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Mind maps

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Introduction

Mind maps are a ***useful study tool, especially for visual learners***. They can be used for note taking and revision, helping plan projects, presentations and gathering ideas for essays and reports.

Mind maps allow you to take ***notes and problem solve in a creative manner***. They mimic the way our brains connect information, which has a positive effect on the amount of information we take in.

Mind maps use ***active learning*** techniques. By using pictures, symbols, text, colour, arrows and shapes, etc, the layout of a mind map keeps the brain engaged. You remember more than with normal notes because several parts of the brain are used when drawing or reading a mind map.

You can draw a mind map by hand with pen and paper – ***it's quick, easy and you can do it anywhere.***

Mind maps work by taking a central theme – be it an essay question, report topic, or subject you want to revise. Connected ideas radiate from this central theme, helping to "map out" issues, using branches and images. Using images, keywords, colour and lines to draw relationships between ideas, you can ***simplify complex topics and make ideas more memorable***.

Drawing a mind map is easy – this guide shows you how to start off. Whether you use pen and paper or a software package, the process is the same.

Starting your mind map

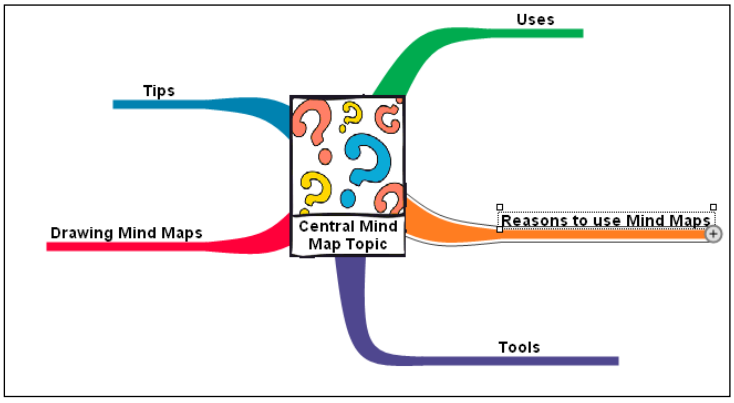
Before you start, see the back page of this guide for a good example of a hand-drawn mind

map. The following map is drawn using Inspiration 8.

Have a large sheet of paper and coloured pens or pencils to hand. Write your central theme in the middle of the page – this can be your essay question, presentation topic... etc

Adding branches

Now think about the main ideas that come from this central topic. Add these as main branches, as in the example below. Each main branch usually represents a **different category of information you want to explore**.



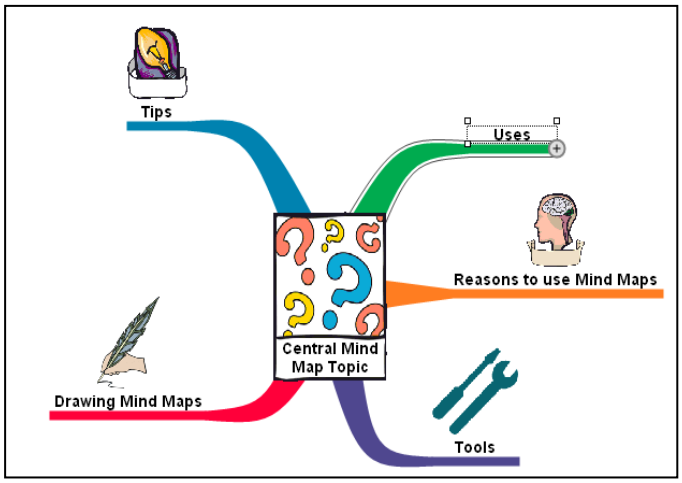
As a Mind map is about ideas and what connect them, **keep text to a minimum** (ideally just key words).

Adding pictures, symbols and colour

Try using a combination of colour, images and key words to make your map **distinctive and personal** to you. This helps recall if you are using the map for your revision.

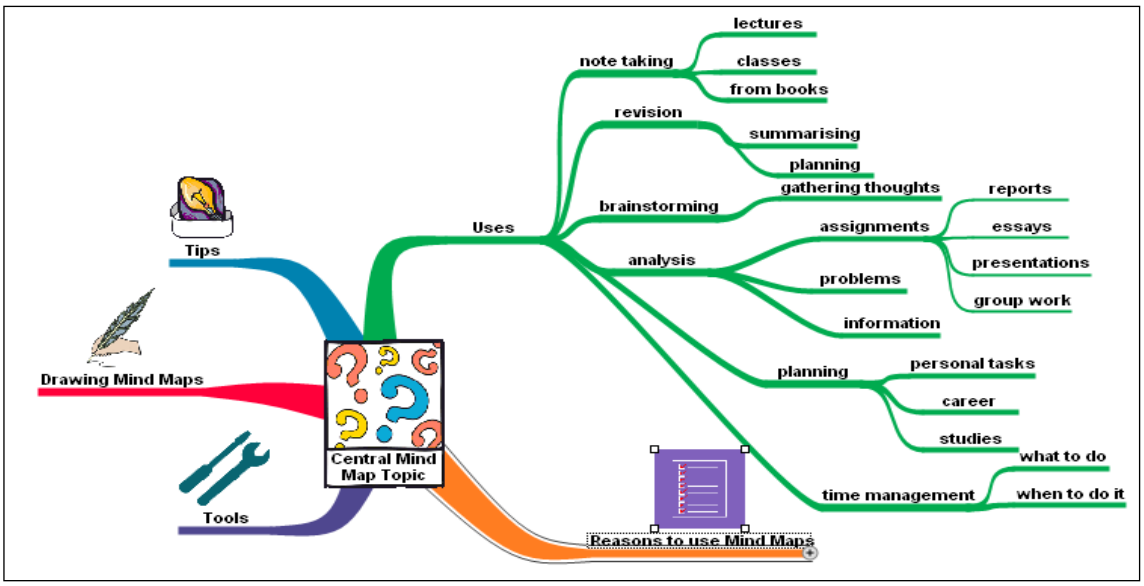
You can **add pictures or symbols** at any time.

Develop your own set of symbols, if you are going to use mind maps regularly.



Adding more ideas as sub-branches

Add sub-branches to the main branches (see below). Sub-branches **expand and explore** the branch (and idea or



concept) from which they come.

The number of sub-branches you use is up to you – it depends on your subject, and how much **detail** you want to go into.

Developing your map further

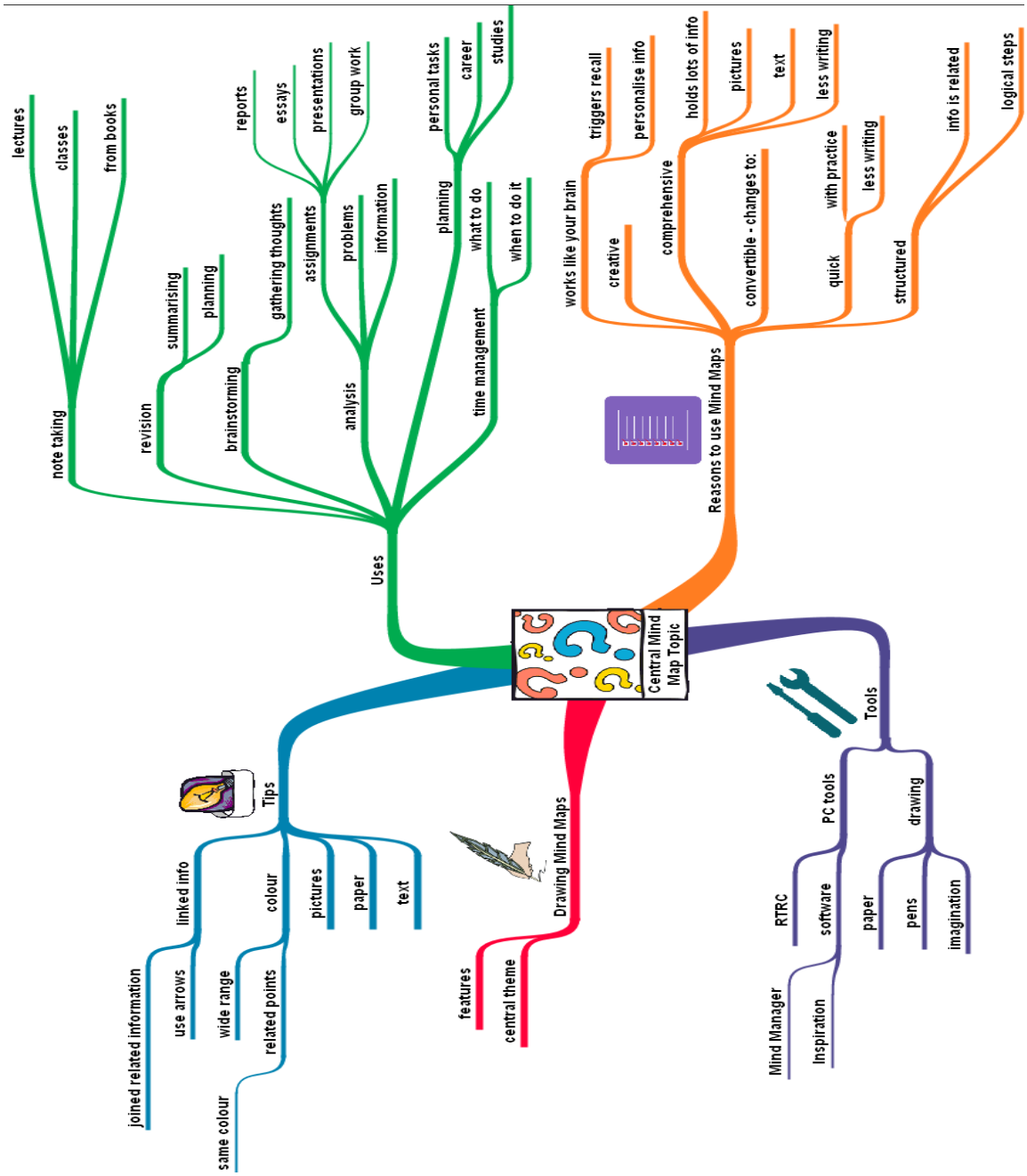
Use sub-branches to **add all the information you need** to each main branch. Sub-branches can have their own **sub-branches**, and so on...

If you are working on one area of the Map and have an idea related to another area, you can **simply switch to the area** where you want to add more information. It is easy to shift between areas without losing your focus.

The **mind map on the next page** takes the subject of mind maps themselves as its subject. It shows all the main branches expanded, with some sub-branches and also uses symbols.

Have a look at it for some more tips on using and drawing mind maps.

The end result can look like this...



Finishing off

Use arrows to link related points in different areas of the Map. Try using different coloured arrows to **show different relationships**.

If your mind map gets too crowded or messy, there is nothing wrong with re-drawing it. Making changes or additions also aids revision. You can also take a **small section of a mind map to develop further** in its own mind map.

Converting mind maps to lists

As mind maps contain a lot of **structured information** on one page, it is easy to pull all the information together into a "tiered" list. Some reasons for converting mind maps to lists...

- ✓ Revising information
- ✓ Creating study summaries
- ✓ Making plans
- ✓ Making "to do lists"

✓ Most mind mapping software packages have a facility to convert maps into lists. To convert a hand-drawn mind map, try the following format:

✓ ***Central Theme*** **=** ***Main Title of List***

✓ **Main Branch** **=** **List Category**

✓ Sub-branch = ● Bulleted Point

✓ Sub-sub-branch = ☐ Sub-bulleted Point

✓ ***Example*** – One branch taken from the previous mind map shown in Figure 5

Reasons to use mind maps

- They work like your brain
    - Trigger recall
    - Personalise info
- Creative
- Comprehensive
    - Hold lots of info
    - Pictures
    - Text
- Convertible
- Quick
    - With practice
    - Less writing
- Structured
    - Info is related
    - Logical steps