

Mind Maps

WHAT ARE MIND MAPS

Mind Maps are a powerful graphic technique that can be applied to all aspects of life where improved learning and clearer thinking will enhance performance and effectiveness.

It is a non-linear way of organizing information and a technique that allows capture of the natural flow of ideas.

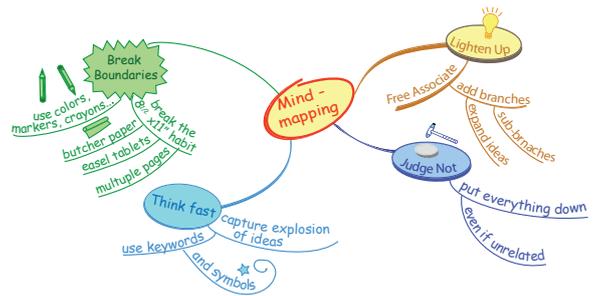
Mind Maps can be used by individuals or by groups for:

- simple tasks, such as writing a memo;
- complex tasks, such as getting a shared perspective of a complex project.

THE PROCESS

The process for creating a mind map can be described in eight steps:

<p>Step 1 - Centre first Mind mapping begins with a word or image, placed in the middle of the page, that symbolises what you want to think about.</p>
<p>Step 2 - Lighten up! Start with an open, creative attitude. Let go of the idea of solving the entire problem, or writing a report that everyone will love. This is simply a brain dumping process that helps stimulate new ideas and connections.</p>
<p>Step 3 - Free associate Put down all ideas without judgement or evaluation. As ideas emerge, write one or two word descriptions of ideas on lines branching from the central focus. Allow the ideas to expand outward into branches and sub-branches.</p>
<p>Step 4 - Think fast Your brain works best in five to seven minute bursts, so capture the ideas as rapidly as possible. Keywords, symbols and images provide a mental shorthand for recording ideas as quickly as possible.</p>
<p>Step 5 - Break boundaries The bigger the paper, the more ideas you'll have. Use different colours and styles.</p>
<p>Step 6 - Don't judge Put everything down that comes to mind even if it is completely unrelated.</p>
<p>Step 7 - Keep moving Keep your hand moving. If ideas slow down, draw empty lines, and watch your brain automatically find ideas to put on them.</p>
<p>Step 8 - Allow organization Sometimes, you see relationships and connections immediately and you can add sub-branches to a main idea. Sometimes you don't, so you just connect the ideas to the central focus. Organization can always come later; the first requirement is to get the ideas out of your head and onto the paper.</p>



BENEFITS

The main benefits of using Mind Maps are the following:

- the process of creating a mind maps is more interesting and entertaining than a standard chart or table;
- their visual quality permits users to highlight and review key points easily and more quickly than with standard sets of notes;
- they facilitate recall, because the association of ideas mirrors the way the brain works; and
- they help groups make sense out of things and help establish priorities.

KEY POINTS AND PRACTICAL TIPS

- ✓ In the centre of the page draw an image that describes the general theme of the mind map.
- ✓ Create sub-centres for sub-themes.
- ✓ Use key words or images.
- ✓ Use lower case letters as they they are more visually distinctive and easier to remember.
- ✓ Use colour to identify themes and associations.
- ✓ Use visual aids (e.g. arrows) to link the various elements.
- ✓ When one area is exhausted go to another branch.
- ✓ If you run out of space, don't start a new sheet; paste more paper onto the map.
- ✓ Be creative! Creativity supports memory.

FIND OUT MORE

- RAPID Toolkit - Tools for Knowledge and Learning: A guide for development and humanitarian organisations, Ben Ramalingam, July 2006 www.odi.org.uk/Rapid/Publications/Documents/KM_toolkit_web.pdf
- EC-FAO Food Security Information for Action Programme e-learning course: Collaboration and Advocacy Techniques www.foodsec.org/DL
- Mind Tools - Mind Maps: A Powerful Approach to Note Taking www.mindtools.com/pages/article/newlSS_01.htm
- Americans for the Arts: Animating Democracy - An Overview of Mind Maps ww3.artsusa.org/animatingdemocracy/pdf/resources/tools/mindmap_overview.pdf
- Richard Hawkins- ICRA Learning Resources - Systems Diagrams Guidelines www.icra-edu.org/objects/anglolearn/Systems_Diagrams-Guidelines1.pdf
- Buzan, T. (1995) The Mind Map Book, London: BBC Books

ABOUT THIS GUIDE

This practical guide was developed to accompany the e-learning course entitled "Collaboration and Advocacy Techniques" published by the EC-FAO Food Security Information for Action Programme and available at www.foodsec.org. This guide and the associated e-learning materials are based on the ODI's Research and Policy in Development (RAPID) programme publication by Ben Ramalingam entitled "Tools for Knowledge and Learning: A guide for development and humanitarian organisations" available at www.odi.org.uk/rapid.