

## Mind Mapping

“Imagination was given to man to compensate him for what he is not, and a sense of humor was provided to console him for what he is.”

— Oscar Wilde

Mindmapping is a visual, nonlinear way to organize information and stimulate the thinking power of your mind. It allows your mind the freedom to explore new territory, to mix ideas up in new ways, develop new patterns and channels of thought, and to go deeper into a subject while maintaining a broad overview.

### Introduction

The human brain is very different from a computer. Whereas a computer works in a linear fashion, the brain works associatively as well as linearly - comparing, integrating and synthesizing as it goes.

Association plays a dominant role in nearly every mental function, and words themselves are no exception. Every single word and idea has numerous links attaching it to other ideas and concepts.

Mind Maps®, developed by Tony Buzan, are an effective method for the generation of ideas by association. To make a Mind Map, one starts in the center of the page with the main idea, and works outward in all directions, producing a growing and organized structure composed of key words and key images. Key features are:

- ❑ Organization
- ❑ Key Words
- ❑ Association
- ❑ Clustering
- ❑ Visual Memory - Print the key words; Use color, symbols, icons, 3D-effects, arrows; Outline groups of words
- ❑ Outstandingness - every Mind Map needs a unique center
- ❑ Conscious involvement

Because of the large amount of association involved, they can be very creative, tending to generate new ideas and associations that have not been thought of before. Every item in a map is in effect, the center of another map.

The creative potential of a Mind Map is useful in brainstorming sessions. You only need to start with the basic problem as the center, and generate associations and ideas from it in order to arrive at a large number of different possible approaches. By presenting your thoughts and perceptions in a spatial manner and by using color and pictures, a better overview is gained and new connections can be made visible.

Mind Maps are a way of representing associated thoughts with symbols rather than with extraneous words, something like organic chemistry. The mind forms associations almost instantaneously, and “mapping” allows you to write your ideas quicker than expressing them using only words or phrases.

### The beginning of Mind Mapping

Mind Mapping was invented by Tony Buzan following his research into note-taking techniques. He studied the three common techniques for taking notes during a lecture:

- ❑ Writing a complete transcript.
- ❑ Writing a summary.
- ❑ Writing key words only.

He then tested six activities to determine how much was learned or remembered.

- ❑ Complete transcript give to student
- ❑ Student writes complete transcript
- ❑ Summary given to student
- ❑ Student writes summary
- ❑ Key words given to student
- ❑ Student writes own key words

The least learning occurred when the complete transcript was provided to the student while having the student write her own key words provided the most learning and remembering.

### ***Visual Memory***

Another seemingly unrelated study on memory was also used in the formation of Mind Maps. In this study by Ralph Haber, 2560 photos were shown to subjects. Then subjects were shown 2560 pairs of photos and asked in each case to say which photo had been in the original group of 2560 and which had not.

The success rate at this test averaged between 85% and 95%, showing that humans have an almost photographic visual memory. In another study where 10,000 vivid pictures were used, a success rate of 99% was recorded.

### ***Originality***

What happens if two people draw mini Mind Maps around the idea 'shoe'. (A mini Mind Map is a Mind Map that only goes one level deep, i.e. it only has words that are directly related to the central idea). If each person comes up with seven related words, how many do you think would be duplicates between the two people? Studies have shown that the average is one word in common, and anything above two is very unusual.

*Try this yourself, get a friend to write down the first seven things related to the word "shoe", and do the same yourself, then compare the lists.*

### ***Result, Mind Maps***

With these results and other research, Tony Buzan came up with a new method for taking notes. His new system was based on the idea of making the notes as brief as possible and also as interesting to the eye as possible. The surprising result was that Mind Maps can be used in many different ways other than just simple note taking.

### **Creating a Mind Map**

A Mind Map consists of a central word or concept – then around the central word, you draw the 5 to 10 main ideas that relate to that word. You then take each of those

child words and again draw the 5 to 10 main ideas that relate to each of those words.

In this way an exponential number of related ideas can quickly be produced with virtually no mental effort. The concept of 'writers block' is hard to understand once you have grasped the use of this simple technique!

Here's a quick overview of the steps:

- ❑ Put a word or symbol that represents what you want to think about in the center of a page
- ❑ Capture every thought that comes to mind (NO censoring!)
- ❑ Link thoughts to center focus by printing key words on lines extending out from the center
- ❑ Ideas related to each other are linked as "branches" off the original line from the center
- ❑ Use color as a way to organize thoughts, stimulate new thoughts or just because it's fun!
- ❑ Use symbols to create thought pictures

### **What can you do with a Mind Map**

#### ***Note taking***

As a means of note taking, Mind Maps have several advantages over other systems:

- ❑ You can place each new idea in the right place, regardless of the order of presentation.
- ❑ It encourages the reduction of each concept to a single word.
- ❑ The resultant Mind Map can be 'seen' by the eye and memorized by your visual memory that has been shown to be almost perfect.

#### ***Creative Writing & Report Writing.***

A Mind Map lets you rapidly produce an almost infinite number of ideas, and at the same time organize them by placing each idea next to what it is related to. This makes a very powerful tool for creative writing or report writing, where it is very important to get down all your

ideas first. It is then a trivial matter to read the Mind Map and write a sentence or paragraph on each 'key word'.

### *Studying the easy way*

Instead of simply reading a book on some topic, next time try using a Mind Map while you read. Just draw your central word and then begin reading, every time you read some idea that strikes you as important or interesting, just add it to your Mind Map in the appropriate place.

When you have finished reading the book, you will have a one page Mind Map that summarizes everything of interest in that book. You will probably also have added several things that you thought up yourself during your reading.

The act of creating the Mind Map will have greatly increased how much you absorbed from the book, and if you ever want to review the topic, all you need to do is to look at the Mind Map.

If you want to learn the information more solidly, then try to redraw the Mind Map from memory a few times. You will find it very easy.

### *Studying as a group*

A group of people can work together to produce a single Mind Map by following these steps:

- ❑ Individually draw Mind Maps on what you already know about the subject.
- ❑ Draw a group Mind Map combining what you have.
- ❑ Decide what you need to learn based on this group Mind Map.
- ❑ Individually study the material, all covering the same areas for depth of knowledge or all covering different areas for speed as appropriate. Each person completing the Mind Map by his/her self.
- ❑ Again combine as a group and create a final master group Mind Map.

### *Meetings & Think Tanks*

As soon as you write something up on a white board, you have immediately lost the creativity that everyone has. So any creative meeting should always start by people spending a couple of minutes individually Mind Mapping.

Then as a way of running a meeting, a master Mind Map on a white board allows every idea or statement to be recorded and placed in an appropriate place so that it can then be discussed at a sensible time. Also no one feels ignored as all ideas are placed on the Mind Map.

### *Giving a Talk*

When giving a talk, a set of notes in the form of a single Mind Map has several advantages over other memory aids:

- ❑ **Brief:** Only a single page is needed
- ❑ **Not reading:** As ideas are reduced to single words, you will not be 'reading' your speech.
- ❑ **Flexibility:** If someone asks a question, you can move instantly to the place on your Mind Map which relates to that question and then return to where you were without losing yourself in a pile of cards or papers.

Mindmapping can also be used for a multitude of other purposes:

- ❑ project management
- ❑ memory enhancement
- ❑ personal growth
- ❑ almost anyplace where information, problems, or people are involved!

### **Computer Mindmapping**

Computer Mind Maps offer several major advantages over the original paper Mind Map. These advantages should combine to make Mind Mapping as popular as it should be:

#### *Easy re-structuring*

You can easily restructure your Mind Map, moving words and trees of words around in seconds. This makes the computer Mind Map even better for quickly creating new ideas and ordering ideas into a meaningful structure.

#### *Highlighting*

Using the style system you can instantly highlight different features of a complex Mind Map — for example, you might make all the 'expensive' options suddenly appear in bright red or all the 'good' ideas appear in bold underlined type.

### **Comments**

Being brief and using single words is the key to a good Mind Map, but sometimes you need to write sentences of explanation for yourself or others. The computer Mind Map allows you to do this but to keep the extra information hidden until it is needed.

This can also be used for *learning* information – when you are able to recite the ‘comment’ information without looking at it, then you have ‘learned’ the contents of the Mind Map and only need the key words to bring it back.

### **Presentability**

In this day and age it is not really acceptable to present your manager with a crayon drawing of your plans. A computer-generated Mind Map gets past this problem by having the same high quality appearance as any other document.

### **Export**

With a computer Mind Map you can instantly export the Mind Map to a normal text file or to a structured word processor document.

### **Just do it!**

The best way to experience these advantages of Mind Mapping is to just *do it!* ☺

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## **Mind Mapping Resources**

### **Reading**

*Mindmapping: Your Personal Guide to Exploring Creativity and Problem-Solving*, Joyce Wycoff <http://www.thinksmart.com/bookpages/creativitiyskills.html>

*The Mind Map Book* - Tony Buzan, ISBN 0 563 86373 8, 1993

*The Aging Heresy* The Buzan Centres Ltd, 37 Waterloo Rd., Bournemouth, Dorset, BH9 1BD., U.K. Tel: +44(0)202-533593 Fax: +44(0)202-534572

“How We Remember What We See”, Ralph N Haber, *Scientific America*, 105, May 1970.

### **Links**

- ❑ [http://www.thinksmart.com/mission/workout/mindmapping\\_8.html](http://www.thinksmart.com/mission/workout/mindmapping_8.html)
- ❑ [http://www.mind-map.com/mindmaps\\_howto.htm](http://www.mind-map.com/mindmaps_howto.htm)
- ❑ [http://www.change-management-toolbook.com/cp\\_03.htm](http://www.change-management-toolbook.com/cp_03.htm)
- ❑ <http://www.innovationtools.com/resources/mindmapping.asp>

### **Software**

#### ***Axon Idea Processor***

Axon Research, Singapore  
Tel: 65-7360422 Fax: 65-7379016  
Email: [axon2000@mbox2.singnet.com.sg](mailto:axon2000@mbox2.singnet.com.sg)  
[Http://web.singnet.com.sg/~axon2000/](http://web.singnet.com.sg/~axon2000/)

#### ***Inspiration***

Inspiration Software, Inc.  
Toll-free tel. (800) 877-4292 — Int'l and local tel. (503) 297-3004  
Fax (503) 297-4676  
[Http://www.inspiration.com](http://www.inspiration.com)

#### ***Mind Maps Plus***

Runs under DOS, requires only VGA.  
Cedar Software, Tel: +44 250 875929

#### ***Mind Mapper***

EGLE Magic, Auckland, New Zealand  
Email: [MMInfo@emagic.marc.cri.nz](mailto:MMInfo@emagic.marc.cri.nz)  
The software is shareware and the mindmap.zip file can be downloaded from <http://www.winsite.com/info/pc/win3/misc/mindman.zip/>