# Idea Mapping

A map is a diagram featuring a main idea in the center, linked with supporting information on the outside. Mapping is a powerful tool that has many benefits for students who will take the time to learn to use it.

- Helps you to generate ideas for the first rough draft
- Enables you to explore, summarize, process, and organize information
- Activates visual and spatial intelligence through graphics and form

There are two ways to make a map, each having its own particular usage.

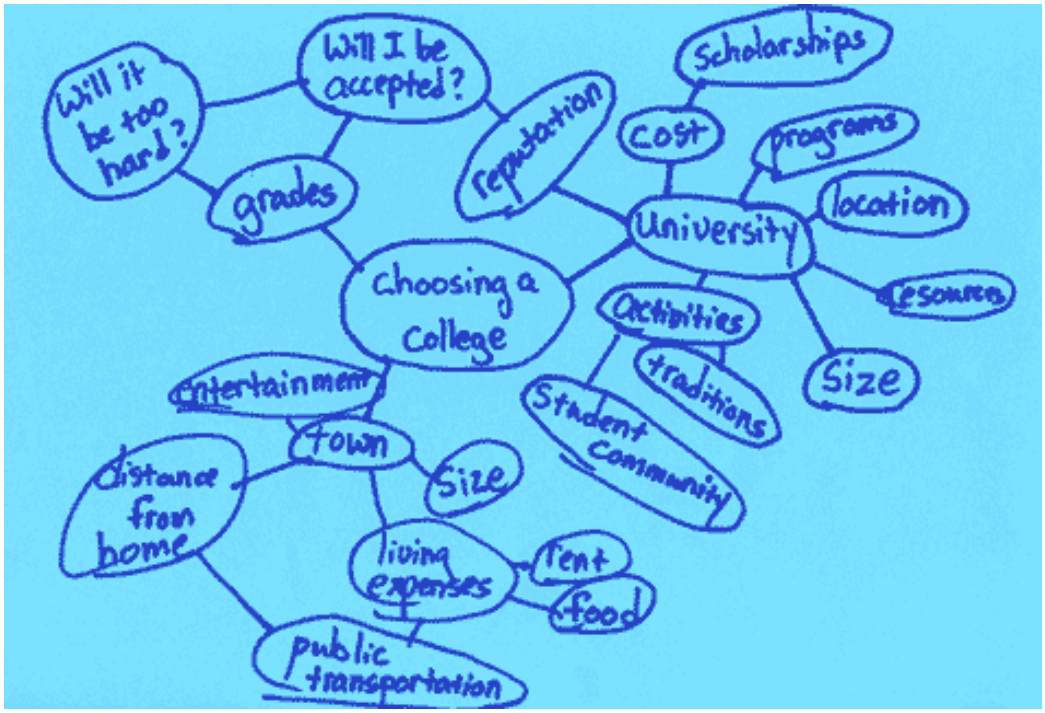
- Drawing quickly and playfully:
    1. Enables you to think creatively
    2. Maximizes your attention capacity
    3. Helps to bring out unexpected ideas
    4. Keeps you from focusing on unimportant details

- Carefully crafting a well-structured map:
    1. Reflects your flow of thoughts
    2. Gives your ideas organization
    3. Cuts out off-topic distractions
    4. Helps you to generate new ideas
    5. Makes you write clearly and more precisely

How to draw a good map:

- Use large, unlined paper and colored pens
- Draw bubbles, lines, arrows, groups, lists, images, words, and explanatory notes
- Represent meaning through the color, size and position of items on the page

The quick method is often called a bubble map.




This map is good for brainstorming, but other maps work more specifically. The form of a map should follow the academic task you wish accomplish:

Some Common Academic Tasks

| | |
|---|---|
| Focusing on a place | Showing characters and action |
| Concentrating on ideas or concepts | Analyzing a story, movie, etc. |
| Grouping similar items | Using evidence to argue an issue |
| Breaking down a process | Separating parts from a whole |
| Expressing cause-effect relationships | Comparing and contrasting things |
| Explaining how a thing is put together | Labeling areas of influence |
| Describing a repeating cycle | Generating ideas systematically |

Before building these maps, make a list of the things you think are important.

1. Focusing on a place: A map

If you want to tell a story focusing on a place, draw a map or picture of the area. Use this when writing personal stories, because thinking about a place can help to generate memories. When writing short fiction, a picture will anchor the characters, ideas, and actions in an environment.

2. Showing characters and action: A cartoon

If you want to focus on characterization and action, it might help to draw a cartoon. Cartoons demonstrate key points. There is a richness of detail expressed, including discontent, anger, and disappointment.

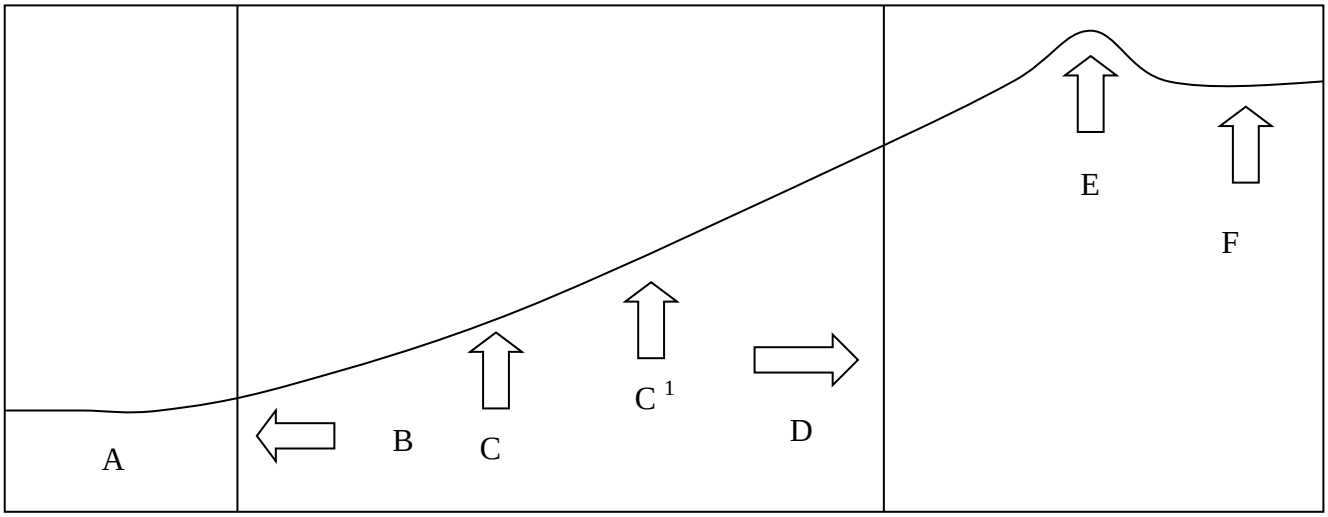
3. Concentrating on ideas or concepts: A Parable

If you want to talk about self-evident ideals, compare something unfamiliar with something common. Draw a picture of this thing and then point out how it symbolizes the concept. The figure shown here, a sower of seeds, is a Biblical parable for spreading the good word. It appears on many university symbols today as a symbolic metaphor for the learning endeavor. Here is the meaning in our modern context. The Sower – Professors at the university
The Seed – knowledge and understanding;
Way side – people who do not want to learn;
Birds – things that cause people to forget;
Shallow ground – silly, undedicated people; Thorny ground – troubles in the world; The good earth – students who want to learn; Some of the seeds in the good earth bring forth 20, 40 or 100 times as much as was planted – Learning spreads to others as people share their knowledge.

4. Analyzing a story: The dramatic timeline

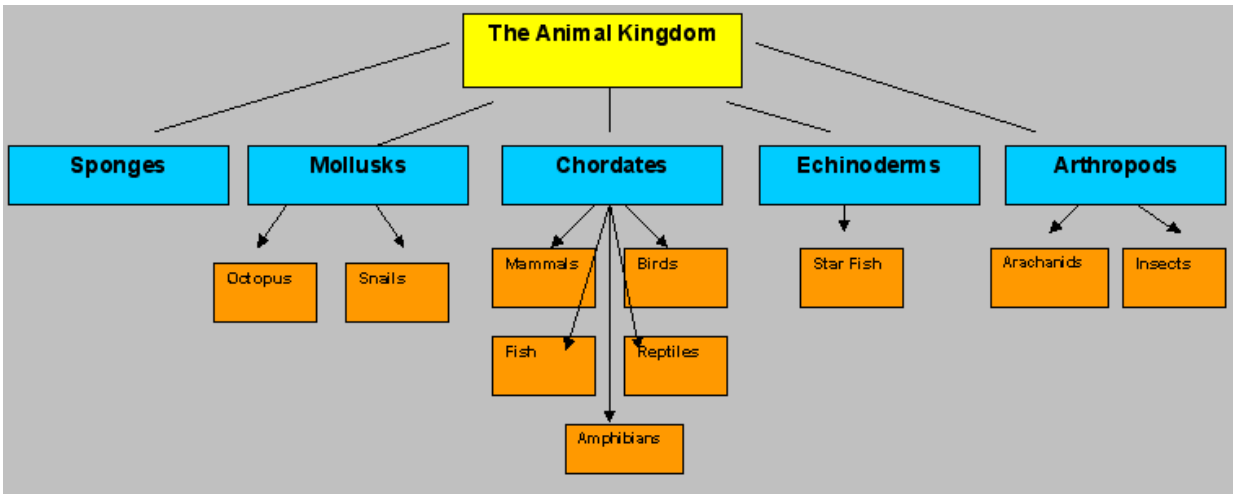
If you plan to analyze a story, whether it is a TV show, a movie, a book, or a video, it is important to describe how things and characters change over time: A dramatic timeline will help you to do this. Almost all stories follow this pattern. In the initial exposition state, A, everything is pretty normal. Then B comes along, a change that has consequences. Things start happening, and at C we see rising action, in that events are starting to stack up. There may be a difference between the first half – C, and the second half – C [1]. Eventually, another big event occurs, D, which sets the stage for the crucial decision at the climax, E. Then there is falling action to F – the resolution / conclusion, which is always somehow different from A.

Analyzing a story: The dramatic timeline, continued

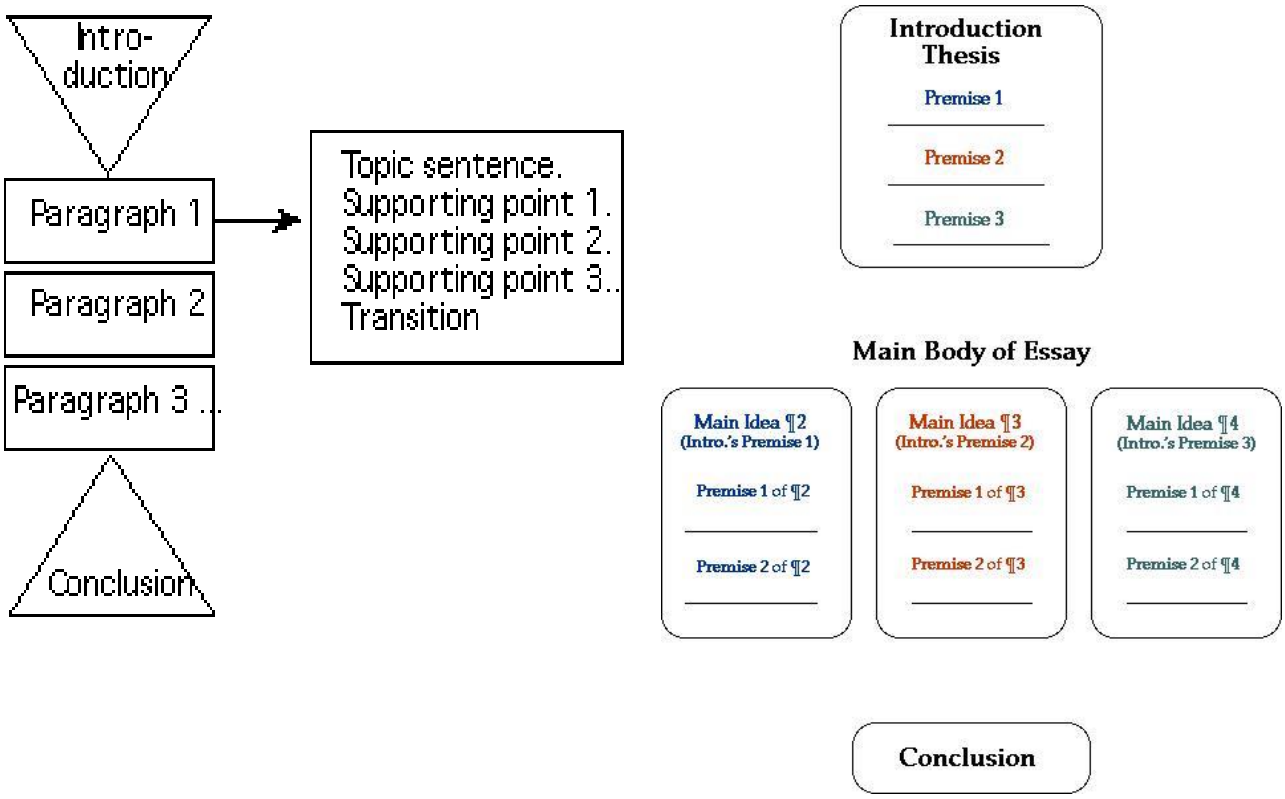



5. Classifying or categorizing (i.e. grouping similar items): A table or tree map.

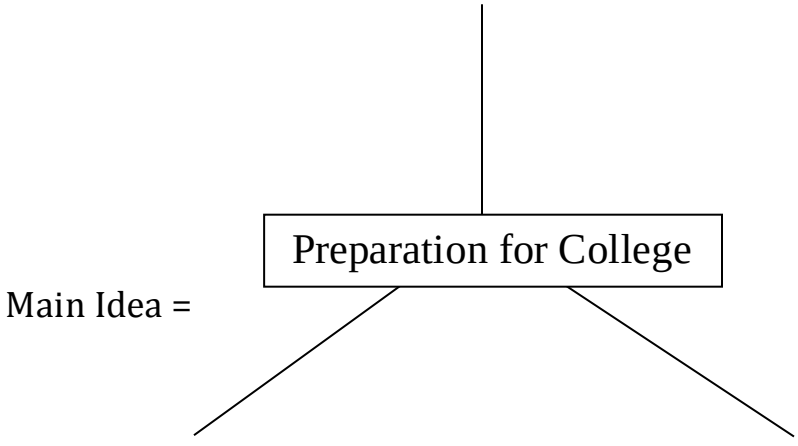
Grouping items together based their similarities was a major method of early scientists. Much of what we know about biology comes from this comparative perspective. Take your list of items and put them into tables or diagrams with different categories and examples of those categories. This will show if something doesn't belong with the rest of the information, as well as generate new ideas.



6. Using evidence and reason to argue an issue: An argument map.

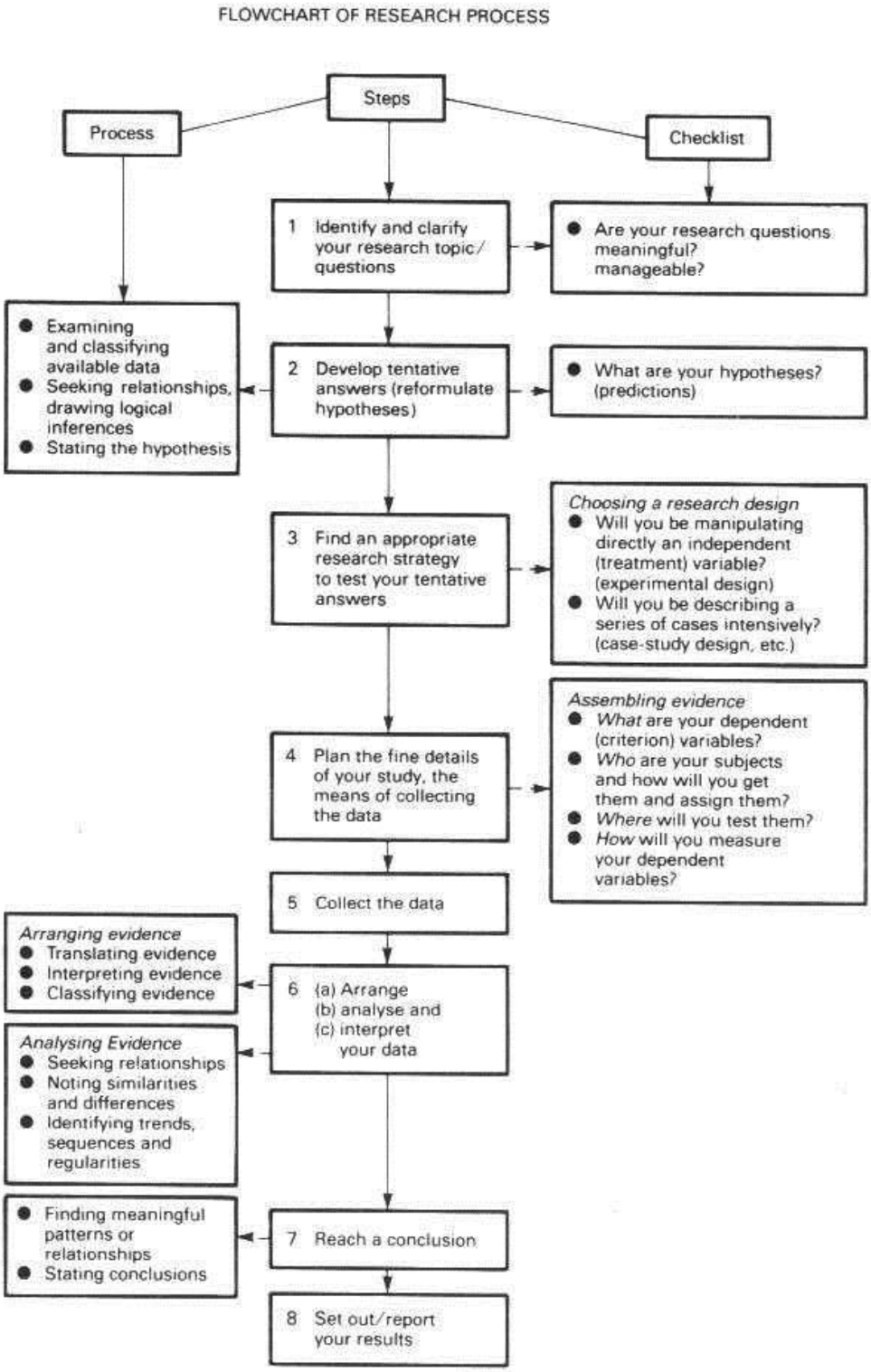



Point one = 1. Achievement test taking ability

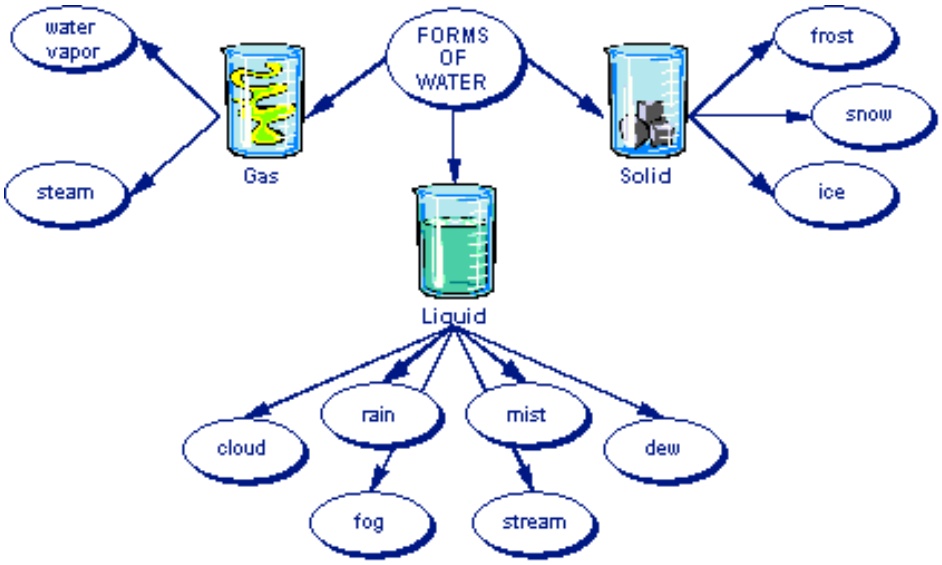


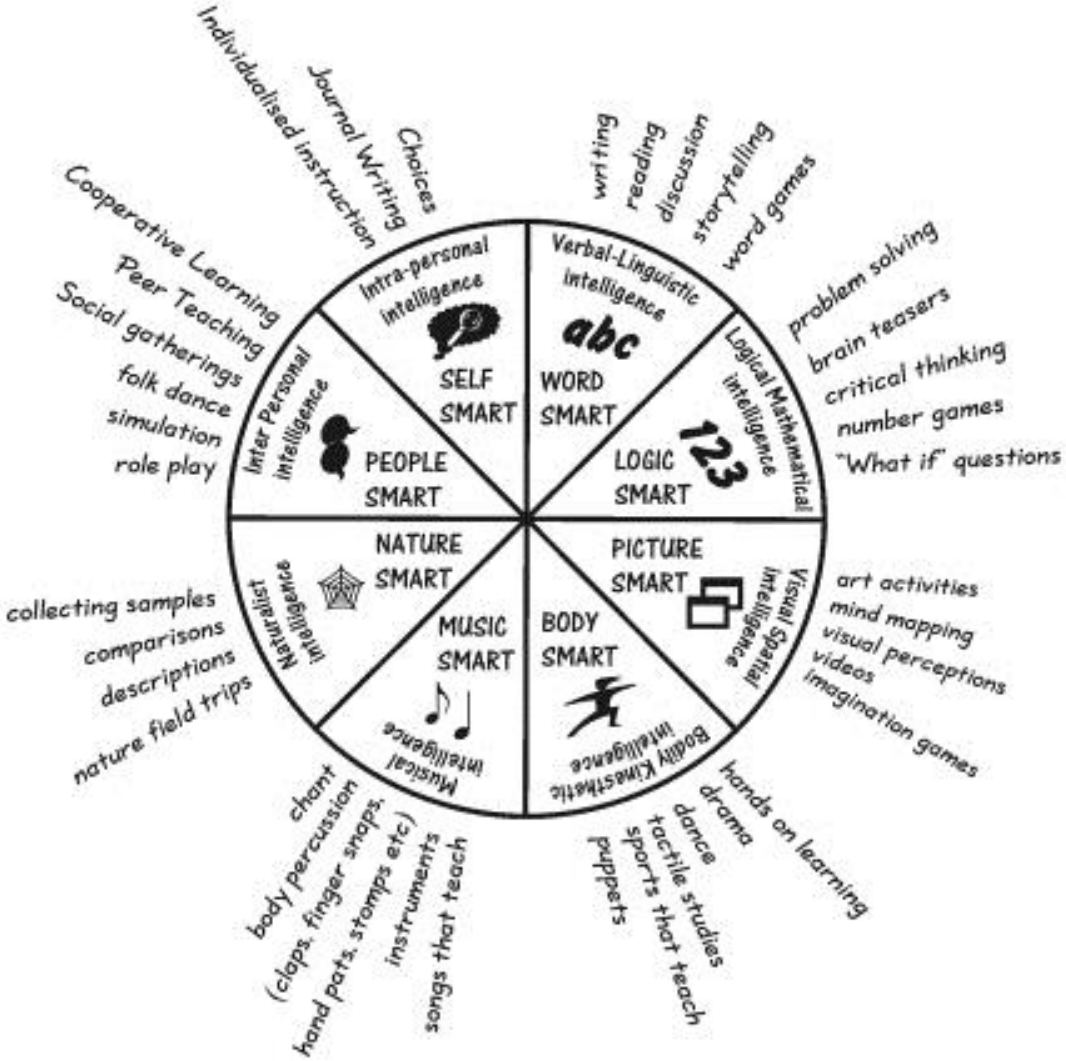

Other Points = 3. Being on your own 2. Study skills & time management

7. Breaking down a complex process into simpler steps: a flowchart

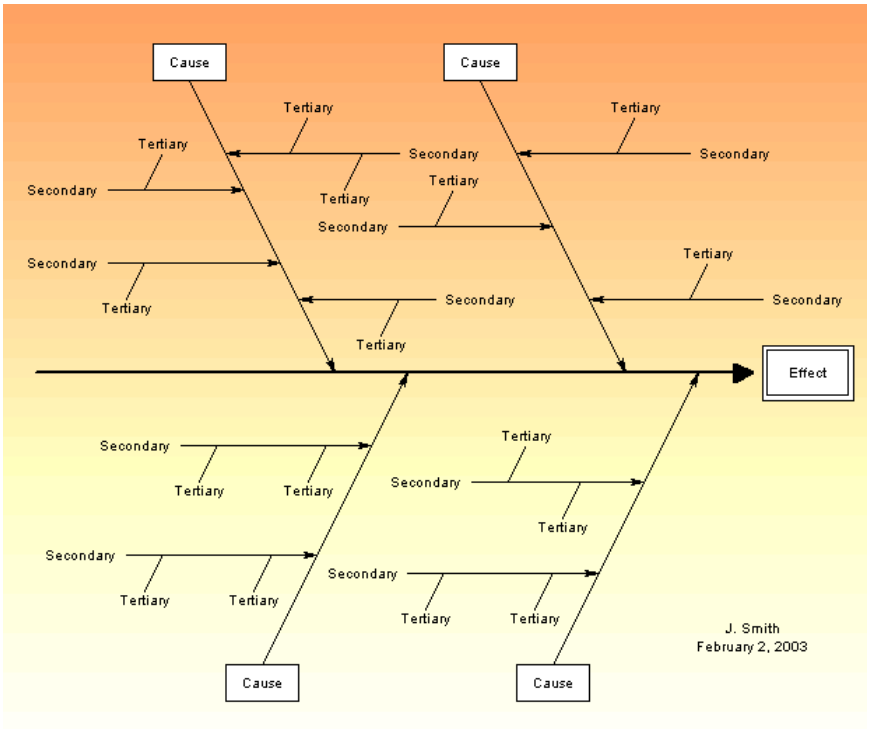


8. Separating parts from a whole: diagrams or pie charts

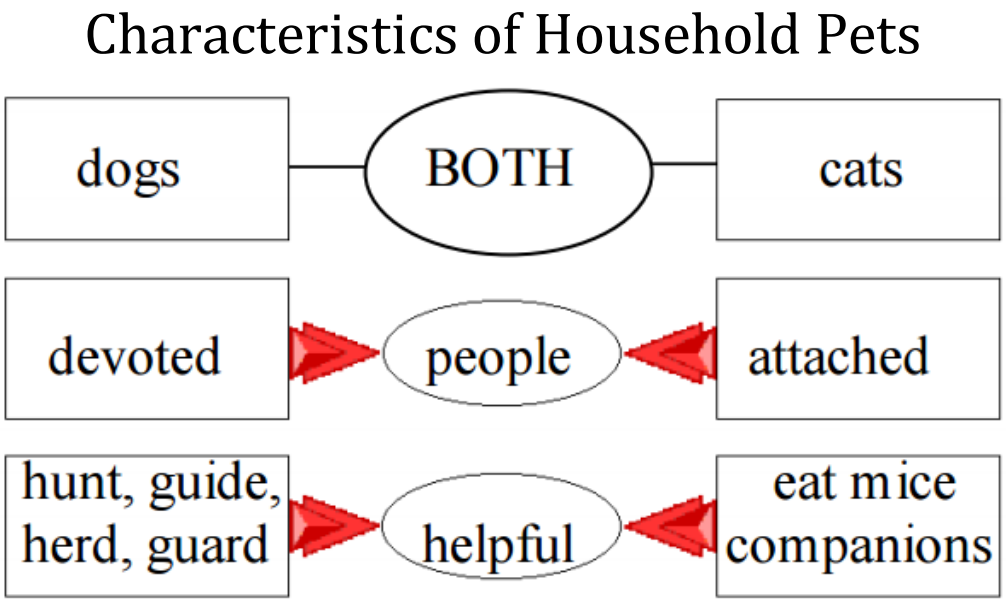


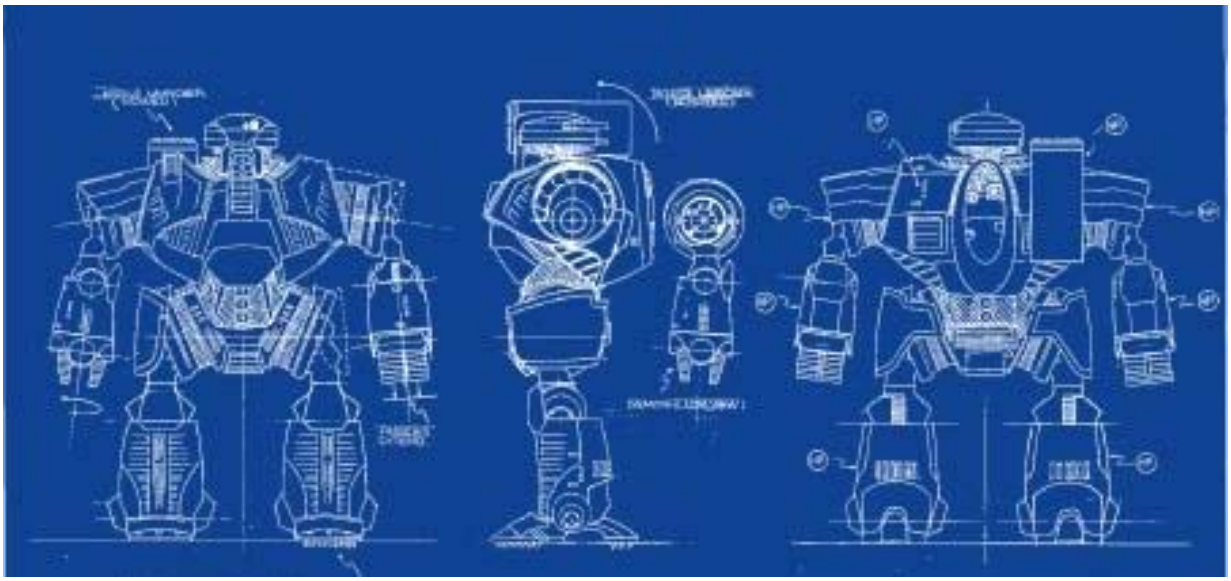
9. Expressing cause and effect relationships: a fishbone map for complex relationships, 2 columns for simplistic



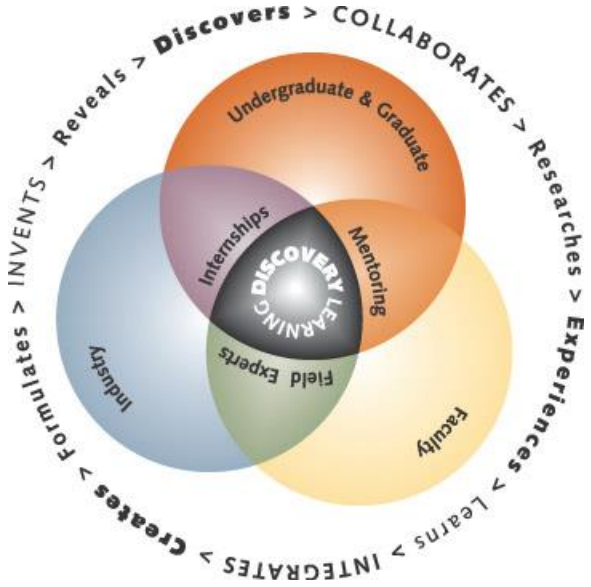

10. Comparing and contrasting things: bubble maps or columns in a table

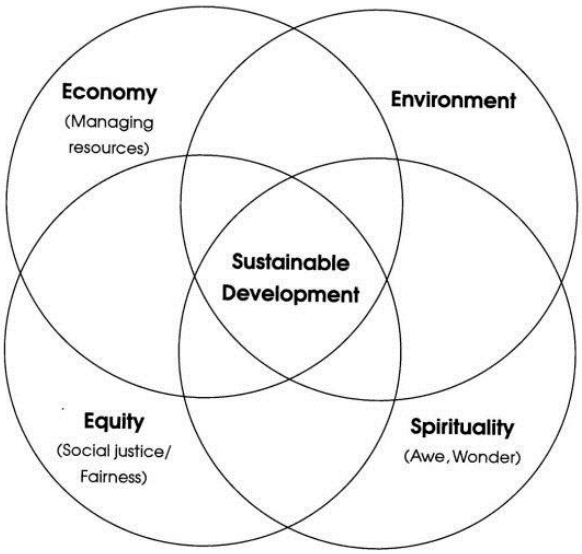


11. Explaining how a thing is put together: a blueprint

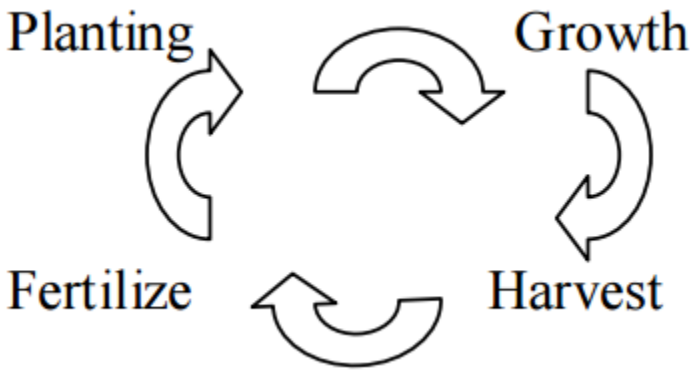


12. Describing areas of influence: a Venn diagram



13. Describing a repeating cycle: A circular diagram




14. Generating ideas systematically: An Idea Map