

An Overview of Mind Maps

What are they?

- 🌐 **A Mind Map is a way of organizing a set of ideas using Radiant Thinking.** (A central idea branches off in many different directions. The branches themselves branch off into finer details or associations. Radiant Thinking is **rational** and **artistic, organized** and **creative**, like a tree.)
- 🌐 Mind maps typically are created on **large sheets of paper** using multiple **colors** and a combination of **words** and **drawings** that stimulate the visual abilities of the mind and enhance memory.

When can I use them?

- 🌐 A Mind Map can be used to take notes, develop a concept, or develop an overview of an activity. Mind Mapping is a good tool for **brainstorming** because it allows you to capture information as it is generated without trying to force it into categories or hierarchies. It also creates a picture of the relationships among ideas.

What are the advantages of using them?

- 🌐 A mind map is usually more **fun** and **interesting** to create than the standard chart or set of notes.
- 🌐 The **visual quality** of the mind maps allows you to make key points to stand out. It also makes the maps easier to review than a set of written notes or a standard chart.
- 🌐 Mind maps facilitate **memory**. Mind maps work the way the brain works—which is not in nice neat lines. Memory is naturally **associative**, not linear. Any idea probably has thousands of links in your mind. Mind maps allow associations and links to be recorded and reinforced. Starting from the center of the page rather than top-left corner allows you to work out in all directions.
- 🌐 Mind Maps provide a way of relating to the world in which one lives in a more **meaningful** way. A mind map is a tool for making sense out of things and for realizing one's priorities.

Key points on creating Mind Maps:

- ❖ Start from the center of the page and work out.
- ❖ Make the center a strong visual image that depicts the map's general theme.
- ❖ Create sub-centers for sub-themes.
- ❖ Use key words, or wherever possible images.
- ❖ Put key words on lines to reinforce structure of ideas.
- ❖ Print (rather than write in script).
- ❖ Lower case letters are more visually distinctive (and better remembered) than upper case letters.
- ❖ Use color to depict themes and associations *and* to make things stand out.
- ❖ Anything that stands out on the page will stand out in your mind.
- ❖ Use arrows, icons or other visual aids to show links between different elements.
- ❖ Don't get stuck in one area. If you dry up in one area go to another branch.
- ❖ Put ideas down as they occur, wherever they fit. Don't judge or hold back.
- ❖ Break boundaries. If you run out of space, don't start a new sheet; paste more paper onto the map. (Break the 8x11 mentality.)
- ❖ Be creative. Creativity aids memory.
- ❖ When you're finished, the mind map should "feel right."

How to Make a Mind Map in 8 Steps

Step 1: Start at the center of the page

Our mind focuses on the center of the page. That's why mind mapping begins with a word or image that symbolizes what you want to think about placed in the middle of the page.

Step 2: Don't be serious!

Write down or draw the first things that come up in your mind when you start to think about related issues, persons, object, goals, etc. Put your thoughts around the central thought. Any idea is game, even if it looks strange or unimportant.

Step 3: Free associate

As ideas emerge, print one or two word descriptions of the ideas on lines branching from the central focus. Allow the ideas to expand outward into branches and sub-branches. Put down all ideas without judgment or evaluation.

Step 4: Think as fast as you can

Come up with an explosion of ideas. Translate them in words, images, codes or symbols.

Step 5: There are no boundaries

Think "out-of-the-box". Everything is possible. Use wild colors, fat colored markers, crayons, or skinny felt tipped pens. You haven't lived until you've mindmapped an idea with hot pink and day-glo orange crayons.

Step 6: Don't judge to fast

Again, everything is possible. Unrelated issues might be relevant later on. Think like you are brainstorming. Otherwise, your mind will get stuck like a record in that "unrelated word" groove and you'll never generate those great ideas.

Step 7: Go, go, go....

Keep your hand moving. If ideas slow down, draw empty lines, and watch your brain automatically find ideas to put on them. Or change colors to reenergize your mind. Stand up and mindmap on an easel pad to generate even more energy.

Step 8: Add relationships and connections

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.

Mind Map Laws

Here are the brain-reflecting foundational structures of a Mind Map. The more of them you follow, the more effective your Mind Map will be.

- Start in the center with an image of the topic, using at least 3 colors.
- Use images, symbols, codes and dimensions throughout your Mind Map.
- Select key words and print using upper or lower case letters.
- Each word word/image must be alone and sitting on its own line.
- The lines must be connected, starting from the central image. The central lines are thicker, organic and flowing, becoming thinner as they radiate out from the center.
- Make the lines the same length as the word/image.
- Use colors – your own code – throughout the Mind Map.
- Develop your own personal style of Mind Mapping.
- Use emphasis and show associations in your Mind Map.
- Keep the Mind Map clear by using Radiant hierarchy, numerical order or outlines to embrace your branches.