

*The Difference is **Atassh Consultants***

Transforming Lives through Training & Development. Since 1991.

Prof. F A Kapadia. 275-J chikalwadi. Bldg.No.13 New Cama Bldg. 3rd. Floor. Tardeo Road.
Mumbai 400 007 Telephone Nos. 9324918900, 9821344329.
Web Site: www.atassh.com, www.atasshpublications.com, E-Mail: atassh@rediffmail.com,

Dated: January 05, 2013

Kind Attention Ms. Ritu Advani

Subject Mind Mapping

Dear Ritu.

At the outset, let me congratulate you for introducing me to Mind Mapping. In my profession of Training & Development, Consultancy and as a Visiting Faculty to various Business Schools I have applied the principles of Mind Mapping on several occasions. The benefits accrued to me are as hereunder:

- Help students brainstorm and explore any idea, concept, or problem
- Facilitate better understanding of relationships and connections between ideas and concepts
- Make it easy to communicate new ideas and thought processes
- Allow students to easily recall information
- Help students take notes and plan tasks
- Make it easy to organize ideas and concepts

Mind mapping is a beneficial learning tool to help students brainstorm any topic and think creatively. Mind maps are particularly helpful in the writing process and provide students with a natural way of thinking and building thoughts on a story plot or theme.

Mind maps also provide teachers with insight into their students' thought process regarding a specific topic. By asking students to create mind maps demonstrating their comprehension of a concept, teachers are able to understand what a student's prior knowledge was and how well the student understands the assignment or the material being taught. This is a very effective way of evaluating students' understanding.

My observation is that the traditional way of taking notes, whether for a lecture or when reading a book, is to follow the chronological sequence of the author's thought, and to summarize the content of the book or lecture, often using sentences and phrases instead of just keywords. An alternative approach, and one which some claim works with both halves of the brain by harnessing its powers of

visualization and association, and thereby improves both memory and creative thinking, is mind mapping.

My comments on how to mind map: There are four key characteristics of a mind map:

1. There is one key concept, often expressed graphically as an image.
2. From the key concept/image radiate out branches each of which contains another key concept which is a subset of the main concept.
3. Attached to these main branches are other branches which represent less important concepts.
4. Together, the branches and central image form a nodal structure.

The steps involved in creating a mind map may be summarized as follows:

Step 1 – Determine your central image or concept.

Step 2 – Create the basic structure for organizing your ideas: these are the main branches and are known as the Basic Organizing Ideas (BOIs), and are represented by branches radiating outwards from the main concept.

Step 3 – Put down keywords associated with the BOIs, which should sit on smaller branches connected to the main branch.

Step 4 – Revisit your mind map, putting things in order, and numbering the branches. If necessary, revise it on another piece of paper.

Techniques

The following points should be borne in mind when creating a mind map:

- Use radiant thinking – start from the centre and radiate outwards.
- Use hierarchy and association – your main BOIs are embodied in thick lines radiating from the centre; the ideas radiating from the individual BOIs have thinner lines. (If you think there are likely to be more BOIs and ideas than you can think of, leave blank lines for future reference.)
- Use as images and color – they will stimulate your brain's visual and creative capacity and help you have fun along the way!
- Use keywords, rather than phrases – easier to remember.
- Use symbols (e.g. x for not) and codes. You can also annotate your mind map, for example you could write references to other sources in a different color pen.
- Be clear: have words the same length as lines (a better use of space), and use capitals, which are easier to read and which emphasize keywords.
- Use arrows to denote links between ideas.

- Draw quickly and uncritically on a sheet of A4 or larger paper (perhaps two A4 sheets put together, which also has the advantage that it will be readily distinguishable from other single folios on your desk!), placed landscape.
- Review your mind map after you have completed your first attempt, not immediately, but once your thoughts have had time to "settle".

My thoughts on uses of mind maps

Mind maps can be used in a wide range of situations, from brainstorming, sorting out family problems, business meetings, making notes from books or lectures, to planning a series of television programs. Most useful to you in your student career, however, will be:

- Making notes from books and other secondary sources.
- Making notes from lectures.
- Making notes for essays or presentations.

Making notes from books and other secondary sources

As a student you will need to browse a large number of secondary sources – textbooks, journal articles, and websites. Sometime, the amount of material can seem daunting. The benefits of mind maps, however, is that rather than working through the material from beginning to end in a chronological sequence, you proceed in a more "spiral" fashion from firstly having an overview to looking in greater and greater depth.

Before you begin to study, organize the task by:

- Browsing the document, getting an idea of how it is organized, what are its basic organizing ideas etc.
- Determining the amount of time you have to study it.
- Determining your goals – for example, are you reading it as background to your course, or do you want to concentrate on a particular topic, for example for an essay question?
- What is your existing knowledge – on a separate sheet, mind map this which will give your mind "grappling hooks" as it seeks to assimilate new information.

You are then ready to do the mind map of the document, for which you go through the following (spiral) stages:

1. **Overview** – look at the chapter summaries, chapter and other main headings. Note that most text books these days have a very explicit structure with objectives at the beginning of each chapter, as well as chapter summaries. This way, you are searching for the gist of the author's argument before looking at the detail.

2. **Preview** – go a stage beyond the book's "organizing bits" and look at the beginning and end of chapters and sections.
3. **In view** – look at the rest of the material, but if there is something that you find very difficult, leave it and return to it.
4. **Review** – finish your mind map notes, going back over anything you found difficult.

Note that the above assumes that you are reading a book; journal articles and websites also have their own organizational structure, for example pages or headings. The same principles will apply.

Making notes from lectures

Lectures lend themselves less easily to the mind mapping technique because their structure is inherently linear. However, you should be able to get a good idea of the "basic organizing ideas" from the scheme of work for the course, or from the notes which the lecturer gives out at the beginning of the lecture. Try and search for the BOIs as the lecture progresses.

Making notes for essays or presentations

The basic difference here is in the preposition: you are making notes for something rather than from something, so you will need to draw together your existing mind map notes and prepare a new mind map covering what you are going to write or present.

- Start with the central idea or image.
- List the main BOIs.
- Brainstorm as many ideas as possible, and set them down as keywords on the main branches. For a presentation, the keywords will represent themes which you will talk about.
- Edit your mind map, numbering the branches in the order you want to write about or present the topics.
- Do individual mind maps of particular sections.
- Do a first draft, revising your mind map as necessary, and doing a new mind map for difficult parts of the draft or when you get writer's block.
- For a presentation, insert symbols where you want to introduce visuals.

Ritu, I sincerely thank you for making my professional and personal life better and easy. I strongly recommend your sessions to people who would want to benefit and be better organized and perform effectively

Prof. Faredoon Kapadia