

Mind Mapping

What is it?

A useful, quick and easy way to record information in a non-linear way.

What to use it for

You will find mind maps most useful for:

- Summarising information.
- Consolidating information from different research sources.
- Thinking through complex problems.
- Presenting information that shows the overall structure of your subject.
- Previewing and refreshing information quickly.

Points to remember

- It's YOUR mind map, so you can design it any way you want to.
- You can use colours or symbols to help you recall the information later.
- Where possible, use single words or simple phrases.
- Print words rather than using 'joined-up writing' as these will be easier to read later.
- Have some coloured pens to hand and use colours to distinguish and separate your different ideas.
- Try using some symbols; remember the old adage that a picture speaks a thousand words.
- Relate different parts of your map to other parts by using lines to link them.

Useful information

Some of the earliest examples of mind maps date back to the third century; however, mind maps have more recently been made popular by Tony Buzan who dispensed with the more conservative method of taking notes linearly by recording ideas using a two-dimensional construction. For some people, mind mapping has proved to be an extremely useful and practical technique. You can use mind mapping for:

- taking notes during a lecture;
- taking notes whilst reading module materials and other literature;
- unpicking assignment briefs and structuring your plans for assignment papers;
- developing your dissertation / thesis proposal (MBA Management Research Challenge, MA / MSc Dissertation);
- agreeing a plan with fellow participants in preparation for presentations.

Using mind maps is an ideal opportunity to make use of creative problem solving, for organising and generating ideas and for reviewing a wide range of diverse information. Using mind maps is an ideal method for capturing your own thought processes, which then enables you to quickly recall information that you will have previously stored in a visual way. Remembering the shape and

structure of the mind map can provide the cues necessary to remember the information within it. Mind maps are thought to be used already by more than 250 million people worldwide.

What does a mind map look like?

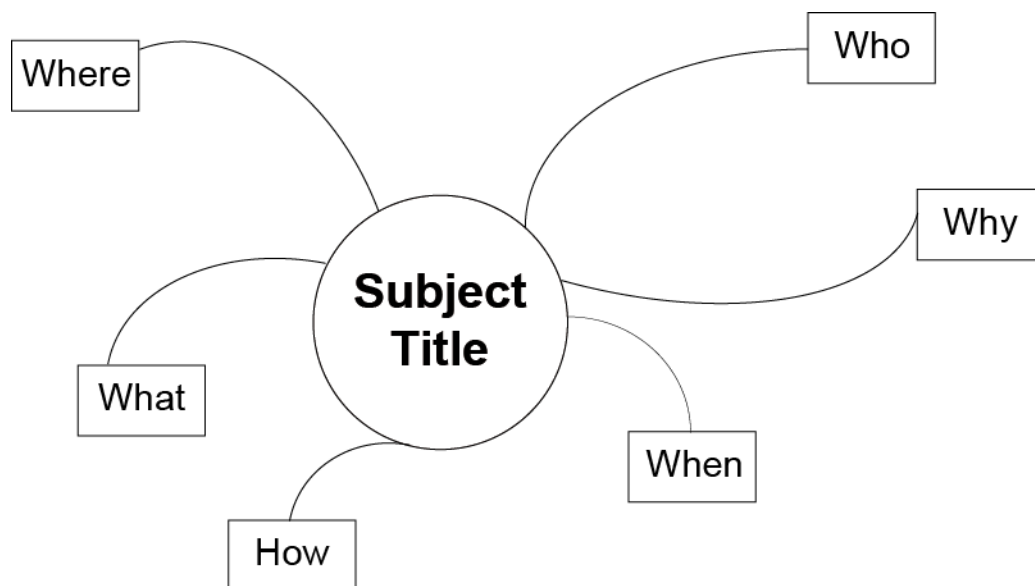
A good mind map shows the 'shape' of the subject, the relative importance of individual points and the way in which one fact relates to others. The concept of a mind map is that, unlike taking conventional notes in a lecture or meeting, drawing up a mind map will engage more areas of the brain in assimilating and connecting facts and information. Of course, drawing up a map will take a lot less space than simply writing copious notes; in fact, an average mind map can take up just one side of a piece of paper.

Getting started

To make notes on a subject using a mind map you can draw it as in Figure 1. Write the title of the subject in the centre of the page, and draw a circle around it.

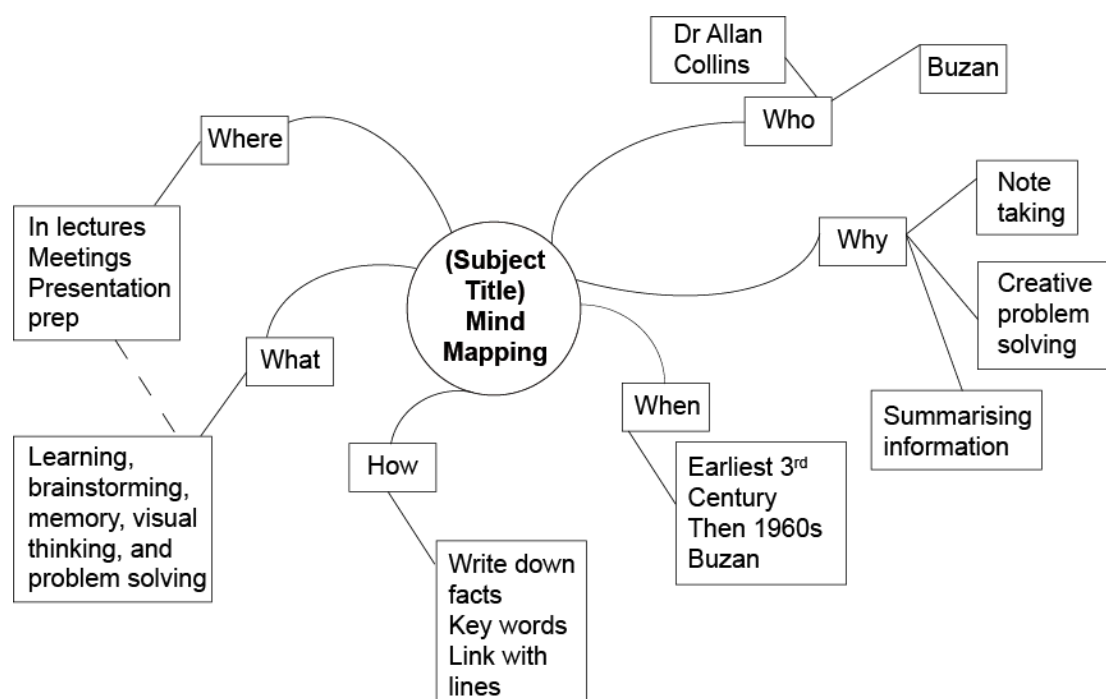
For the major subject subheadings, draw lines out from this circle. Label these lines with the subheadings.

Figure 1 Basic mind map



If you have another level of information belonging to the subheadings above, draw these and link them to the subheading lines, as given in the example in Figure 2.

Figure 2 A more detailed mind map



Finally, for individual facts or ideas, draw lines out from the appropriate heading line and label them. As you come across new information, link it into the mind map appropriately; it can be as elaborate or as simple as you wish. Many people who practise using their mind maps regularly use colours and symbols as an additional reminder of complex information. The structure that you choose to produce for your mind map is personal to you and you will find that as you develop your maps, they will evolve of their own accord.

Mind mapping tools

There are several software tools available that can help you to build on the process and result in some high-quality maps, which can be redesigned, edited and added to as you gather further information or ideas. Three of the more commonly used products, and their platform availability are given in the following table:

	macOS	Windows	Android	iOS
MindGenius (2018)		●		
MindManager (Mindjet, 2018)	●	●		
SimpleMind (simplemind, 2021)	●	●	●	●

Getting the most from your mind maps

Of course, any mind map you design is of your own making and once you have expanded your technique you can add your own conventions to develop them further.

Once you get into the habit of using mind maps you will find it a highly effective method of taking notes as it will enable you to record not only facts, but also the overall structure of the subject you are recording.

Referring back to your map will help you to make connections you might otherwise have missed.

References

MindGenius (2021) <https://www.mindgenius.com/mind-map-software/> [Accessed 14 February 2021]

Mindjet (2021) <https://www.mindjet.com/> [Accessed 14 February 2021]

Siimplemind (2021) <https://simplemind.eu/> [Accessed 14 February 2021]

Useful further reading

- * Buzan, T (2010) *The Mind Map Book: Unlock Your Creativity, Boost Your Memory, Change Your Life*. Harlow: BBC Active/Pearson Education

Buzan, T (2002) *How to Mind Map: The Ultimate Thinking Tool That Will Change Your Life*. HarperCollins

Buzan, T (2003) *The Mind Map Book: Radiant Thinking – Major Evolution in Human Thought*, 3rd ed. BBC Active

Buzan, T (2004) *Mind Maps at Work: How to Be the Best at Work and Still Have Time to Play*. London: HarperCollins

Buzan, T (2006) *The Ultimate Book of Mind Maps: Unlock Your Creativity, Boost Your Memory, Change your Life*. London: HarperCollins.

* This book is available for loan from the Henley Business School Library at Greenlands.

Reviews of Buzan's *The Ultimate Book of Mind Maps* can be found on the internet, but basically it suggests the use of mind maps in a whole range of life areas. It is in full colour and contains a considerable number of examples from running meetings to writing speeches, preparing for interviews and personal planning for the future. For those wishing to learn more about mind maps and how to make effective use of them, this is a very useful book. However, check out some of the websites listed above as these can also offer some really helpful tips and examples. Finally, have a go; you may even surprise yourself.