

Creating Effective Mind-Maps

TRAIN TO LEARN EFFECTIVELY: TIP SHEETS

Mind-mapping is a strategy for pre-writing and studying that will help you organize information in a visual manner. By focusing on key ideas and looking for links between them, you can map knowledge that will help you better understand, retrieve, retain and organize information. You can map your own ideas to plan assignments, or create a concept map with course content to help you study.

Idea-mapping to Plan Assignments and Essays

One prewriting strategy that you may use to get some ideas down on paper is brainstorming: jotting ideas down as quickly as you can think of them. The problem with unstructured brainstorming is that you may end up with a mishmash of writing that you can't make sense of. Some benefits of using mind-mapping for assignments are:

- Mind-mapping will not only help you organize your thoughts, but it will also help you to develop your own ideas so that you don't fall into the trap of simply saying what you think your instructor wants to hear.
- As you brainstorm ideas, you are free to push your thinking — what do you already know about the topic? What more can you think of related to it?
- Mind-mapping will help you see the inter-relationship between ideas. For example, as you note a point, you may think of a question that arises from it, or a point related to it on a separate but attached branch. A general point may develop into several more specific points, or examples may illustrate or clarify a point you wish to make. These can each be separate branches.
- Mind-mapping can help you to reduce your topic to a manageable range and see areas where you do have plenty of detail and ideas, as well as others where you may need to increase your research.

Concept-Mapping for Reviewing and Studying

Study or concept maps help you demonstrate hierarchical relationships among the topic, main ideas, and supporting details or relevant course material.

They are a powerful study strategy because they help you see the big picture—because they start with higher-level concepts, they help you chunk information based on meaningful connections. In other words, knowing the big picture makes details more significant and easier to remember.

Mapping also helps you to learn actively. Because maps are highly individualized, they represent information in a unique and personal way. Structuring the map allows you to see interrelationships in the information. So, when should you create a mind-map?

- When a course can be organized by topics or concepts.
- When knowing a structure, system, operation process, or sequence of events is integral to understanding course material.
- When summarizing, outlining or otherwise reducing content for an exam.

Making and Using Concept Maps

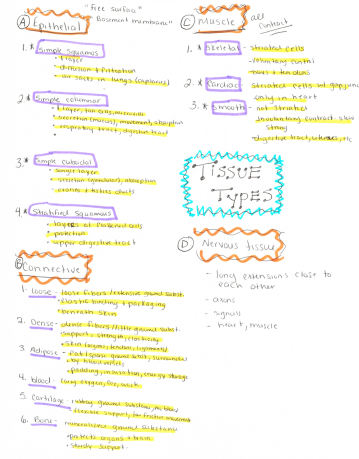
The one key step is to focus on the ways ideas are linked to each other. For a few ideas on how to get started, take out a sheet of paper and try following the steps below:

1. Give yourself plenty of room on the page; landscape orientation format works best.

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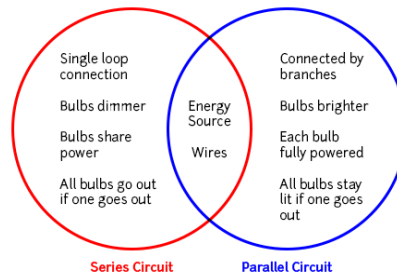
- Determine the main concept of the lecture and create a central idea. From memory, try creating a graphic organizer related to this concept. Starting from memory is an excellent way to assess what you already understand and what you need to review.
- Add branches to the map. Go through lecture notes, readings and any other resources you have to fill in any gaps and focus on how concepts are related to each other.
- Add keywords and images.
- Colour code your branches and ideas; jazz it up!



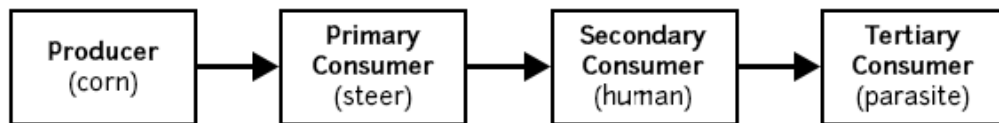
Your completed concept map is a great study tool. Try the following steps when studying:

- Elaborate (out loud or in writing) each part of the map. In other words, ask yourself questions about how things work and why. Try to make connections between ideas and explain how they work together.
- List related examples, where applicable, for sections of the map.
- Re-create your concept map without looking at the original, talking through each section as you do.

Example 1: This illustrates the **similarities and differences between two (or more) ideas**, such as series and parallel circuits. Notice that the similarities are in the intersection of the two circles.



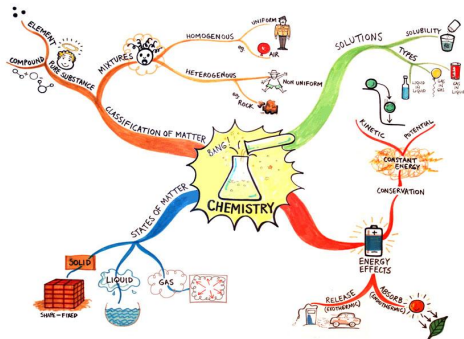
Example 2: This illustrates the **relationship between ideas** that are part of a **process**, such as a Food Chain.



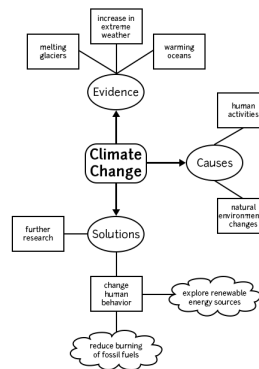
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Example 3: This illustrates the **different fields** of chemistry.



Example 4: This illustrates the **relationship between main idea**, e.g. climate change, and supporting details



Useful Apps and Online Resources

- Poplet Lite: Click-and-drag platform that facilitates easy organization of information, pictures, and drawings. It gives students a quick way to organize information, color-code topics, type in data, and add comments. Useful for presentations.
- Inspiration Maps: Useful to plan, organise and build thinking skills. Watch as students engage, create and learn as they build and organise their diagrams. With a single tap, turn your diagram into an outline that can be customised and expanded upon, then exported to a writing app. It has a trial option.
- BiggerPlate.com (formerly Mappio.com): a free mind-map library.

References

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