

## CREATIVITY TOOL: DOING A MIND MAP

Mind Mapping is a great approach for recording and organizing ideas. It also expands the mental resources available in thinking, summarizing facts, and in generating new ideas. It works better than list making or outlining, because a Mind Map contains more information and shows relationships better than an outline. It also helps in overcoming mental blocks. A Mind Map makes “mental hooks” available for each idea that make it possible to “pull up” related ideas.

### Basic Approach

1. **Write your focal word** or phrase in the center of a blank (unruled) page. This focal concept will be your starting point, so choose it carefully – the simpler, the better!
2. **Print key words around your focal word** to represent key thoughts triggered by the focal concept, and connect the key words to the focal idea with lines (preferably curved lines – don’t get too linear!). (**Tip:** Writing single words or very short phrases will generate more “hooks” than writing a sentence or specific statement. For example, if the focal word is “motivation”, the initial branches surrounding it might be named “causes”, “effects”, “problems”, “improvements”, “role models”, etc.)
3. **Let ideas flow out of the central focus** and if possible, make each conceptual “branch” a different color. As you generate each idea, print your “branch words” around it. Print everything that comes to mind, even if it doesn’t connect to a branch right away. Sometimes this may take you down a sidetrack not directly related to the focal idea, but that’s okay! It’s more important to go for quantity and get ideas down than to analyze the strength of each connection. Generating novel connections is what Mind Mapping is all about! Remember: The goal of Mind Mapping is to fill the “conceptual space” of the problem or challenge at hand by generating connections. In this sense, Mind Maps can’t be “wrong,” only more or less complete.
4. More tips:
  - Keep moving! Don’t stop to judge or evaluate: leave your mind as free as possible
  - Colors are good! Sometimes changing colors will take you in a new direction. Use different colors for different branches of your map.
  - Try for a single word or very short phrase on a line: the word “customer” will generate more “hooks” for other ideas than the phrase “Our Grand Rapids customer who buys our commercial product line.”
  - Use little pictures and cartoon figures, especially when you feel blocked. Sometimes the right brain will generate an image before the left brain can pull up the right word. You can always add a key words to the picture later. Pictures and symbols will generate more ideas than words. Below are examples, but you can invent your own!

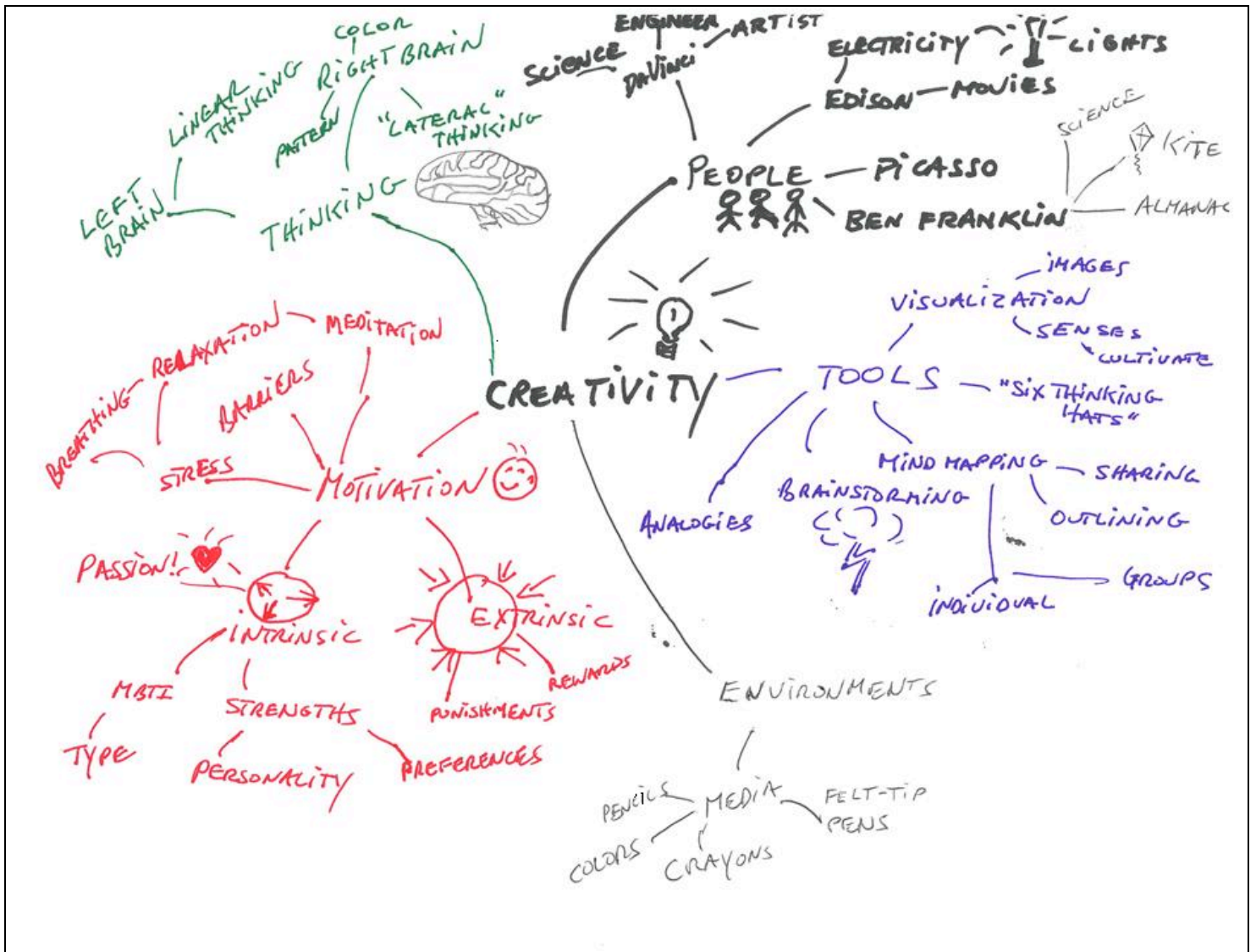


**Include Shapes and Creative Icons Like This in Your Map!**

For more information, check out the website of Mind Map inventor Tony Buzan, or do a Google image search on the keyword “Mind Map”:

<http://www.mind-mapping.co.uk/make-mind-map.htm>

**See next page for a sample Mind Map.**



Mind Map Of Concept Of "Creativity."

**The Da Vinci Variation**

This is a Mind Map variation suggested by Leonardo Da Vinci's technique of free association drawing as described in Michalko's book *Thinkertoys* (Ten Speed Press) pp. 263-267. In this variation, after you've written your focal word on the page, start by making only drawings (pictures, symbols, icons, stick figures, or whatever) in a circle around the focal word. This shuts down the left-brain and allows the right brain to suggest idea images. Next, connect these images with a line to the focal idea, develop a keyword for each image, then proceed to create idea branches as in regular Mind Mapping.