

MIND MAPPING: GETTING IN THE "RIGHT" STATE OF MIND*

What is mind mapping? *Mind mapping* is a method of documenting that uses the *right* brain (creative hemisphere) to enhance your ability to understand information and solve problems. Unlike outlining, which uses the *left* brain (logical hemisphere), mind mapping is flexible, has few rules, and is easy to learn and teach. The boxes on the next page compare right and left brain function and give steps for how to mind map; page 54 shows an example of a mind map.

When do you use it? You can use it for a variety of purposes. Below are some of the most common:

- Taking notes/learning new content
- Writing papers/preparing presentations
- Preparing for exams
- Promoting idea-generation (brainstorming)
- Facilitating group problem-solving

What are the benefits? General benefits and specific group benefits are listed below:

General benefits:

- **Quicker** than regular note-taking
- **Highlights** key ideas/gets rid of the irrelevant
- **Helps** you quickly gather, review, and recall large amounts of information
- **Increases** brain power available for *learning and problem-solving* by reducing energy used on concerns about structure and documentation
- **Encourages** you to identify relationships and use creativity

Group benefits:

- **Promotes** communication (keeps everyone focused on the main issues)
- **Facilitates** problem-solving (generates more ideas, helps group suspend judgment)
- **Makes** ideas and relationships clear

How does it promote critical thinking? By pushing you to use your *right* brain talents, mind-mapping facilitates the "productive phase" of critical thinking -- the phase when you need to gather relevant information, identify relationships, and *produce* new ideas. Once you've completed this "productive phase", you can then get in touch with your *left* brain talents and move to the "judgment phase"--- you can evaluate what your mind has *produced*, make *judgments* about its accuracy and usefulness, and make refinements.

*Source: Alfaro-LeFevre (2004). Critical Thinking and Clinical Judgment: A Practical Approach. WB Saunders. Used with permission.

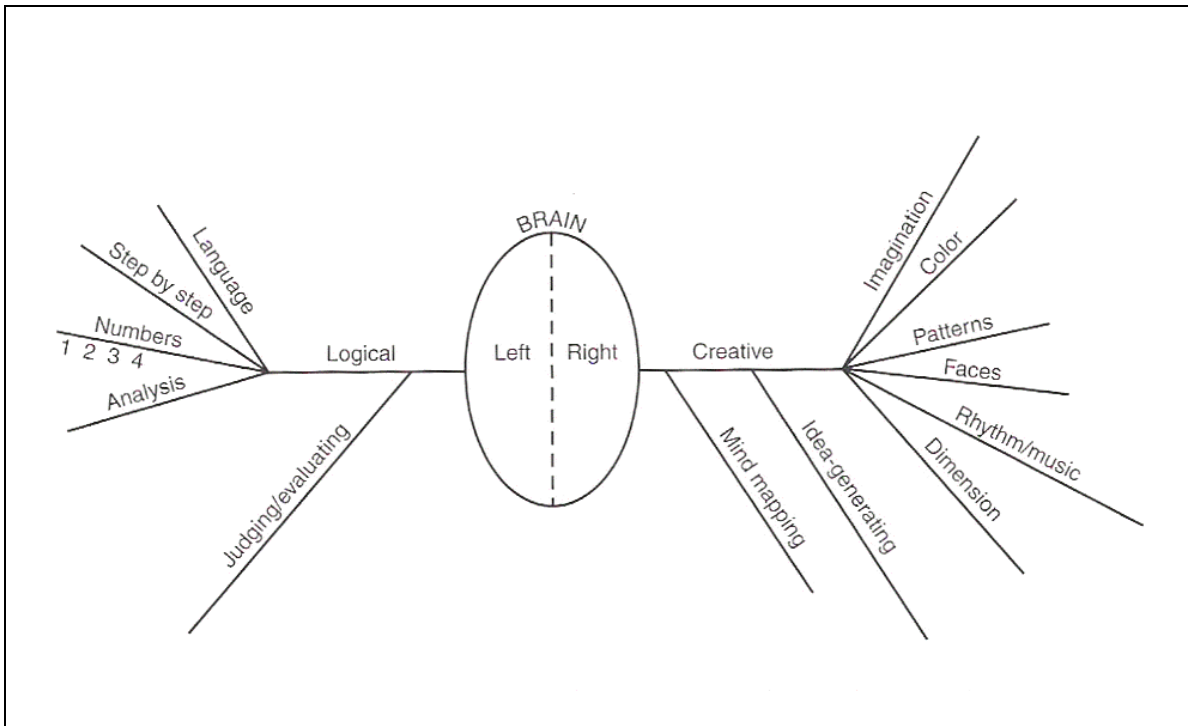
LEFT VERSUS RIGHT HEMISPHERE FUNCTION

Left Brain (Logical, Judging, Evaluating)	Right Brain (Creative, Idea-generating)
<p>Deals with: Language Logic Linearity (step-by-step approaches) Numbers and sequence Analysis</p>	<p>Deals with: Images/imagination Colors/geometry Pattern, face, and map recognition Rhythm/music Dimension Parallel processing</p>

8 STEPS FOR MIND MAPPING TO PROMOTE CRITICAL THINKING

1. **Put central theme or concept** in the center, bottom, or top of the page, and draw a circle around it (see an example mind map on the next page).
2. **Place the main ideas relating to the concept** on lines (or in circles) around the central theme.
3. **Add details** by putting them on lines (or in circles) connecting them to the main ideas.
4. **Use key words or simple pictures** only; keep it legible.
5. **Make sure no idea stands alone.** If you can't connect an idea with something on the page, it's irrelevant to the central theme.
6. **Don't allow yourself to slow down** over concerns about where to place words (this is your left brain habits trying to dominate). Rather, let your ideas flow, and use lines to show connections.
7. **Use colors** to highlight most important ideas.
8. **Once you've completed your mind map,** get in touch with your left brain talents (judging and evaluating) and evaluate what you've produced. **Revise as needed.**

MIND MAP OF HOW THE BRAIN WORKS*



* Adapted from: Menthey, ,M., and Miller, D. (1991). Tools for leaders, tools for managers, (22):2-21, with permission of Springhouse Corporation®