

What is a Mind Map?

A Mind Map is a creative technique focused on getting ideas flowing with minimal structure. It helps develop concepts, inspire curiosity, and provide actionable ideas about a topic of your choosing. It can help you move past “feeling stuck”. Completed quickly – typically within 5-10 minutes – Mind Maps lead to authentic and uncensored ideas.

How does it work?

Start with a blank sheet of paper and a pen or pencil.

Step 1. The anchor.

Pick a topic or challenge to place in the middle of your paper as your anchor. This can be any topic of your choosing. It can be an adjective, noun, or even verb.

You might think about:

- an issue that interests you,
- an activity that energizes you,
- a characteristic or quality that you value,
- a skill that you are good at or enjoy.

Step 2. Initial connections.

Brainstorm a few ideas, typically 5-7, that relate to your anchor. These are words that quickly come to mind and make up the layer around your anchor. Allow yourself to think freely, being open to any thoughts or associations.

Step 3. Branch further.

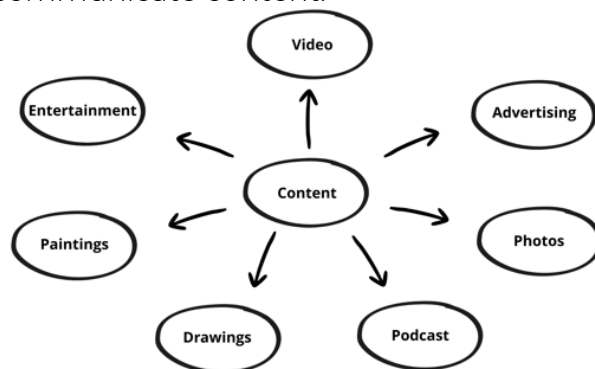
Make secondary connections that branch off your initial connections. Keep writing and branching. Do not erase; all ideas are welcome.

Example

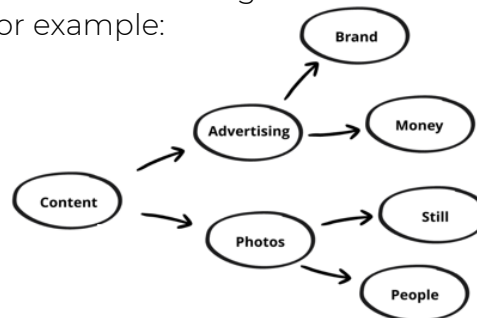
Step 1. The anchor. A history major with an interest in “content creation and communication” selected “Content” as an anchor.



Step 2. Initial connections. This student brainstormed many ways to share and communicate content.



Step 3. Branch further. This student continued building on ideas. For example:



How does it work? (Continued)

Step 4. Reflect.

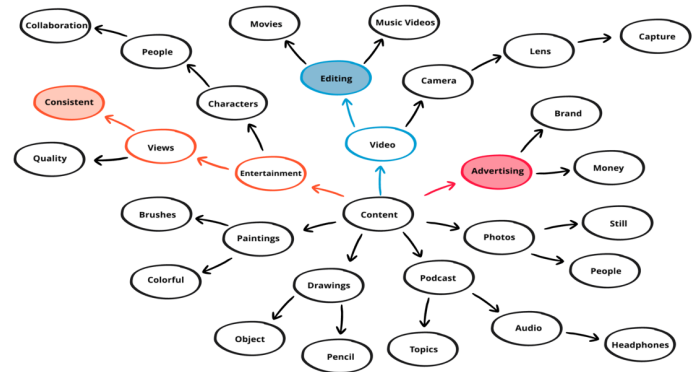
After 5 – 10 minutes, step back to look at your Mind Map as a whole. Circle approximately three concepts that stand out to you as particularly compelling places to start exploring. What story do you see emerging here? What next steps would you like to pursue?

Step 5. Take action based on reflections.

Explore the area(s) identified in your reflections, revisiting your Mind Map to make adjustments or seek additional inspiration.

Example

Step 4. Reflect. The most compelling ideas that jumped out to this student happened to be a career field (advertising), a skill area (editing), and a personal quality (consistent).



Step 5. Take action. This student turned the Mind Map into a story. They sought advertising opportunities in content creation, describing their transferrable skills in editing and attention to detail, honed through their LAS History degree program.

Why Mind Map? What's the Point?

Running into challenges and getting stuck is normal – it happens to everyone. Mind Maps are non-structured tools that encourage free brainstorming. They help you overcome your inner censor, discovering new ideas or options. And, Mind Maps can be applied to any topic.

When we can see the possibilities in front of us, we often come up with better ideas, make better decisions, and tell better stories about our journeys.

Want to Learn More?

Visit a Peer Mentor in the Lisnek LAS Hub

- » First floor of Lincoln Hall, Quad-side, Behind the marble staircase
- » Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday | 10:00 am – 3:00 pm
- » Fall and Spring semesters, while classes are in session

las.illinois.edu/resources/hub
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