About IM Mind Maps

IM Mind Maps were popularized by author and consultant, Tony Buzan. They use a two-dimensional structure, instead of the list format conventionally used to take notes.

Mind Maps are more compact than conventional notes, often taking up one side of paper. This helps you to make associations easily.

- Map individually, and as a group.
- Summarizing information, and note taking.
- Consolidating information from different research sources.
- Thinking through complex problems.
- Presenting information in a format that shows the overall structure of your subject.
- Studying and memorizing information.

Drawing Basic Mind Maps

To draw a Mind Map, follow these steps:

1. Write the title of the subject you're exploring in the center of the page, and draw a circle around it. This is shown by the circle marked in figure 1, below.
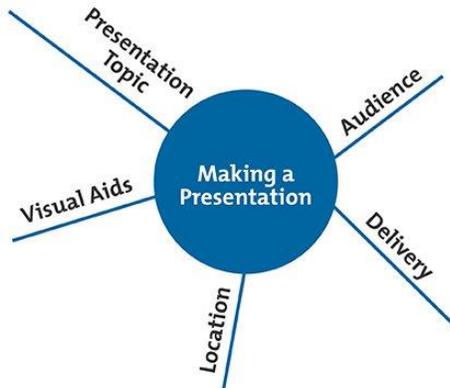
(Our simple example shows someone brainstorming actions needed to deliver a successful presentation.)
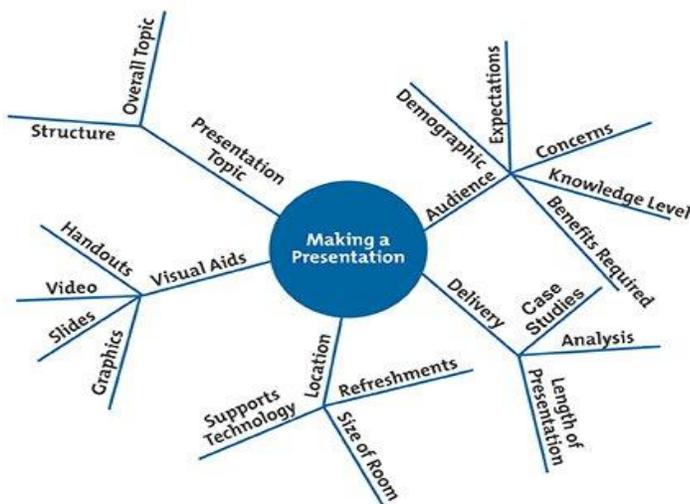
Figure 1

2. As you come across major subdivisions or subheadings of the topic (or important facts that relate to the subject) draw lines out from this circle. Label these lines with these subdivisions or subheadings. (See figure 2, below.)

Figure 2

3. As you "burrow" into the subject and uncover another level of information (further subheadings, or individual facts) belonging to the subheadings, draw these as lines linked to the subheading lines. These are shown in figure 3.

Figure 3

4. Then, for individual facts or ideas, draw lines out from the appropriate heading line and label them. These are shown in Figure 4.

Figure 4
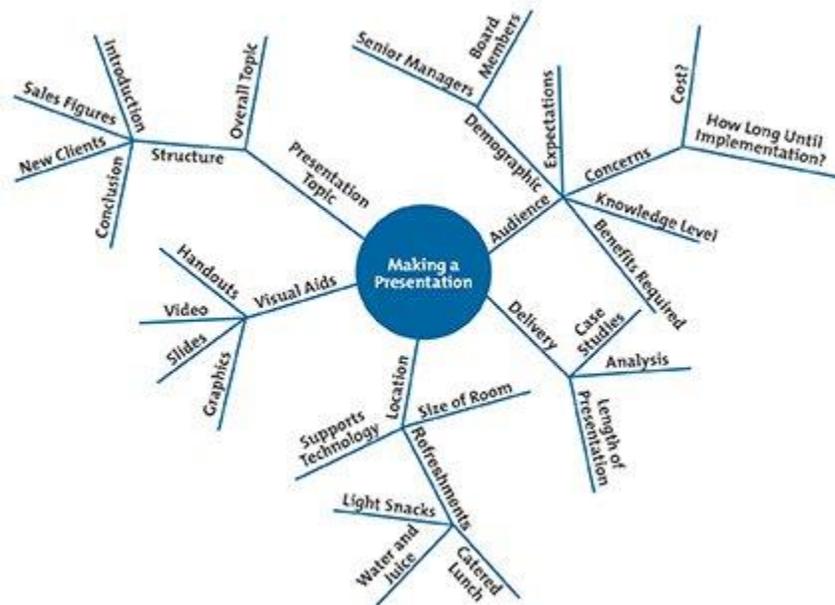
5. As you come across new information, link it in to the Mind Map appropriately.

A complete Mind Map may have main topic lines radiating in all directions from the center. Sub-topics and facts will branch off these, like branches and twigs from the trunk of a tree. You don't need to worry about the structure you produce, as this will evolve of its own accord.

Using Mind Maps Effectively

Once you understand how to take notes in Mind Map format, you can develop your own conventions for taking them further. The following suggestions can help you draw impactful Mind Maps:

- **Use Single Words or Simple Phrases** – Many words in normal writing are padding, as they ensure that facts are conveyed in the correct context, and in a format that is pleasant to read.

  In Mind Maps, single strong words and short, meaningful phrases can convey the same meaning more potently. Excess words just clutter the Mind Map.

- **Print Words** – Joined up or indistinct writing is more difficult to read.

- **Use Color to Separate Different Ideas** – This will help you to separate ideas where necessary. It also helps you to visualize the Mind Map for recall. Color can help to show the organization of the subject.
- **Use Symbols and Images** – Pictures can help you to remember information more effectively than words, so, where a symbol or picture means something to you, use it.
- **Using Cross-Linkages** – Information in one part of a Mind Map may relate to another part. Here you can draw lines to show the cross-linkages. This helps you to see how one part of the subject affects another.

Converting Mind Map to a Project Map

I have been mind-mapping & project-mapping for over 25 years. I have found this method to be the best way to organize my thoughts and projects. Here is a sample of how I transfer a mind-map to a project-map.
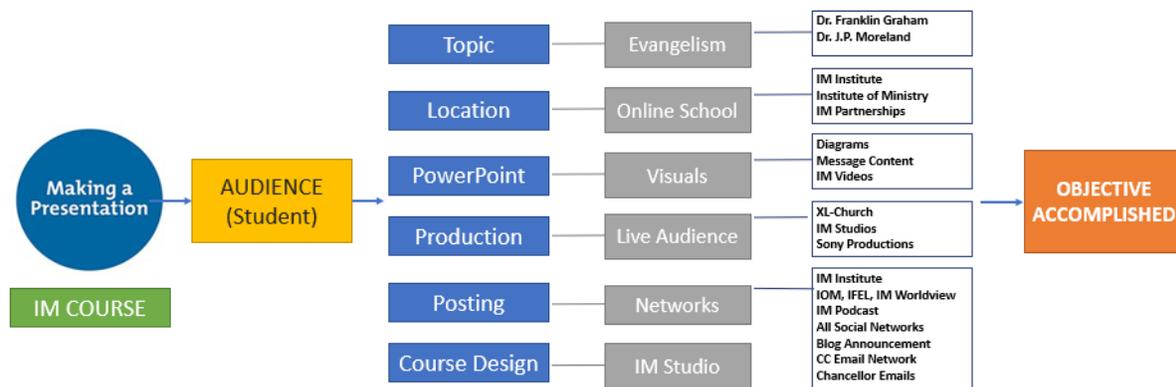
If you practice mapping 3-times a week, you will find that it will literally train your mind to think in an organized manor. The other thing you will notice is that as people talk, you will map out the discussion in your mind – thus, responding in a topic centered method. Enjoy your mapping!

-Dr. Stephen Phinney