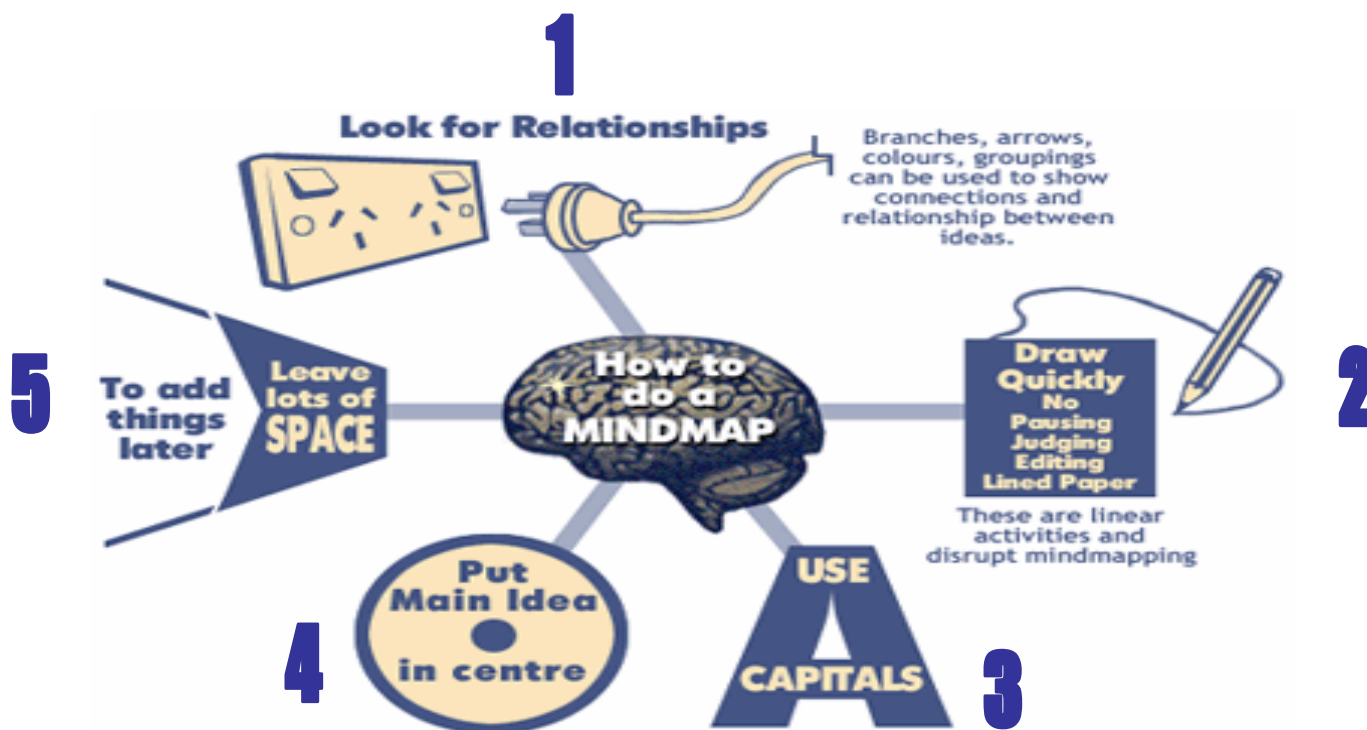


How to do a Mind Map

Here are some hints on how to construct a mind map. Click on the appropriate part of the mind map below if you want to know more.

SAMPLE OF A MIND MAP ON HOW TO MAKE MIND MAPS



Mind mapping (or concept mapping) involves writing down a main idea and attaching related ideas which radiate out from the center. By focusing on key ideas written down in your own words, and then making branches and connections with important details, you are mapping knowledge in a manner that will help you understand and remember new information.

1: Look for relationships - Use lines, colors, arrows, branches or some other way of showing connections between the main idea and its details on your mind map. These relationships are important for you to understand new information or construct a structure for an essay. By personalizing the map with your own symbols and designs you will construct a visual and meaningful relationship between main ideas and details essential for understanding and later recall.

2: At first, draw quickly without pausing, judging, or editing - All of these things promote thinking and the idea of mind mapping is to think creatively which enhances memory. There will be plenty of time for modifying the information later on but at this stage it is important to get every possibility into the mind map. Sometimes it is one of those obscure possibilities that may become the key to your knowledge of a topic.

3: Use capitals for major ideas - The idea of using capitals is to quickly identify key points. Capitals are also easier to read in a diagram. Record related details in lower case. Use sketches, graphics, drawings where they can help you visualize important information.

4: Put main ideas in the center - Most students find it useful to turn their page on the side and do a mind map in "landscape" style. With the main idea or topic in the middle of the page this gives the maximum space for other ideas to radiate out from the center.

5: Leave lots of space - Some of the most useful mind maps are those which are added to over a period of time. After the initial drawing of the mind map you may wish to highlight things, add information or add questions for the duration of a subject right up until exam time. For this reason it is a good idea to leave lots of space.

Organizational Patterns That May Appear in a Mind Map

- **Branches.** An idea may branch many times to include both closely and distantly related details.
- **Arrows.** You may want to use arrows to join ideas from different branches.
- **Groupings.** If a number of branches contain related ideas, you may want to draw a circle around the whole area.
- **Lists.**
- **Explanatory/Exploratory notes.** You may want to write a few sentences in the map itself to explain, question, or comment on some aspect of your map -- for example, the relationship between some of the ideas.

More About Mind Mapping

Above is a mind map of the concept of mind mapping! It has been adapted from a mind map produced by Tony Buzan, the person credited with much of the promotion of mind mapping as a learning and thinking tool. For a full explanation of the mind mapping technique see **Buzan, T. (1991). *The Mind Map Book*. New York: Penguin.**



Summarizing Readings

Mind mapping can help you understand and remember the important issues in your readings. One way to make a mind map is to follow these 5 steps in creating mind maps for textbook assignments.



1. Skim

Firstly, skim over the outline, introduction, conclusion, bold headings, summary, and chapter headings. When skimming through the text, observe any diagrams, pictures, or graphs. These give you an overview of what you are about to read, puts it in context, and may already give you some clues as to where the most relevant parts are located. This should not take more than 2 to 3 minutes.

2. Read

Some can read a whole chapter in one sitting while others find it more comfortable to chunk the reading into sections.

3. Mind Map

It is important to do the mind map from memory at this stage so don't consult the article or any other source of information.

4. Update and Study

The mind map you have just done is very valuable as it will show both areas you have understood and also areas you are not sure of. Compare your mind map to the text to discover the gaps in your knowledge and update your mind map. Quiz yourself on the mind map by trying to draw it from memory before looking at your updated original.

5. Personalize

Using different colors or symbols, add your own comments and questions to the mind map. Questions relating to relationships, implications, alternative approaches, usefulness, clarity, personal experience could all be considered at this stage. It is in this personalizing stage where your mind map really starts to help you speed your understanding and learning. The trick now is to address all those questions you have raised and to keep returning to your mind map with the answers!

Lectures, Seminars, Workshops and Tutorials

Some students find it useful to create mind maps for various sessions where new information is presented. Look at the various parts of the mind map below to discover why mind mapping can be a helpful note-taking and summarizing tool.



Adds structure

This memory strategy helps you record information in a structure that suits your learning style and has meaning for you. This is an important strategy for increasing understanding, learning, and recall. The content of a course may be come at you thick and fast but a mind map allows you to organize information in a format that promotes memory.

Helps review and suits repeated reviews

The mind map allows you to revisit information to be learned as you review. It is in repeated reviewing that you can identify what you have and have not yet learned before you take a test when you can still do something about it. Some students find it hard to consult a mind map during a lecture so they take standard notes in the lecture but construct a mind map afterwards when they rewrite and reorganize their lecture notes.

Better recall

By having all of the information covered in a session incorporated into a single mind map, many students find this an aid to remembering what was covered in lectures and textbooks.

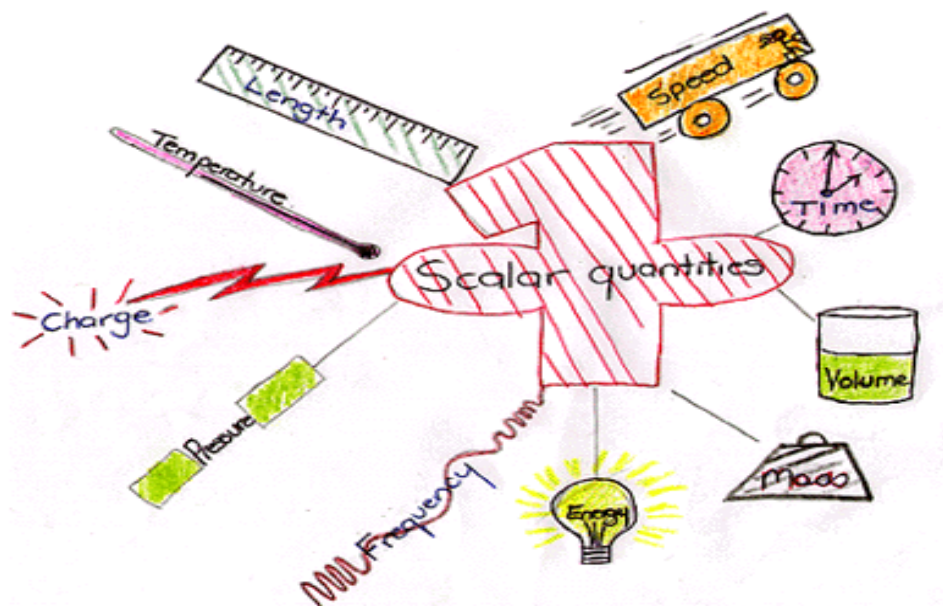
Prompts questions

Your mind map should raise some questions about the information you have received. You can bring up these questions in class or in study groups.

Helps exam preparation

Imagine how useful it would be if you had a set of mind maps for each of your lectures! These mind maps would show you the areas where you had difficulty and include the follow-up information you added in order to clear these problems up. You would also be able to construct a mind map of the entire subject prior to the exam and this would help you identify the key themes and likely exam questions.

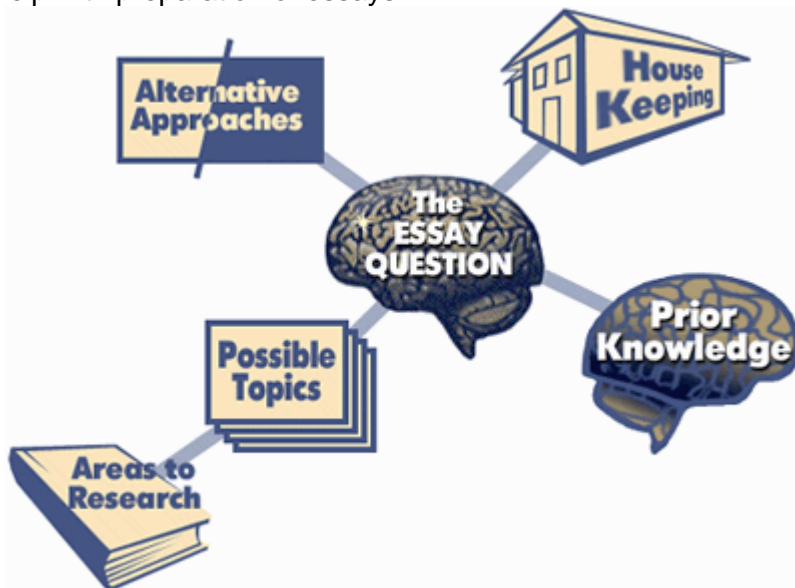
Sample Mind Map from a Lecture



The mind map above was produced from standard lecture notes so that a student could clarify the key points of the lecture. The mind map was produced in the first review after the lecture and was added to throughout the semester. It was then used for exam preparation.

Essay Preparation

Mind maps can help you in the early stages of your essay by summarizing your research and providing you with a picture of all aspects of the question. You can then move from your non-linear mind map to a more structured essay plan. Look at the various parts of the mind map below to discover more about how mind maps can help with preparation of essays.



Housekeeping

It is often useful to list in "housekeeping" details such as:

- grading criteria and weight
- due date
- timeline for completion of each stage of the essay
- any other requirements

Prior knowledge

You should always put down on your mind map all that you already know about the essay question. This knowledge may have come from personal experience, lectures, readings or other sources. You may be surprised as to how this part of the mind map branches out in lots of directions and generates even more ideas!

Possible topics to be covered

Most essays will involve the possibility of tackling a number of topics within the question. Put all of these possible topics down. You may not have the time or length of essay to tackle all of them but getting them down and looking for connections, relevance, and priorities is a good start. It will help you narrow down your topic into a more manageable task.

Areas to research

The areas to research will be suggested by the possible topics and from here your mind map may lead you on to various sources of information you will need to pursue. Often you will have to choose carefully which areas will be the most productive and relevant to research.

Alternative approaches

One of the powerful things about mind mapping is that it is a tool which encourages creative thinking and often creative solutions to problems. Always look at alternative ways of approaching essay questions and always be prepared to be a critical researcher and writer who is prepared to go outside the normal boundaries!

Human beings tend to become better at that which they practice.

What if you practiced making mind maps?