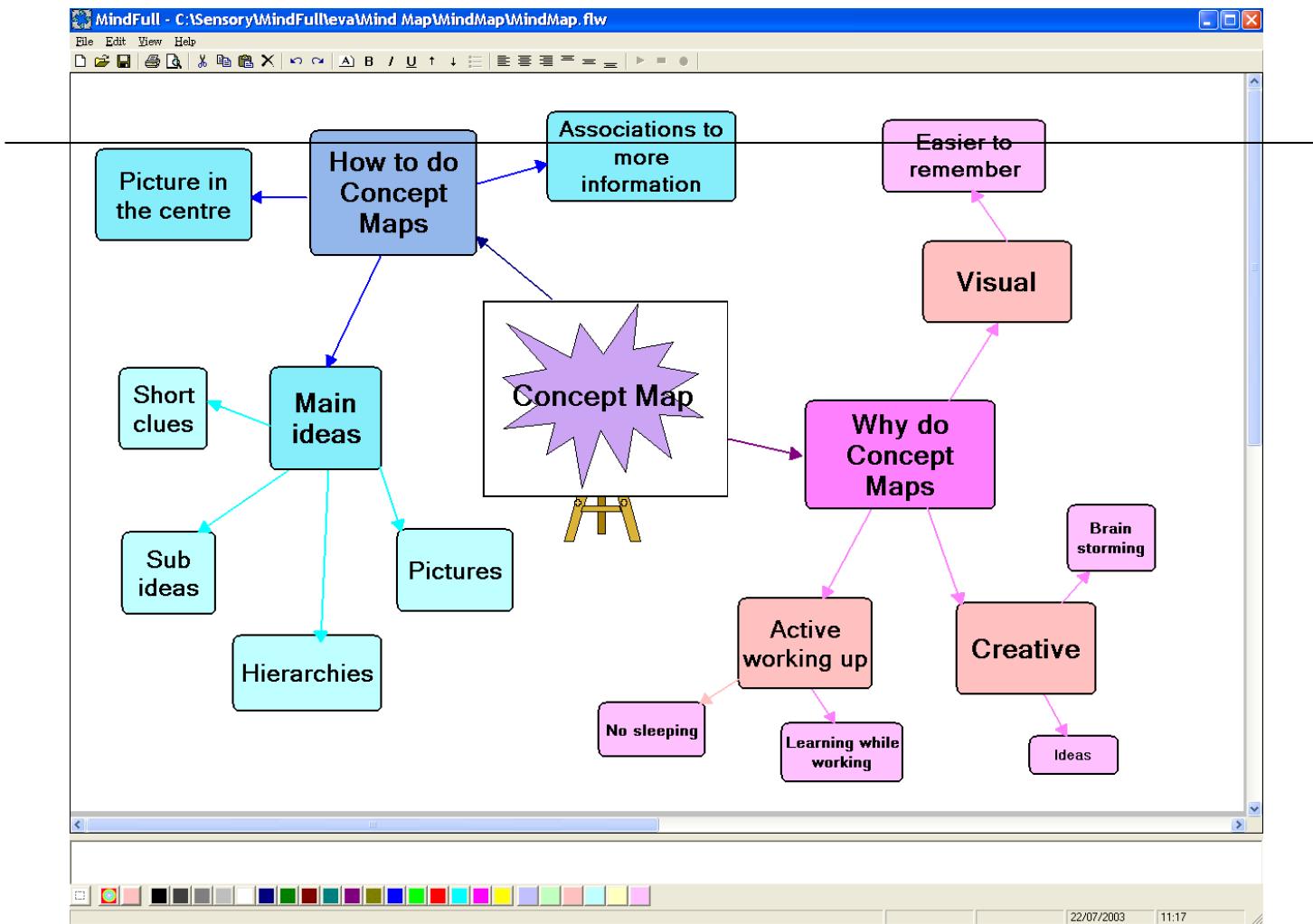


Concept Maps

... a tool to support studying and working...



Introduction

Concept maps are an aid to learn, memorize, organize and have several other uses. They are advantageous for anybody, but especially for those who have deficiencies in the literacy skills.

They do not cure dyslexia or other deficits. They are just a way of processing material, organizing thoughts and ideas in a very effective way.

Many individuals who have literacy problems cannot meet the requirements of the school. The traditional western education prefers the left hemisphere functions. Therefore those who show a disposition to verbalism and can process information in a sequential way are at an advantage in the school, whereas those who are rather visual and parallel, global thinkers often feel uncomfortable in the current education. The most of the underachievers are visual and are global thinkers. However, these persons can be very successful in the real life.

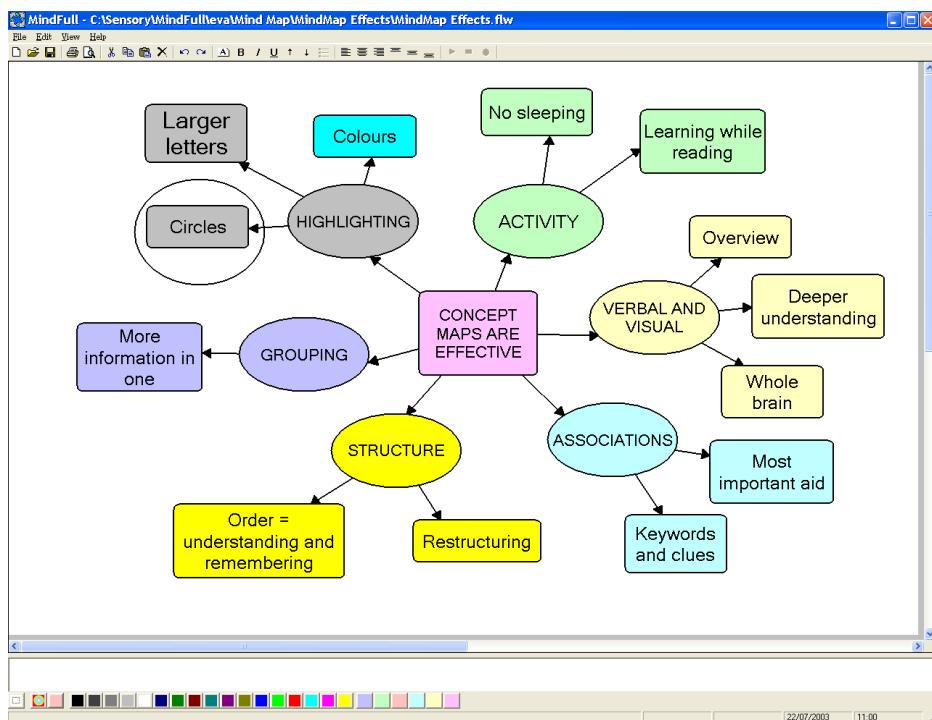
The whole brain approach means that we use tools that activate as many functions of the brain as possible. That way learning and all other cognitive functions will become far more effective than by using only one way of information processing. Concept maps are good partners to whole brain approach. You can create concept maps in pen or pencil. However, a computer program designed to create concept maps can be very helpful. You can change the elements of the concept map, and produce nice letters, shapes or pictures.

How does it achieve its effects

The concept mapping method uses a lot of basic knowledge on learning and memory. This knowledge renders concept mapping such an effective aid.

Verbal and visual

Concept maps are both verbal and visual, thereby making the whole brain work. Thus you can work in the most effective way. Schools prefer verbal thinking, but visual processing is just as important a part of the cognitive functioning as verbal processing.



Images and all visual material provide an overview of the whole, which results in a wider understanding. Visualisation is a very important part of creative thinking. Moreover, pictures lead to a deeper understanding, and they are easier to remember.

A picture is “worth a thousand words”. You can store a lot of information in a picture. You get the same amount of knowledge with one glance on an image as by reading long sequences of description or other information.

Associations

Associations are the most important aid to human memory. If you can connect a new piece of information to an old one, it will be easier to store the new item.

Concept maps are based mainly on this aid. You need not write and draw everything into the map. You can recall information through keywords or other clues.

Structure

Concept maps make the structure of a theme visible. They help one to understand and remember any material. With restructuring you can also get a new idea. It is easy to add new items and enlarge the content while keeping or renewing structure as you wish.

Grouping

When information is presented in groups, more items can be recalled. In a concept map you can connect more information in a group and remember all as one.

Highlighting

The information that is emphasized can be recalled easier. Concept mapping allows one to use different highlighting techniques like colours, large letters, circles, etc.

Activity

While creating a concept map you work up the material actively. Thereby you process it, and it will be easier to learn. The active studying provided by concept mapping keeps your attention, and you will not fall asleep over your books.

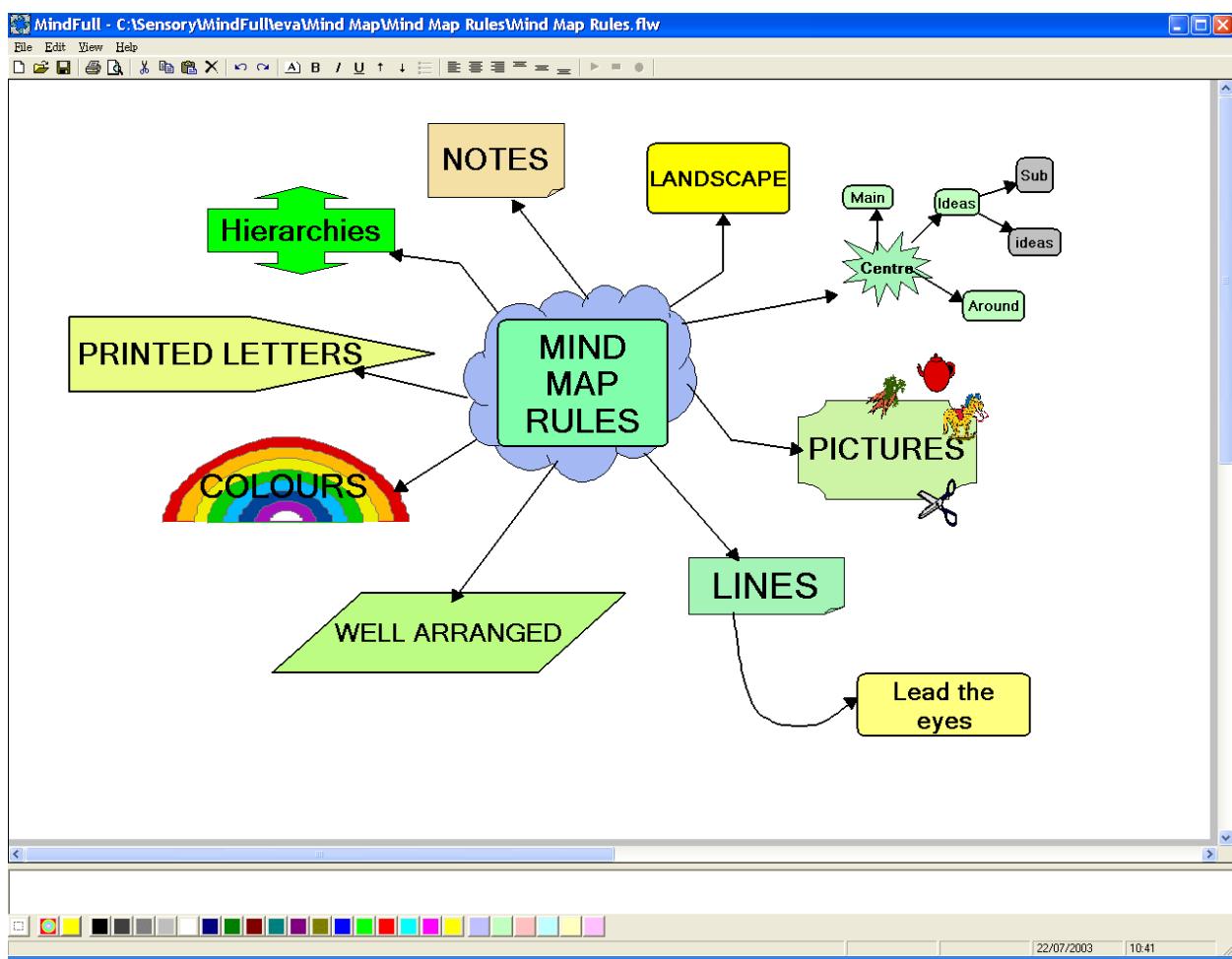
How to create a Concept Map

It is very easy to create a concept map. It is basically a sun; the central theme in the middle radiates the main ideas. Or we can call it a spider. Its body is the central theme, and its legs are the main topics. The main topics can branch to subtopics.

There are some basic rules that make the method effective.

Basic rules

The concept map method is the most effective if you consider some basic rules. Your first ten-twenty concept maps should adhere to these rules. Later you need not follow all the laws, rather develop your own style.



These rules ensure that your concept map will help you a lot, because they optimize the benefit you can gain through this method.

1. Place the paper in landscape position. Our visual pool is horizontal. The traditional portrait arrangement is for listing and sequencing.
2. Start with a central image in the middle of the sheet. The main ideas should be arranged around it. Sub ideas can branch from them.
3. Use as many pictures as you can. Pictures help you to remember and understand the material. They delight the eyes.
4. You can use boxes connected by lines or words on lines to create a clear concept map. Lines lead the eyes, thus they help you to understand and remember the material.
5. Only a tidy, well organized concept map is an effective help. The structure you draw in your concept map will remain in your mind about the given topic.
6. Use colours throughout your concept maps. Colours are useful as codes and sequencing aids. They enhance memory. A colourful concept map is delighting.
7. Use printed letters. You remember printed letters, especially block letters photographically. Thus they are easier to recall.
8. You can display hierarchies. Hierarchies help to understand the connections.

Uses of the Concept Map

Concept maps can be used in various areas of studying and working.

- Concept maps are a help in memorizing. You can make concept maps from any material you have to learn. You can create concept maps to each examination topic.
- You can work up books, articles and other material you have to read easily and effectively.
- Concept maps help in essay writing. You can outline your ideas and organize them.
- When you have to give a presentation a concept map is a perfect draft. You can see the whole material, thus you can modify it easily if it is necessary.
- You can draw a concept map when you sketch a project or your ideas about a topic, and you can explain them to others.
- Concept maps can be used in any creative work, brain-storming, flow of ideas.
- A concept map is a good support in organizing. It gives a survey of the tasks.

