visually depict the connections that you make between different ideas or concepts. As in a brainstorm, anything can be written on a mind map – however, **how you choose to link the ideas together will place certain values or assumptions upon them.**

Connections are the main point of mind maps.

You start a mind map the same way you start a brainstorm: grab a large piece of paper and write your main topic (in key words!) in the centre.

Secondly, draw a number of different

lines emanating from your central topic – generally anywhere between 3 and six is a good number. These branches lead out to your main subtopics. Branching off each of these subtopics are more lines, leading to more ideas or examples that relate. Negative ideas can also be included.

We use the term “branching” because the end product looks a lot like a tree: the thick trunk is your central topic, with sub topics coming off as the largest branches, which then split again and again into ideas, facts, considerations, thoughts or feelings, etc.

By using a number of different mind-map organisation tools, you can effectively represent the way that you see those connections. Looking at the ideas, and making the connections between them, is why mind maps are useful for generating solutions to complex problems. When everything is laid out in front of you, you will

clearly be able to see connections you may not have thought about, or new ideas evolve from the links between old ideas.

Equally, mind maps are a great way to see “the big picture” and fully understand process, idea or topic. In this way, they can also be a great exam tool!

As with brainstorming, the final product of a mind map is a personal representation of the connections that you see: it does not need to be understood by anyone but you.

Mind maps are sometimes referred to as cognitive maps, concept maps, knowledge trees etc.

MIND MAPS

- USED TO SHOW CONNECTIONS
- CLEAN SHEET OF PAPER
- MAIN TOPIC IN THE CENTRE
- IDEAS ‘BRANCH’ OFF MAIN TOPIC
- LINES DRAWN TO SHOW CONNECTIONS
- WRITE//REPRESENT EVERY IDEA
- NOT NECESSARILY EASILY UNDERSTOOD

Idea Organisation Tools

- PLACEMENT OF BRANCHES
- DIFFERENT COLOURS
- DIFFERENT LINE SHAPES
 - THICKER (SOLID CONNECTIONS)
 - THIN (NORMAL CONNECTIONS)
 - DASHED (POSSIBLE CONNECTIONS)
- IMAGES
- ARROWS & OTHER SYMBOLS

“These maps are useful tools that ... represent the structure of knowledge in a form that is ... compatible with the way human beings construct meaning.” (All & Havens, 1997, p.1210)

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Resources & Further Reading

A free, online mind-mapping tool: <https://coggle.it/>

Tony Buzan's website on Mind Mapping: <http://www.tonybuzan.com/about/mind-mapping/>

References

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