

Brainstorming and Mind-mapping

Quick study guide

Brainstorming is a way of expanding your thinking on a topic. Mind-mapping then helps you to organise your ideas and consider the relationships between them. There are two stages in the process: a free thinking stage and an organising stage. These should not be done together.

Stage 1 - Brainstorming

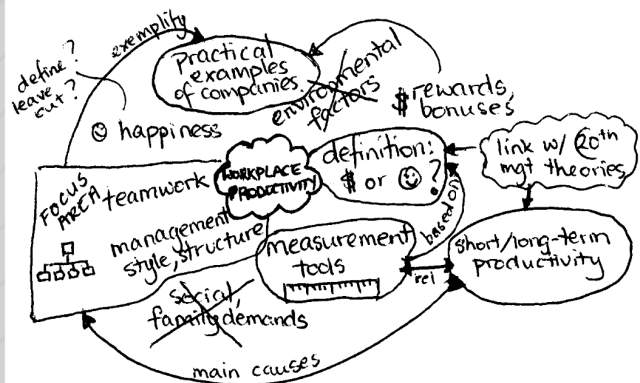
Free thinking and producing ideas



- 1 Write your topic or area of study in the centre of a blank page
 - 2 Use colours, pictures, words and symbols to record any other ideas, topics, authors, theories or anything else associated with the topic
- You can put these anywhere on the page. Associate freely and do not filter out ideas; at this point anything and everything is potentially useful

Stage 2 - Mind-mapping

Identifying relationships, organising ideas



- 3 Circle the key points and ideas you have identified. Identify gaps in your knowledge, and any questions you have
- 4 Look at each item and consider, "How does this point relate to the others, and to the topic as a whole?"
- 5 Map relationships with lines, arrows, colours and words
- 6 Identify the type of relationship between points: contrast / similarity / cause / effect

Why brainstorm and mind-map?



Focus your research



Solve problems



Help structure and plan your assignment

Major thought relationships



Speakers and writers organise their ideas so that they may be communicated clearly to their audience. This organisation generally involves one or more types of major thought relationships.



A text usually contains a combination of these relationships, although often one is used as the dominant means of organising the ideas. Here are some examples of language you could use for each of the relationships.

Exemplification

Using examples to clarify ideas



e.g. 'An illustration of this is the...',
'Characteristics such as...',
'For instance,...'

Contrast

Identifying differences and the basis of those differences between things



e.g. 'As opposed to,...',
'This differs from X in that ...',
'Whereas,...'

Comparison

Identifying the similarities or commonalities among things



e.g. 'Like X, Y is ...',
'X resembles Y in that ...',
'In the same way, ...'

Enumeration

Listing and classifying items



e.g. 'There are several kinds of ...',
'These can be divided into three types,...'

Chronology

Ordering content around events or time periods



e.g. 'The earliest ...',
'Thereafter, ...',
'By the time, ...'

Causality

Indicating a cause-effect relationship, incorporating the idea that one thing might cause or be caused by another



e.g. 'As a consequence, ...',
'This resulted in ...',
'Hence, ...'

Process

Outlining a sequence of events or ordered steps



e.g. 'Step 1 involves ... Step 2...',
'Initially, ... then ... finally ...'

Spatial order

Organising information according to physical location or spatial sequence



e.g. 'The base is positioned next to ...',
'X moves outwards to the ...'



The ability to identify these thought relationships will assist your comprehension of reading material, and confidence with using them in your writing will aid textual coherence.