

# Drawing Mind Maps

by Olivier Serrat

## Thinking as a Skill

Intelligence is a potential, and thinking is the operating skill through which it acts upon experience. Outside highly technical matters, perception is the most important part of thinking. If most errors of thinking are errors of perception—that being colored by emotions and values—thinking as a skill can be improved by practice and education. Numerous straightforward yet powerful tools encourage creativity and flexibility, and help optimize different styles of reasoning (including analyzing, integrating, planning, and problem solving). They include APC,<sup>1</sup> OPV,<sup>2</sup> PMI,<sup>3</sup> brainstorming, lateral thinking, and mind maps. After they are mastered, these tools can be applied explicitly.



Mind maps are a visual means that represent, link, and arrange concepts, themes, or tasks, with connections usually extending radially from a central topic. They are used by individuals and groups (informally and intuitively) to generate, visualize, structure, and classify these.

## Definition

We usually write notes as sentences that we break into paragraphs, lists, or bullet points. A mind map is a circular, nonlinear way of organizing information: it shows the connections between a central topic and the relative importance of the concepts, themes, or tasks that one relates to it. It can be applied by individuals and groups to generate, visualize, structure, and classify these whenever clearer thinking and improved learning will enhance performance and effectiveness.

## Advantages

Here are a few advantages to using mind maps:

- The process of drawing a mind map is more interesting and entertaining than writing a report, or drafting a standard chart or table.
- The visual quality of mind maps allows users to identify, clarify, classify, summarize, consolidate, highlight, and present the structural elements of a subject more simply than with a standard set of notes. (It also assists review.)
- Mind maps facilitate recall because the clear association and linking of ideas mirrors the way the brain works—keywords and images are remembered with lesser effort than linear notes.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> A stands for Alternatives; P stands for Possibilities; C stands for Choices.

<sup>2</sup> This stands for Other People's Views.

<sup>3</sup> P stands for Plus, or the good points. M stands for Minus, or the bad points. I stands for Interesting, or the interesting points.

<sup>4</sup> Memory is associative, not linear. Any idea probably has thousands of links in one's mind: mind maps allow associations and links to be recorded and reinforced.

- Mind maps are compact, with no unnecessary words; easy to draw; very flexible; and can summarize pages of information.
- Mind maps help identify gaps in information and shine clarity on important issues.

### Process

The process of drawing a mind map can be described in a few steps: (i) start at the center of the page (rather than from the top-left corner); (ii) adopt an open, creative attitude; (iii) associate and link keywords and images freely; (iv) think fast; (v) break black-and-white boundaries with different colors and styles; (vi) do not judge; (vii) keep moving; and (viii) allow gradual organization by adding relationships and connections.

### Further Reading

ADB. 2008. *The Reframing Matrix*. Manila. Available: [www.adb.org/documents/information/knowledge-solutions/the-reframing-matrix.pdf](http://www.adb.org/documents/information/knowledge-solutions/the-reframing-matrix.pdf)

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Edward De Bono. 2006. *De Bono's Thinking Course: Powerful Tools to Transform Your Thinking*. BBC Active.

Tony Buzan. 1995. *The Mind Map Book*. London: BBC Books.

### For further information

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