

An Introduction to Concept Mapping

Concept mapping is a powerful way to organize and arrange ideas. It is a good way to visually show what you know about a topic. This booklet gives a brief description of the steps involved.

1 Prepare a list of concept words - the important ideas related to the topic.

For example, on the topic of trees you might list: tree, leaves, coniferous, deciduous, cones, seeds, and needles. This is not a complete list, just some of the concepts which seem most important for the ideas of trees.

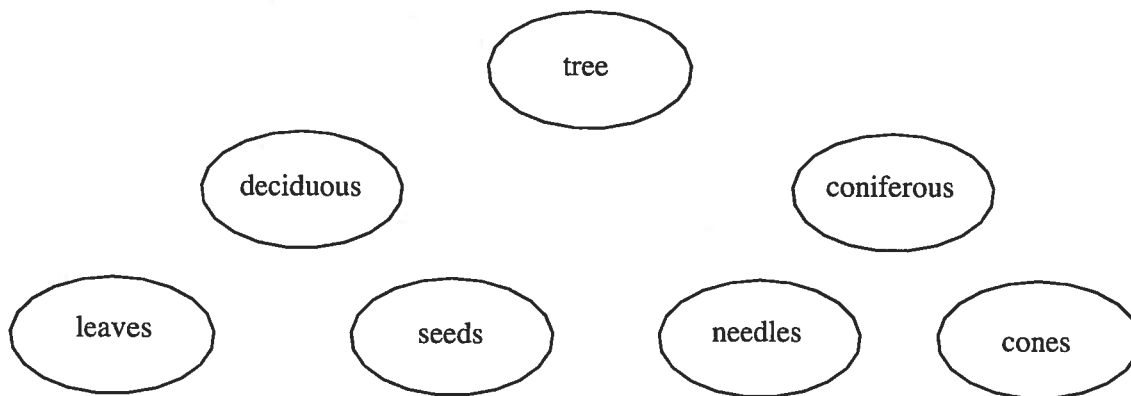
2 Group the concept words into levels that seem to belong together or that have the same amount of detail.

Continuing with our tree example, you might choose to group "tree" by itself on the top level, since it is the big concept that ties everything together. Deciduous and coniferous go together since they are types of trees, needles and leaves go together since they are similar parts of the tree, and cones and seeds go together.

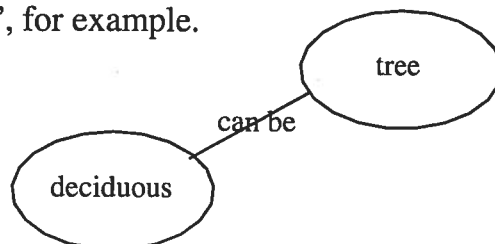
3 Put the concept words on a page with the most general idea at the top and the most detailed group at the bottom, like this:

tree
deciduous coniferous
needles leaves cones seeds

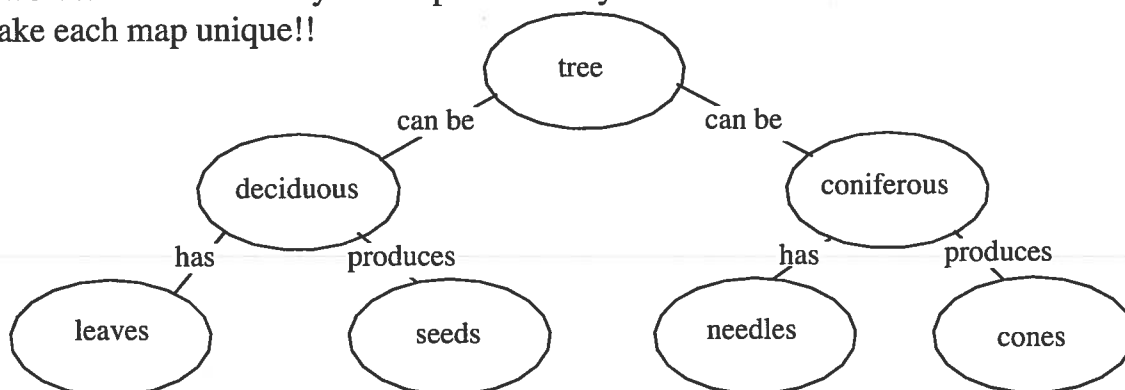
4 Spread the concepts out on a page to arrange the concepts into a pattern that will allow you to link them together. You can use little cards, Post-It notes, or pieces of paper for each concept to make it easier to move them around.



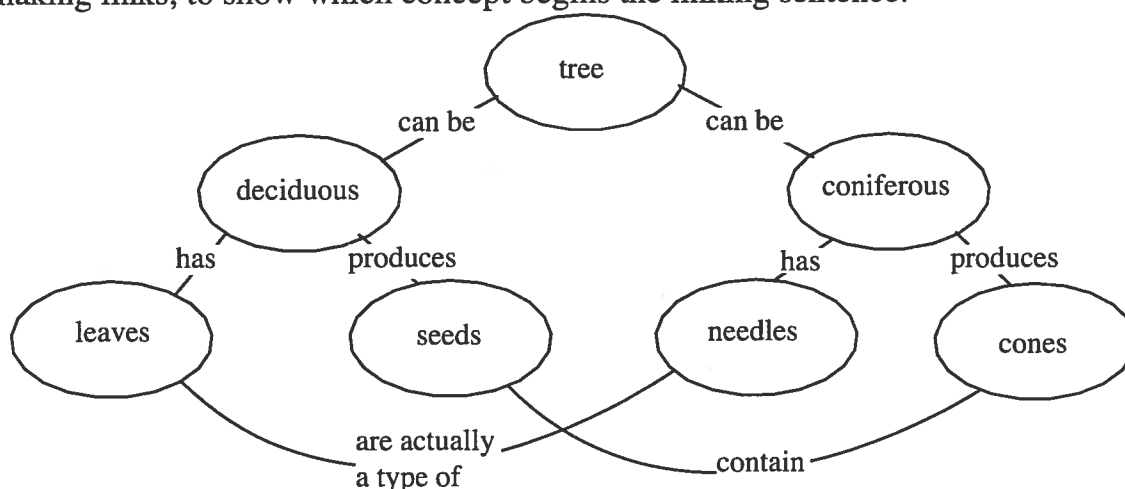
5 Link the concepts together so that each pair of concepts forms a short sentence. You might start with "Trees can be deciduous", for example.



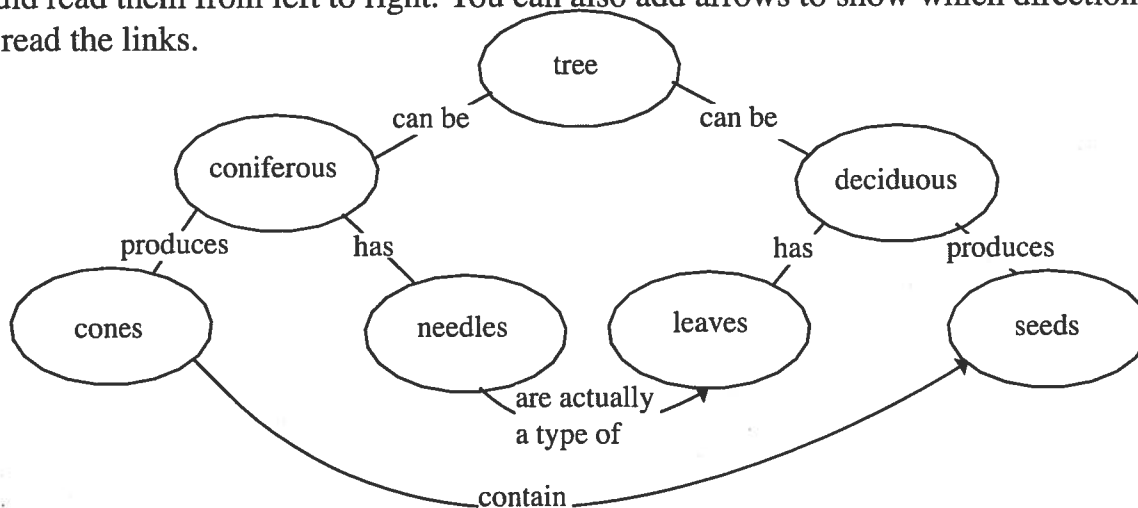
- 6 Continue to link the concepts. Each pair that is linked should form a short, complete sentence. In the tree example, all the concepts have been linked at least once to another concept, using linking words. There are always other possible ways to make links---the choice of concepts and links make each map unique!!



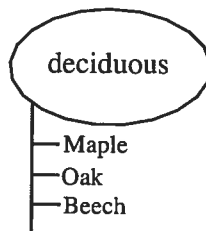
- 7 Next you should look for places where you can make cross-links. These are linking words that join concepts that may seem unrelated at first. In our tree example, a few cross-links have been added to point out something about leaves, needles, seeds and cones. You can also add arrows when making links, to show which concept begins the linking sentence.



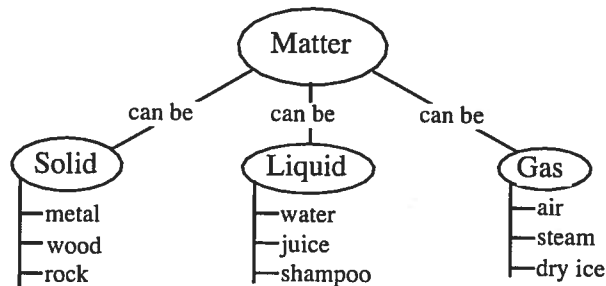
- 8 As you work, you may find that the concepts need rearranging so that the map makes more sense. In the example, the cross-links would make more sense if the lines did not cross, and if you could read them from left to right. You can also add arrows to show which direction you should read the links.



9 Finally, you can add examples of concepts to your map.



Examples can help to make a map more understandable. For example, look at part of this map about matter:



To get good at concept mapping, you have to practice. In this activity, you will work with a partner. You will need small slips of paper, a pencil, and your best thinking! Although you may not think you are an expert at anything, there is one subject you know a lot about--school!! The following list of concepts all have something to do with school. Your job is to put them together into a concept map that shows your knowledge (and opinions) about school. Use this booklet as a guide, but if you are not sure, ASK!

The concepts, in no order, are: **homework, teachers, marks, school, recess, students, soccer, classes, science, fun, tests.**

Have fun, and be creative!

Reference

Barlow, R., based on Novak, J. & Gowin, D., "Learning How to Learn", 1984, Cambridge University Press