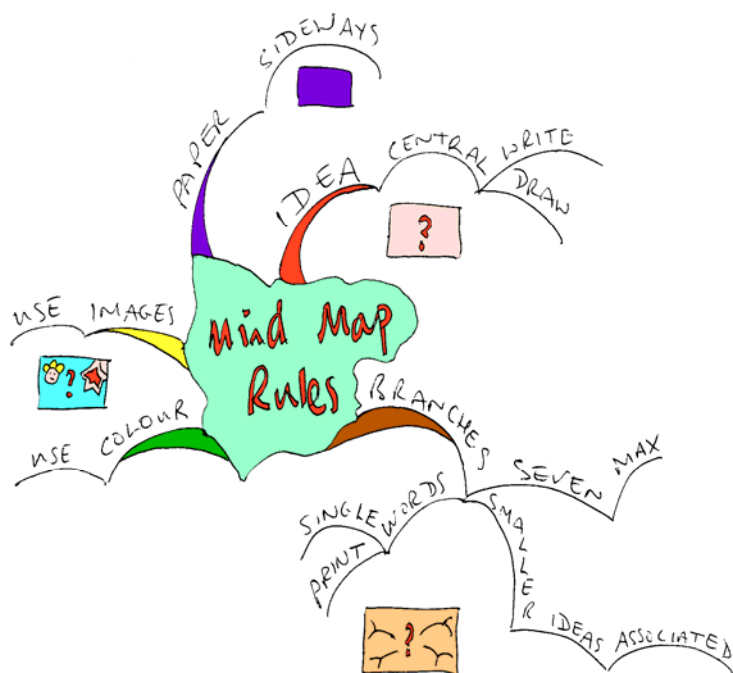# Mind Maps

## What is a mind map?

A mind map is a type of diagram that helps you structure and organize your thinking. There are a few basic rules that make mind maps different from other diagrams:
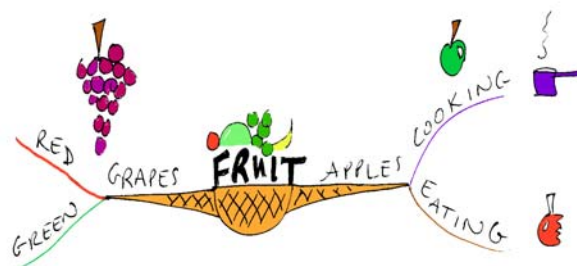
1. Start with a piece of paper turned sideways - landscape format.

2. In the centre write and/or draw the central idea that you want to explore.

3. Add up to, but not more than, seven branches off the central idea as main themes, each with a word to describe it.

4. Use only single words on branches (no phrases or sentences) and PRINT the words - use all capital letters.

5. Add smaller brances off your main branches for associated ideas, each of these should also be a single word.

6. Use colour and images as much as possible in your mind map.

Number your main branches, and use them as the basis of paragraphs or chapters in essays or reports.

Make a mind map of a group project - then assign a branch to each group member.

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# When to use mind maps

The possibilities are endless! You might find them useful for:

Analysing a topic        Thinking of keywords for literature searching        Taking notes in lectures

Revising for an exam        Planning a party        Preparing for a presentation

# Why use mind maps?

Most people have been taught to make linear notes but the use of colours, graphics, symbols and words of different sizes much more closely matches the way our brains work.

By selecting just *keywords* we reduce the amount of information we need to process when taking notes or revising from them.

Even the positioning on the paper can become an aid to memory.

Mind mappers have found that they can give presentations direct from the map with no additional notes.

Mind maps allow you to quickly make *associations* between keywords and so help you gain an overview of a topic.
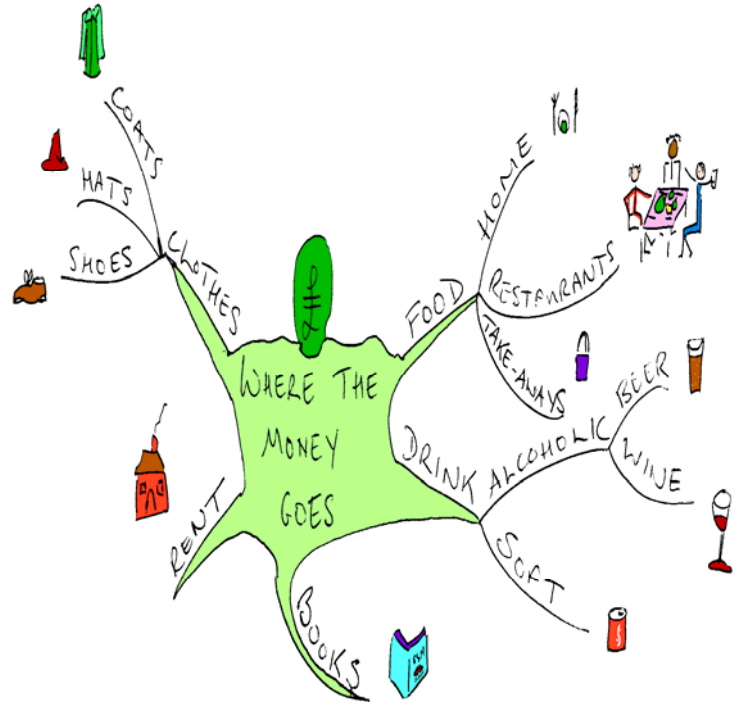
## They're also fun!

# Computer generated mind maps

There are occasions when you might prefer to have a printed mind map e.g. as an appendix to a report. The University provides software that you can use to do this. In the Assistive Software folder on the network (under Training & Assistive Software) is a package called **Inspiration**. This allows you to generate mind maps and add graphics to them. It can also generate outlines that help you prepare written material.

# Whose idea were they?

Mind maps were invented by Tony Buzan who has written books on the subject, and also has a website.

Buzan, T. & Buzan, B. (2003) *The Mind Map Book*. Rev Ed. London. BBC.
Buzan, T. (2002) *How to Mind Map*. London: Thorsons.
http://www.mind-map.com/