

Creative Techniques – Brainstorming and Mindmapping

Mindmapping

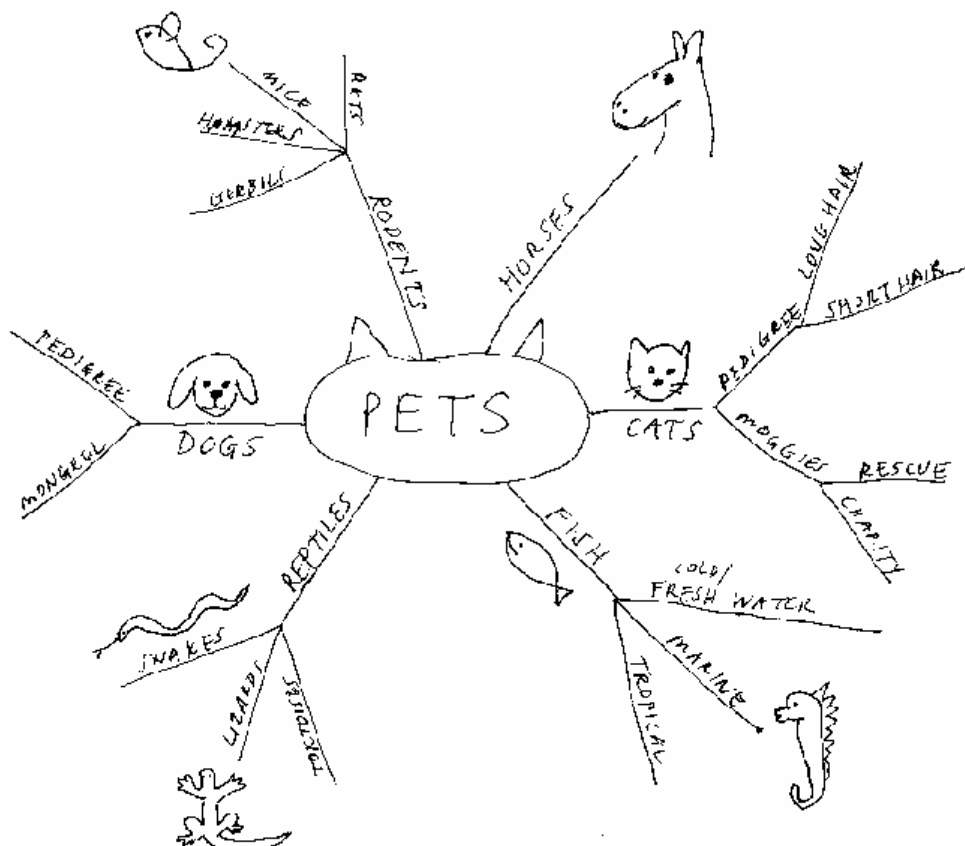
Background

Mindmaps are a method of taking notes in a visual form. They are also known as idea webs, spider's webs and concept maps. The writer starts with a key word or phrase in the middle of the page and draws branches to link connected ideas. As well as words, mindmaps can contain symbols and pictures. Colours are encouraged to aid memory.

Mindmaps can be drawn to generate ideas and make plans. They can also be used for recall, e.g. in an examination.

Tony Buzan is regarded to be an expert on the subject of mindmaps. He has written several books on the subject and runs training courses on memory techniques and mindmaps. The term "Mind Maps" (two words, capital M's) is a term copyrighted by Tony Buzan.

Mindmap drawn according to Tony Buzan's design rules:



Mindmaps – Online Material - Arachnophobia

Mindmaps are explained as follows:

- Learners are encouraged to think about how they write – from left to right in Western countries and right to left in the East.
- They are then asked to consider the possibility of starting to write in the middle of the page and are introduced to the idea of mind maps and spider's webs.
- An examples of a mind map drawn in the style of Tony Buzan is shown (on sport).
- The Tony Buzan's 7 rules of mindmapping are displayed.
- There is an animation where learners click to see a mind map develop on the subject of food.
- A hand-drawn mindmap on the subject of food is shown.
- This is followed by a mindpmap made with mindmapping software – on the subject of fish.
- Learners are then given an interactive map to develop on the subject of gardens.
- This is followed by a mindmap on travel – learners can make there own entries. Learners can print off what they create and there is also a sample mindmap to view.
- Finally, pointers are given for the use of mindmaps and links to websites with further information.

Supporting students

Mindmaps are a very versatile tool as they can be used in many situations – to record what is happening and to stimulate ideas.

Students should be encouraged first of all to try both the Buzan style of mind maps (writing along the lines) and the “bubble” style, where ideas are put in boxes. They can then develop a style of their own using aspects of each.

Many students find mindmapping software useful. Commonly used programmes include Inspiration, Mind Manager and Mind Genius and many others are available via the internet.

Mindmaps are particularly recommended for students who have dyslexia as this holistic approach to generating ideas or taking notes often appeals to them.

Mindmaps are likely to appeal to students who had a high score for “Pictures” in the Creativity Profile Quiz.

Additional material

In the chunk called Creative Exercises, there are six exercises for Mindmapping, one for each of the creative strands:

Pictures
Words
Logic
People
Music
Movement

Learners could choose an exercise from the list that inspires them and they could do more than one if time allows.

In addition to this, they could apply Mindmapping as follows:

In their studies:

To plan projects, report and essays – and also to recall information quickly in an examination.

In their personal and leisure time:

To plan holidays, family events, fund-raisers, work out relationships, etc.

At work:

To think through projects, examine processes, show relationships between departments, interactions with customers and clients, etc.

Mindmaps – Websites

Mindtools

http://www.mindtools.com/pages/article/newISS_01.htm

Tony Buzan Mind Map site

<http://www.mind-map.com/EN/index.html>

Birmingham Grid for Learning

<http://www.bgfl.org/services/mindmaps/default.htm>

Good examples of online mindmaps

Tony Buzan – hand-drawn mindmaps

<http://www.mind-mapping.co.uk/mind-maps-examples.htm>

BBC Article – mindmapping and dyslexia

<http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/education/1926739.stm>

Brainstorming - background

Many learners will have heard of the term brainstorming as it features frequently in business life and is often mentioned by the media.

Basically, brainstorming means coming generating ideas rapidly and without criticism until a list of ideas is produced. No ideas, however odd, are rejected at that stage. At a later stage – often at another meeting – the ideas are then examined and evaluated. Usually, the problem or situation to be brainstormed is clearly defined in advance.

Main sets of rules for brainstorming have been produced, but they all have similarities. Here are the rules suggested to learners in this material:

1. State the problem or suggestion clearly so that everyone knows exactly what they are meant to be doing.
2. Choose a recorder - someone should write down all the ideas on a flipchart or whiteboard. It can be a list or a mindmap. (See the chunk on mindmaps).
3. Make it clear that there will be no discussion, and especially no criticism of any ideas, until they have all been recorded.
4. Have a warm-up session - a small introductory problem to brainstorming to get everyone working.
5. When you are brainstorming you should go for quantity, not quality - encourage people to say any idea that comes into their heads.
6. Members of the group should be encouraged to "tag on" to other members' ideas - add new features or develop them.
7. A time limit should be put on the session so that it doesn't drag on too long.

Recent media coverage has suggested that the term brainstorming is offensive to people with certain medical conditions such as epilepsy, as it has been used in the past to describe some of the symptoms of epilepsy. However, surveys conducted by charities supporting people with epilepsy have revealed that the term is not offensive when used to describe the generation of ideas.

Brainstorming online material

The online material takes learners through brainstorming as follows:

- Learners are asked to think about occasions when they worked with others to produce lists of ideas, either at work or in their personal time.
- They are then given a definition of brainstorming (in the context of generating ideas) and are invited to watch a short movie (animation) on brainstorming.
- The differences between brainstorming and simply making a list are discussed and suggested rules for brainstorming are given.
- The possibilities for brainstorming alone are examined and the “pros and cons” are discussed.
- Learners are then presented with a brainstorming exercise: to think of as many ways as possible to improve travel to work. They can do this face to face with other learners or colleagues, remotely using a chat group or webcam, or on their own. They can then check suggested answers from lists online
- Learners are introduced to the concept of random generators – for words, pictures and websites. When no ideas are forthcoming in a brainstorming session, the introduction of a random idea can

Supporting learners

Individual Learners

It is useful to experience brainstorming as a group exercise, even as a pair, as participants can bounce ideas off each other. If you have a learner working alone, try to find someone to work with them, either in person or remotely, or work with them yourself.

Learners working in a group

Most learners catch on to the concept of brainstorming fairly quickly, but some find it difficult to make suggestions in case what they say is viewed as silly. Work with learners to build up their confidence. Point out that many ideas which are commonplace now would have been regarded as unbelievable years ago.

Additional exercises

In the chunk called Creative Exercises, there are six exercises for Brainstorming, one for each of the creative strands:

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Learners could choose an exercise from the list that inspires them and they could do more than one if time allows.

In addition to this, they could apply Brainstorming as follows:

At work

Brainstorming can be used in any situation where new ideas are required or a situation needs to be reviewed. For a brainstorming session to work properly, the rules need to be followed.

While studying

- Lecturers and tutors can organise brainstorming sessions in class to stimulate learning.
- Groups of students working together can brainstorm ideas for projects.
- Individual students can brainstorm ideas essays, etc.

Personal and social life

Brainstorming can generate ideas for many situations, including:

- Fundraising
- Improving the family budget
- Organising care for a relative or friend
- Deciding on a social venue

Websites /books

Websites

Brainstorming

<http://www.brainstorming.co.uk/>

Mindtools

<http://www.mindtools.com/brainstm.html>

Step by Step Guide to Brainstorming

<http://www.jpb.com/creative/brainstorming.php>

Business Balls Brainstorming

<http://www.businessballs.com/brainstorming.htm>

Creativity and Innovation in Science and Technology

<http://www.mycoted.com/creativity/techniques/brainstorm.php>

Book:

Brainstorming: Techniques for New Ideas by Timothy Cory