

Quick Guide: How to Mind Map

Mapping is a very powerful technique for promoting creative thinking and improving memory. Developed by Tony Buzan, it has become a very widely used tool. So if you need to plan or remember something, here are the **top ten tips** for creating and using a mind map:

1. **Use A3 paper** - give yourself plenty of room to develop your ideas - you can always reduce its size later if necessary.
2. **Get a good set of coloured pencils or felt pens** - as a child, you might have had a favourite set of pencils that you particularly enjoyed using. Tap into that excitement again.
3. **Use pictures** - as a visual technique, mind mapping accesses parts of the brain that logic and language don't. Use words as well, but maximise the pictures even if, like me, "you can't draw".
4. **Let your mind wander** - don't be constrained by what you've already thought. If a new train comes to mind, work with it. You can always come back to earlier thoughts and develop them later.
5. **Draw whatever comes to mind** - don't worry about the relevance of your thoughts. Things that seem irrelevant when you first think them are often very valuable in the final picture.
6. **Link related ideas** - ideas which flow from one another can be drawn like tree branches, linked by different breadth 'twigs' to denote the strength of the link. Also keep an eye out for links between different trains of thought and draw lines to link those, too.
7. **Be extravagant with colour** - you can use different colours to denote different trains of thought and different kinds of links. Don't just draw outlines, colour things in.
8. **Redraw** - chances are, after a while you'll wish you'd drawn some things in different places or you might want a smaller copy to carry around with you. Use the redraw as a further opportunity to let your thoughts develop rather than just copy the old version.
9. **Revisit** - come back to it. Having captured some ideas, your brain will continue to work on it while you do other things and will provide you with fresh ideas. Keep it somewhere accessible and look at it now and again.
10. **Have fun** - your brain is much more effective when you're enjoying yourself. If laughing out loud is inappropriate where you are, sit somewhere where you can.

Compiled by Bill Carpenter