

Introduction

There are nine broad reasons, listed alphabetically below. You can click a link to go straight to the one that describes what you want to do now if you're looking for help on making a map for a specific activity. Reasons:

Analyzing | Creating | Discussing | Learning | Organizing | Planning | Presenting Note taking | Understanding

"Thinking" could have been included in the above list, but that spans all the headings and is just too fuzzy. There will often be other overlaps over time, as a map turns out to be useful for other purposes.

Credit: http://www.informationtamers.com/WikIT/index.php?title=How_to_make_a_mind_map#The_map_as_a_note_center

The hardest part?

A mind map starts with a central topic - what the map is going to be about - as a keyword, image or phrase. That's easy. It's what comes next, the first layer of topics or keywords, that most often seems to be a barrier to those beginning mind maps, because a piece of paper or computer screen that is almost empty can sometimes give us a state of mind to match.

In answer to the question "Where do I start?" or "How do I decide what topics to put in the first layer of nodes?" here are some tips:

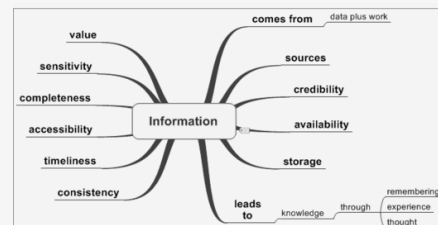
- 1. Think about how the central topic may be subdivided** - these sub-categories will usually be second-level topics, though perhaps not when mind mapping for creative solutions.
- 2. Don't worry about having to change this first layer later.** The process of mind mapping will often change your thinking about a topic, and require changes in the map.
- 3. Use a parking list for topics that seem related, but don't have a clear place in the hierarchy yet.** As the map develops you will generally see where to place them, and if you don't, it points to the need for more research, discussion, or just setting the remaining parked topics aside, for later review.
- 4. Try the six traditional question-stubs:** What? Where? When? Why? Who? and How? when applied to the central topic. Try the less traditional "for whom" as well. Do these questions provide useful suggestions for the first layer.
- 5. Check through the visual thinking guides to see which of these might help kick off your thinking.**
- 6. It's topics that help you that matter.** So if you are finding useful topics related to the central topic, you are on the right track. What the nodes of a mind map represent may vary greatly depending on why you are mapping. They may be topics that are subdivisions of the central topic that you are analyzing, actions that need to be carried out for a project that you are planning, ideas generated in a creative session, topics to be covered in a presentation, and so on.

Step 1 Diagram

Step 2

Then we start to think about availability and accessibility. Are they too similar? The real analysis is beginning. They are very closely related but it's worth keeping them both. Information can be available but at a price, for example, and unless we have the budget, it's not accessible. Or it may be in a file on our desktop computer that we forgot to copy to our laptop or phone. Available somewhere out there, but not accessible. We can add that to the map as a comment and a connecting relationship.. Sensitivity of information is easy to break down. Information may be sensitive because it is personal, or includes commercial secrets, or may affect a criminal case - we can add twigs to "sensitivity" to capture these thoughts.

Step 2 Diagram

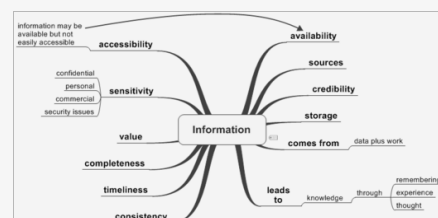


Step 3

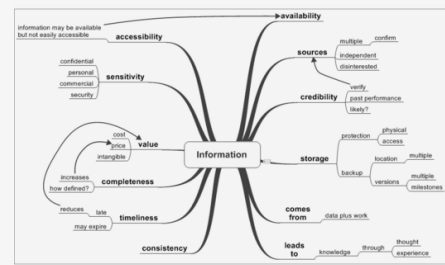
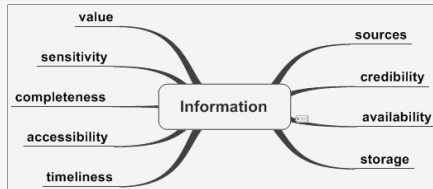
Then we start to think about availability and accessibility. Are they too similar? The real analysis is beginning. They are very closely related but a few moments reflection shows that it's worth keeping them both there. Information can be available but at a price, for example, and unless we have the budget, it's not accessible. Or it may be in a file on our desktop computer, available, but not accessible. We can add that to the map as a comment and a connecting relationship.

Sensitivity of information is easy to break down. Information may be sensitive because it is personal, or includes commercial secrets, or may affect a criminal case - we can add twigs to "sensitivity" to capture these thoughts.

Step 3 Diagram



Step 4 Diagram



Starting with a central topic, a mind map of that topic is made by considering its main components, and placing them in the map as its first level analysis.

For example, if we had decided to write a blog article about the concept of "information", we might think about "sources", "credibility", "availability", "storage", "timeliness", "accessibility", "completeness", "sensitivity", "value" ...

Compared to a text-based outline, the map format enables quick movement from one section to another, casting the eye across several areas at once, or focusing in on one area for detailed analysis. Many of its users therefore find it to be flexible and idea-provoking. Thought sparks thought, and soon the analysis is proceeding briskly.

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