

## Chapter 1

# Introducing Mind Mapping

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### *In This Chapter*

- ▶ What characterises a Mind Map
  - ▶ How to create your first Mind Map
  - ▶ What you can use Mind Maps for
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**W**ould you like to know how to create a Mind Map? Before we get started, I first want to give you an idea of what a Mind Map actually is and how many different opportunities there are for using Mind Mapping. I can assure you: you'll soon find this technique absolutely indispensable.

## *Presenting Information Visually*

If you flip through the many Mind Maps depicted in this book you'll notice that they look more like pictures than text. Mind Maps are a bit like a tree looked at from above, with its branches radiating out in all directions from the trunk. You'll also notice that Mind Maps do contain actual words but that these are always reduced to mere keywords.

A Mind Map, for example the Mind Map specimen in this chapter, can contain the same information as the continuous text in the chapter itself. The main difference is that in a Mind Map content is not presented in lines and rows as in continuous text but is actually visualised. In addition to keywords, visualisation involves a sequence of graphic elements such as:

- ✓ Colours
- ✓ Symbols
- ✓ Pictures
- ✓ Spatial arrangement of branches

The second main difference is that a Mind Map is an individual, personalised map, which reveals the thoughts of its creator. This means that Mind Maps are not automatically self-explanatory, since no two people would create exactly the same thought structure. Nevertheless, Mind Maps can also be understood by other people; for instance, when you've read the content of the book or already know something about the topic.



You can use the specimen Mind Maps in each chapter in a number of ways, for example, by taking a quick look at them just before reading a chapter without understanding everything in them or after reading a chapter as a quick recap of its content. This is also helpful if you pick up the book again after a break and want to recall the material.

## Give it a try!

Mind Mapping is a technique that you can learn from, work with and put into practice. Let's start with an exercise. The exercise gives you your first taste of setting up a Mind Map and introduces you to Mind Mapping procedures.



To master Mind Mapping properly, work through the exercises described in the book. Just reading it through without doing the exercises won't enable you to apply Mind Mapping successfully. Mind Mapping is a technique and the best way to learn it is by putting it into practice. As you start writing and creating your mind map you activate your 'muscle memory', meaning that you *remember* the information more than by just reading it. The exercises and instructions in this book help you to do this as effectively as possible.

Please have the following to hand:

- ✓ A sheet of A4 or, even better, A3 paper.
- ✓ A pen with a fine point, for example a biro.

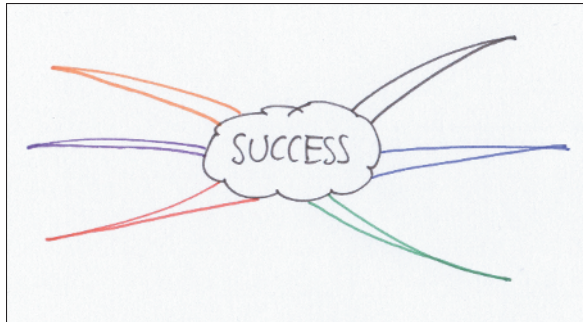
And now let's get started:

- ✓ Write the word 'Success' in the middle of your sheet of paper (see Figure 1-1).
- ✓ Draw a sort of frame or cloud around the word (later on you'll learn about leaving the central word 'open', increasing creativity).
- ✓ To the central concept attach six branches that are long enough for a word to be written on them. Remember to keep the branches quite short to start with – you can always make them longer afterwards.



Mind Mapping doesn't prescribe how many main branches a theme should have. That depends entirely on the theme concerned. In this exercise I stipulate the number of main branches: there should be six.

**Figure 1-1:**  
Six main  
branches  
around  
the central  
theme.



- ✓ Take a couple of minutes to consider what you associate with the notion 'Success' and what concepts or ideas occur to you in this connection. Write each of your concepts in the form of one (!) keyword on one of the branches of the Mind Map.
- ✓ For each word consider whether and how you could express the concept in visual form. Then write or draw them beside the keyword on the branch concerned. Don't worry, artistic quality is not an issue here!

After five minutes your first Mind Map may look something like Figure 1-2.

**Figure 1-2:**  
Six associa-  
tions for the  
theme of  
Success.



If you now compare your six associations with my associations you'll probably see that you associate completely different concepts from mine with the theme of Success. That's quite normal, as everybody has different experiences and a different background and hence also different associations.

Even if you and a colleague draw up a Mind Map of a very specific professional theme quite independently of each other you'll be surprised at just how different your Mind Maps look.

## Taking the Mind Map a stage further

Use a further ten minutes or so to take your Success Mind Map a stage further by drawing sub-branches from each main branch and adding greater detail. There's no limit on how many sub-branches you can add to each main branch. Just put them wherever further associations arise and extend the Mind Map accordingly.

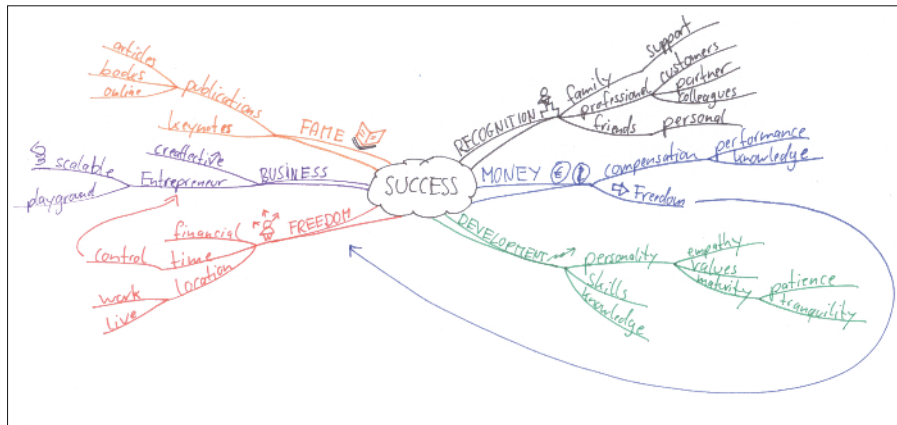
You can:

- ✓ Add sub-branches at as many levels as you like
- ✓ Attach as many sub-branches to the same level as you like
- ✓ Jump to and from individual themes within your Mind Map

In Chapter 4 I explain just how people think. One feature of our brain is that it thinks by association and by leaps and bounds. You can make use of these characteristics with Mind Mapping by extending your thoughts at a point in the Mind Map where they're best suited.

Now start the exercise and come back to the book after about ten minutes.

Figure 1-3 contains my own example for this exercise.



**Figure 1-3:**  
Mind Map  
taken a  
stage  
further.

## Free association or strict logic?

When drawing in the sub-branches for each of your six concepts you'll make associations which at first sight have no direct connection with the central theme of Success. Figure 1-3 depicts the concept 'Business' as a main branch on my Mind Map. With this concept of 'Business' I associate, among other things, the concept of 'Entrepreneurship' meaning perhaps that I'd like to found a number of companies in my lifetime. From the concept of 'Entrepreneurship' I arrive at the concept of 'Playground'. In my specific case I'd like to found a number of small companies as a playground for my ideas!

In my Mind Mapping seminars I sometimes meet people who weigh up each new concept on the Mind Map and ask whether it really has a strictly logical connection with the theme of the Map. In our case I might wonder whether the concept 'Playground' is really logically connected with my theme of 'Success'. When drawing up the Mind Map in this exercise, try not to worry whether each word can really be traced back logically to the central idea. Otherwise you'll only restrict yourself and, at worst, write down nothing at all. Allow your thoughts and associations free rein.

## *A little reflection please*

Now that you've finished this exercise I've the following questions for you:

- ✓ This first exercise on 'Success' took you a total of 15 minutes. In your view, what are the differences with 'normal' messages which you simply write down?
- ✓ If I'd asked you to express your thoughts on the theme of Success instead of producing a Mind Map in just 15 minutes, would the number of thoughts and their depth have been similar?

In my seminars I often get the following feedback when I ask these two questions:

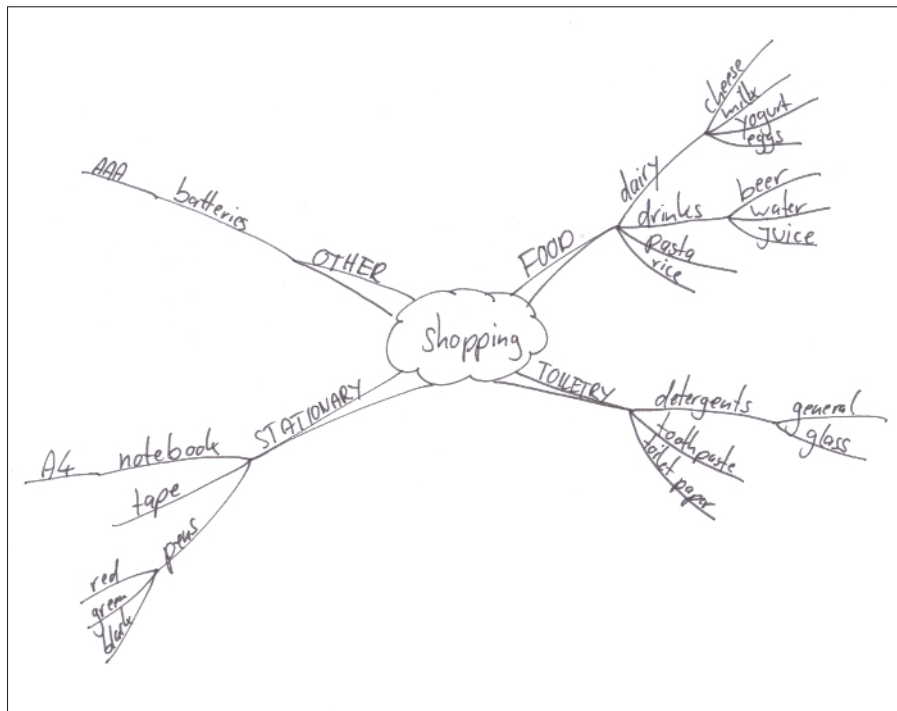
- ✓ The Mind Mapping process provides a flow of associations and so it's much easier to add new thoughts.
- ✓ In this way significantly more ideas are generated than in normal messages.
- ✓ The structure of the Mind Map allows you to add new thoughts at every point without having to squeeze them in somewhere.
- ✓ The practice of working with key concepts and branches enables you to penetrate a theme much more quickly and deeply.
- ✓ The spatial arrangement of branches displays connections and links between themes which could not be identified in linear representations.

## A Simple Technique with Many Applications

Mind Mapping involves a couple of easily assimilated ground rules. With this set of rules you can apply Mind Mapping to many situations, wherever information has to be structured and organised. This could also be as simple as a compiling 'shopping list' (see Figure 1-4). But you'll usually use Mind Mapping in more complex areas.

Frequent applications of Mind Mapping are:

- ✓ Manuscripts and 'cribs' for lectures and presentations
- ✓ Notes from texts and books
- ✓ Notes from talks, presentations and discussions
- ✓ Project management
- ✓ Knowledge management
- ✓ Exam preparation



**Figure 1-4:**  
Shopping  
list with  
Mind  
Mapping.

## ***'Cribb' for lectures and presentations***

All important content required for a lecture or planned presentation can be contained in a Mind Map readily and clearly for you to access. The visual form of the Mind Map gives you an overview of your material so that you can speak to your audience freely, naturally and effectively.

Of course it's also possible to supplement a lecture with additional visualisations like well-known PowerPoint presentations. With Mind Mapping software you can also present a lecture to an audience visually as a Mind Map.

In Chapter 5 I demonstrate in detail how you can use this technique to draft notes for talks and lectures.

## ***Taking notes from texts and books***

Mind Mapping allows you to summarise the most important content of many text and book pages in one or more Mind Maps.

It's clear, particularly in the case of notes from books, that Mind Maps are devised mainly for the person who made the Mind Map concerned and are not usually comprehensible to other people. For a person who's read a book and, while reading, made notes from it using Mind Mapping, the Mind Map's the key to recalling the book's content.

How to make notes from texts and books is the subject of Chapter 6 where you'll learn and practise this procedure.

## ***Taking notes from presentations and discussions***

This application of Mind Mapping's based on a similar principle. With Mind Mapping you can glean important information from discussions and presentations easily and, above all, very quickly. The essential thing about Mind Mapping – and its great strength – is that you can organise content thematically and not necessarily in the chronological order of a discussion or presentation. This means that, instead of writing down all the information sequentially as you would when taking ordinary notes, you can add new information flexibly to the Mind Map at any time in a way that makes thematic sense. This is particularly useful in unstructured discussions and presentations. In Chapter 7 you'll learn how effective notes can be taken in lectures and discussions and practise this technique.

## Assistance with study

During both my undergraduate and post-graduate study I organised my notes and book excerpts in the form of Mind Maps, sometimes with pen and paper and sometimes with the software available at the time. All these Mind Maps are scanned and stored on my computer and are accessible to me in digital format. Even years after completing my studies it can often

happen that I'd like to look up a topic that I covered at that time and clarify an issue relating to it. In this way Mind Maps that I made then are still extremely useful to me today. Without having to search through the details of texts and pages of notes I can conjure up all the required information in just a few minutes. In Chapter 16 I describe in detail how this is done.

## Project management

When it's a matter of planning and organising projects, Mind Mapping can help you to gain a quick and easy overview of the issues and recognise connections among the individual elements of your project.

Mind Mapping software's particularly helpful with project management. In this way you can:

- ✓ Make changes flexibly to a Mind Map.
- ✓ Convert the Mind Map to other file formats.
- ✓ Use additional functions of the program that are relevant to project management, such as the inclusion of time scheduling and personal details.
- ✓ Display a timeline as a GANTT diagram.
- ✓ Integrate digital information and create digital links from your Mind Map.

You could also use Mind Mapping to present project management on a single page. Best of all, you've visualised the content of the project and so simplified your task.

You can find detail on how to deploy Mind Mapping in project management in Chapter 14.

## Knowledge management

As has already been shown, you can summarise the content of books, discussions and lectures with Mind Maps. With Mind Mapping software you can link together these different areas of knowledge to develop your own form



of knowledge management. By linking several Mind Maps together you can navigate around entire fields of knowledge and call up content at any time. Chapter 15 book demonstrates with several examples how you can manage knowledge with Mind Mapping.

## *Pen and Paper or Computer?*

One day when I was talking to a company on the phone, the lady there told me that, if possible, her employees ought to learn Mind Mapping by computer. By 2005 computers were everywhere. Quite right too. And yet, even in 2012, despite the long hours they spend at their computer, most people still use a pen a paper to write with. Indeed, it's hard to imagine a child learning how to write on a computer without first practising by hand. It's a similar situation with Mind Mapping.

The essential thing is the Mind Mapping technique itself, irrespective of whether it's tackled with a pen and paper or computer. It's very important to master the thought processes and procedures associated with Mind Mapping. At the beginning this is often easier with a pen and paper than with a computer.

You can then decide which situations are best suited to either method of Mind Map preparation. In fact, you'll need both methods.

Pen and paper are often preferable when:

- ✓ It's impractical or undesirable to use a computer, for example, in many kinds of meeting.
- ✓ The computer doesn't provide the flexibility you get with a pen and paper.
- ✓ Drawing a Mind Map with pen and paper helps you to assimilate content better, for example, when preparing for exams. This method helps as you initiate your 'muscle memory' as mentioned previously.

On the other hand, computers and software offer possibilities that far exceed what can be done with pen and paper, so working on a computer may be particularly suited to project and knowledge management. Whenever the content of a Mind Map needs to be altered often or you need to work on content together with other people, you are better off with a computer.

Mind Mapping software provides the possibility of:

- ✓ Generating different views of a Mind Map (condensing and expanding).
- ✓ Filtering Mind Maps according to specific criteria.
- ✓ Linking Mind Maps with other documents.
- ✓ Presenting Mind Maps electronically.
- ✓ Converting Mind Maps to other data formats and processing them further.
- ✓ Searching Mind Maps by using keywords.

Lastly, with software there are no problems of space and you can update and alter the content as often as you like.

You can find out more about the differences between Mind Mapping with pen and paper and Mind Mapping software in Chapter 8. In Chapter 9 I provide you with an overview of the many different software programs. In Chapters 10 and 11 you get to know both the Mindjet MindManager and iMindMap programs in detail.

I devote the whole of Part III to the topic of Mind Mapping software.

## *Revising Mind Maps*

If you produce Mind Maps with a pen and paper you'll often encounter situations where you'd like to revise your Mind Map because the following problems have arisen:

- ✓ You've made a mistake and had to cross it out several times and rewrite. Now the Mind Map doesn't look as nice as you'd like it to.
- ✓ After you've drawn a Mind Map you realise that you'd like to organise it differently so that it provides an overview of the entire topic.
- ✓ You've encountered difficulties of space when drawing a Mind map and had to divide a theme into several main branches.

Don't regard the production of another version of a Mind Map as additional work or wasted time but consider it as a chance to understand a theme better and rework it more precisely. Revising a Mind Map helps you to get to grips with a theme more closely.

## *Advanced Strategies Using Mind Mapping*

When you have a basic grounding in Mind Mapping you can then combine the technique with other processes to increase your work efficiency.

In Chapter 12 you learn more about special reading strategies that quickly enable you to read works of non-fiction very efficiently and extract their essential content. This involves a combination of skim-reading techniques and Mind Mapping. The way in which Mind Maps are produced enables you to read as little as possible but as much as you need.

Mind Mapping can also be used effectively in group situations aimed at developing new ideas and solutions. Despite what's often written, Mind Mapping's not appropriate for joint brainstorming sessions. The technique's not best suited to this. Mind Mapping proves useful, however, when generated ideas need to be organised and structured so they can be taken further. I demonstrate in Chapter 16 how this can be done.

In fact, Mind Mapping is a technique with applications in many different areas. When you reach the end of this book you'll be familiar with all the areas mentioned above and be able to decide what you can use the technique for.

