



UNIVERSITY OF  
PORTSMOUTH  
ASK - ACADEMIC  
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# Mind Maps: From chaos to order

Mind maps can be used to represent information visually. They are what they say they are: maps of your ideas and of the literature. Like any map, they can show every route, from a motorway down to a narrow country track or a pathway.

There are many ways to produce a mind map. Practicing creating mind maps will help you develop your own preferred style. They can be very tidy or seem, to some, to be “messy” and confusing. Everyone has their own preference. You can be as creative as you like, and they don’t have to be pretty! Just try it and have fun with it.

Mindmaps work best for many if they include images. They can be anything, and don’t even need to make sense to other people. They certainly don’t have to be good quality art. They just need to be whatever comes to your mind, which will help you with recall.

Handout content:

- What can mind maps be used for?
- Why are mind maps considered to be effective? What can they do for me?
- How to use mind maps.
- Example of a mind map created using Microsoft Word and Powerpoint, on the topic “Chocolate”. Mindmapping software is available on the University system.
- Example of a mind map created by hand, including images.
- Mind map outlining the mindmapping process, including tips and the value of mind maps. This example used *Inspiration* software.

## What can mind maps be used for?

- Brainstorming.
- Developing understanding.
- Sorting and organising your ideas, and therefore planning.
- Reflection.
- Memory.
- Revision and exams.

## Why are mind maps considered to be effective?

1. They replicate, very simply, the way in which connections are made between neurons in our brains. Therefore, some people find mindmapping more “natural” than other forms of note-taking.

2. You need to really think about how this piece of information relates to the information already on the mind map. If it doesn't already "fit", you should think about either starting a new thread or whether it needs to be included at all. Consequently, you are engaging more fully with the information than you might do with, for example, linear notes.
3. Because you are relating a piece of information to the whole mindmap or a particular strand, you are engaging in ***synthesis***. This is making associations and identifying relationships, so that all the information you choose from your own ideas, the literature and, where appropriate, experience, fits together as a whole.
4. Because of this process, you are free to change any part of it as you engage with new ideas and literature. It is flexible and fluid.
5. The images and other visual clues can help improve understanding and memory.
6. Through creating associations and understanding relationships, your understanding may develop more quickly, and more deeply, than with some other methods.

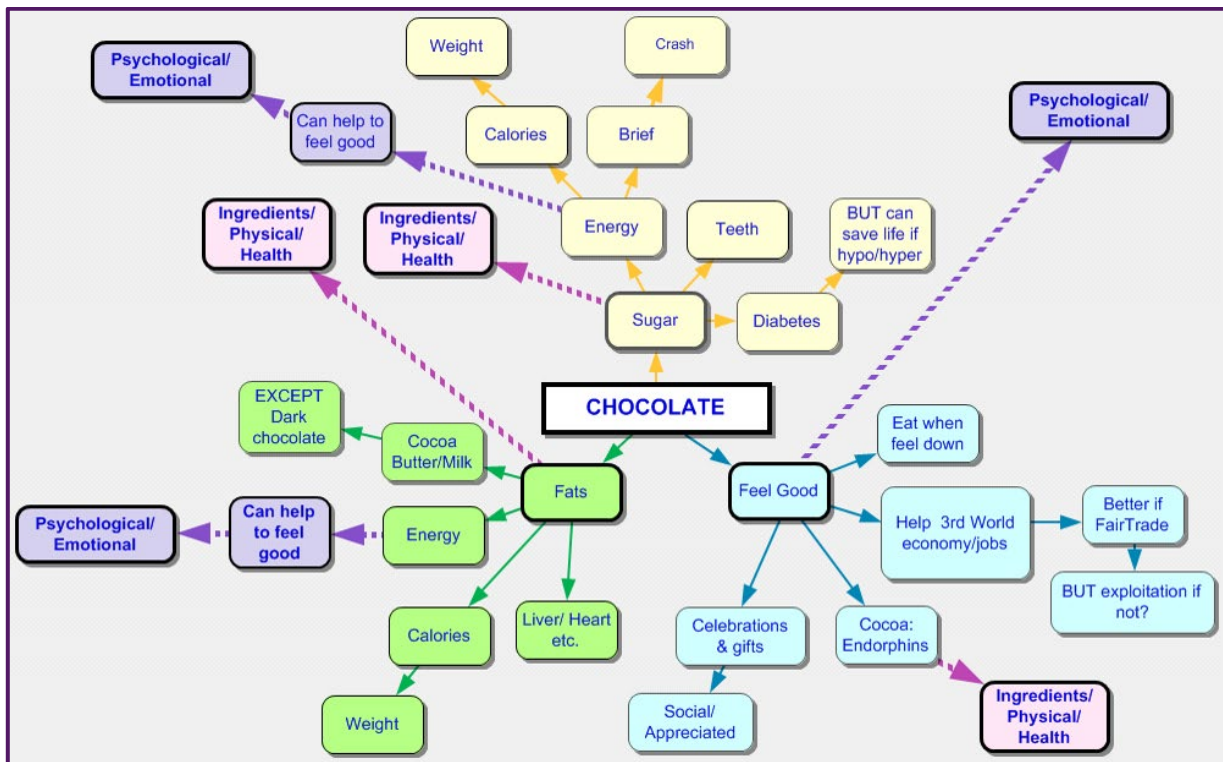
## What can mind maps help me with?

- Exploring a topic and developing your ideas.
- Sorting and organising your thoughts.
- Exploring for both breadth and depth.
- Identifying relationships: cause-and-effect, similarity and difference.
- Deciding what material to include or exclude and therefore what you will focus on.
- Deciding what is important for background and context (where required).
- Planning your assignment and structuring it well.

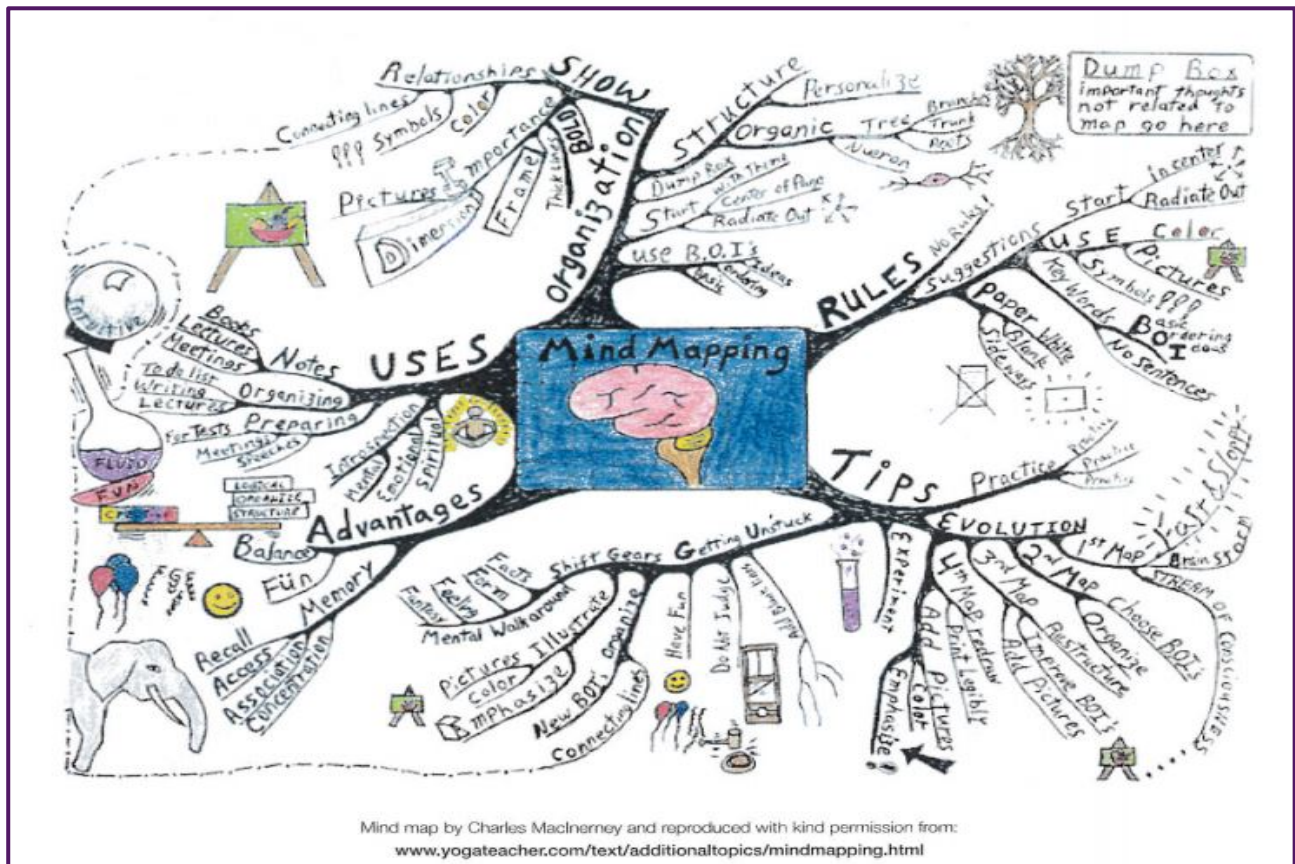
## Using mindmaps.

1. Content spreads out from a main heading in the middle. This is your ***starting point***. It can be anything, for example a topic, your idea, or information from a text.
2. You could produce a broad outline of key topics for an assignment or section, and pick a specific point for a new mindmap in order to think and explore more deeply.
3. Use just a couple of key words and/or images for each piece of information.
4. Individual bits of information are always connected to other bits of information.
5. You should alter the size and style of the text and connecting lines to indicate importance.
6. You should use colour to help identify themes and relationships. You may find that some pieces of information can go with more than one branch. Colour-coding and using additional connecting lines can help you keep track if this is the case.

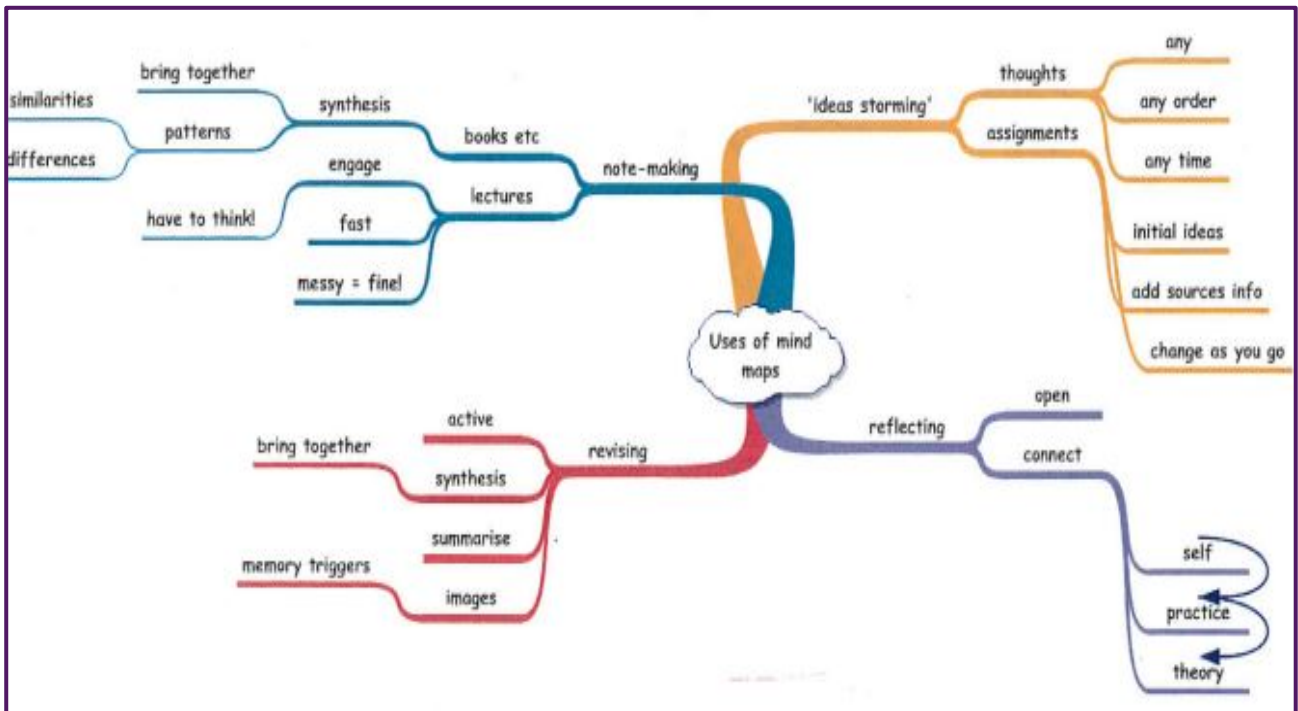
Mind map created using Microsoft software.



Mind map created by hand.



# Mindmapping's Value and Process.



If you would like an Ask tutorial, please contact us:

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