



Mind Maps®

A Powerful Approach to Note-Taking

(Also known as Mind Mapping, Concept Mapping, Spray Diagrams, and Spider Diagrams)

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Have you ever studied a subject or brainstormed an idea, only to find yourself with pages of information, but no clear view of how it fits together?

This is where Mind Mapping can help you.

Mind Mapping is a useful technique that helps you learn more effectively, improves the way that you record information, and supports and enhances creative problem solving.

By using Mind Maps, you can quickly identify and understand the structure of a subject. You can see the way that pieces of information fit together, as well as recording the raw facts contained in normal notes.

More than this, Mind Maps help you remember information, as they hold it in a format that your mind finds easy to recall and quick to review.

About Mind Maps

Mind Maps were popularized by author and consultant, Tony Buzan. They use a two-dimensional structure, instead of the list format conventionally used to take notes.

Mind Maps are more compact than conventional notes, often taking up one side of paper. This helps you to make associations easily, and **generate new ideas** . If you find out more information after you have drawn a Mind Map, then you can easily integrate it with little disruption.

More than this, Mind Mapping helps you break large projects or topics down into manageable chunks, so that you can plan effectively without getting overwhelmed and without forgetting something important.

A good Mind Map shows the "shape" of the subject, the relative importance of individual points, and the way in which facts relate to one another. This means that they're very quick to review, as you can often refresh information in your mind just by glancing at one. In this way, they can be effective mnemonics – remembering the shape and structure of a Mind Map can give you the cues you need to remember the information within it.

When created using colors and images or drawings, a Mind Map can even resemble a work of art!

Uses

Mind Maps are useful for:

- **Brainstorming** – individually, and as a group.
- Summarizing information, and note taking.
- Consolidating information from different research sources.
- Thinking through complex problems.
- Presenting information in a format that shows the overall structure of your subject.
- Studying and memorizing information.

Drawing Basic Mind Maps

To draw a Mind Map, follow these steps:

1. Write the title of the subject you're exploring in the center of the page, and draw a circle around it. This is shown by the circle marked in figure 1, below.

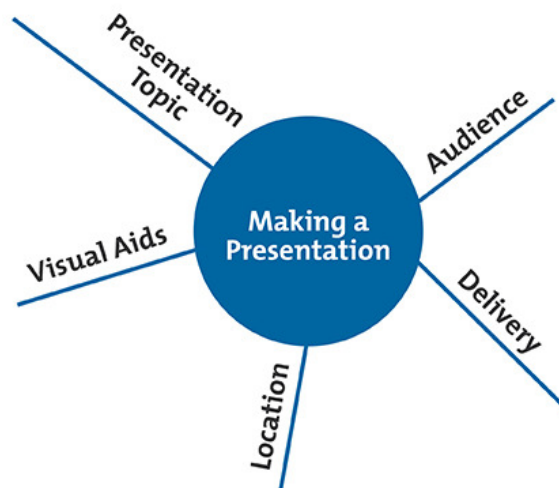
(Our simple example shows someone brainstorming actions needed to deliver a successful presentation.)

Figure 1



2. As you come across major subdivisions or subheadings of the topic (or important facts that relate to the subject) draw lines out from this circle. Label these lines with these subdivisions or subheadings. (See figure 2, below.)

Figure 2



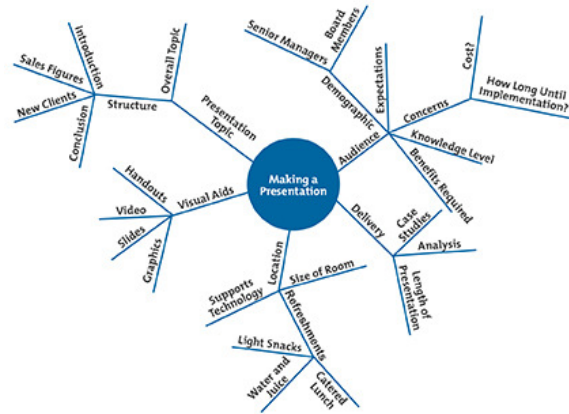
3. As you "burrow" into the subject and uncover another level of information (further subheadings, or individual facts) belonging to the subheadings, draw these as lines linked to the subheading lines. These are shown in figure 3.

Figure 3



4. Then, for individual facts or ideas, draw lines out from the appropriate heading line and label them. These are shown in Figure 4.

Figure 4



5. As you come across new information, link it in to the Mind Map appropriately.

A complete Mind Map may have main topic lines radiating in all directions from the center. Sub-topics and facts will branch off these, like branches and twigs from the trunk of a tree. You don't need to worry about the structure you produce, as this will evolve of its own accord.

Tip:

While drawing Mind Maps by hand is appropriate in many cases, software tools and apps like **Coggle**, **Bubbl.us**, **Mindmeister**, **MindGenius**, **iMindMap**, and **Mindjet** can improve the process by helping you to produce high quality Mind Maps, which you can then easily edit or redraft. (Click [here](#) for a full list of Mind Map software.)

Using Mind Maps Effectively

Once you understand how to take notes in Mind Map format, you can develop your own conventions for taking them further. The following suggestions can help you draw impactful Mind Maps:

- **Use Single Words or Simple Phrases** – Many words in normal writing are padding, as they ensure that facts are conveyed in the correct context, and in a format that is pleasant to read.
In Mind Maps, single strong words and short, meaningful phrases can convey the same meaning more potently. Excess words just clutter the Mind Map.
- **Print Words** – Joined up or indistinct writing is more difficult to read.
- **Use Color to Separate Different Ideas** – This will help you to separate ideas where necessary. It also helps you to visualize the Mind Map for recall. Color can help to show the organization of the subject.
- **Use Symbols and Images** – Pictures can help you to remember information more effectively than words, so, where a symbol or picture means something to you, use it. (You can use photo libraries like iStockPhoto to source images inexpensively.)
- **Using Cross-Linkages** – Information in one part of a Mind Map may relate to another part. Here you can draw lines to show the cross-linkages. This helps you to see how one part of the subject affects another.

Visual Example

Click on the thumbnail below for a great example of a Mind Map that has high visual impact:



Key Points

Mind Mapping is an extremely effective method of taking notes. Not only do Mind Maps show facts, they also show the overall structure of a subject and the relative importance of individual parts of it. They help you to associate ideas, think creatively, and make connections that you might not otherwise make.

Mind Maps are useful for summarizing information, for consolidating large chunks of information, for making connections, and for creative problem solving.

To use Mind Maps effectively, make sure you print your words, use different colors to add visual impact, and incorporate symbols and images to further spur creative thinking.

If you do any form of research or note taking, try experimenting with Mind Maps. You'll love using them!

This site teaches you the skills you need for a happy and successful career; and this is just one of many tools and resources that you'll find here at Mind Tools. Click [here](#) for more, subscribe to our [free newsletter](#), or [become a member](#) for just \$1.

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