

Thinking Maps are powerful tools to help you gather ideas and arrange information as you prepare to write for any occasion or purpose. Eight different maps reflect the types of thinking processes we may use at any given point. Choosing a map that best allows you to complete a writing task will strengthen your ability to generate and evaluate the quality commentary and concrete details required for your writing.

Circle Map

Thinking Process: Defining in Context

*How are you defining this
“thing” or idea?*

What is the context?

*What is your frame of
reference?*

The Circle Map is used for **brainstorming ideas** and for showing **prior knowledge** about a topic by providing context information. In the center circle use words, numbers, pictures, or any other sign or symbol to **represent** the object, person, or idea you are trying to understand and **define**. In the outside circle write or draw any information that puts this “thing” in **context**.

Bubble Map

Thinking Process: Describing Qualities

*How are you describing
this “thing”?*

*Which adjectives would
best describe this “thing”?*

The Bubble Map is used for **describing using adjectives** (and adjective phrases). Unlike the Circle Map which is used for brainstorming, the Bubble Map is a tool for **enriching [one’s] ability to identify qualities and use descriptive words**. In the center circle, write the word or “thing” being “qualified.” In the outside “bubbles” write in adjectives and / or adjective phrases to describe something.

More Thinking Maps®

Double Bubble Map

Thinking Process: Comparing and
Contrasting

*What are the similar and
different qualities of these
“things”?*

*What qualities do you most
value? Why?*

The Double Bubble Map is a tool for comparing and contrasting “things.” In the center circles, write the words for two “things” being investigated. In the middle “bubbles” use adjectives, adjective phrases and other terms that show similarity between the two “things.” In the outside bubbles, as connected respectively to the two “things,” write the words that describe their different qualities.

Tree Map

Thinking Process: Classifying

*What are the main ideas,
supporting ideas, and
details in this information?*

The Tree Map is used for **classifying** “things” and ideas. On the top line write the category name, on the second level of lines the sub-categories, and below each sub-category write the specific members.

Brace Map

Thinking Process: Part-Whole

*What are the component
parts and subparts of this
whole physical object?*

The Brace Map is used to **analyze physical objects**. On the line to the left write the name of the whole object. On the lines within the first brace to the right, write the major parts of the object, then follow within the next set of braces with the subparts of each major part.

The Final Thinking Maps®

Flow Map

Thinking Process: Sequencing

What happened?

What is the sequence of events?

What are the sub stages?

The Flow Map is used for **sequencing and ordering information**. In the outside rectangle write the name of the event, or sequence. In the larger rectangles – flowing from left to right – write in the major stages of the event, and in the smaller rectangles below, write in the substages of each major stage.

Multi-Flow Map

Thinking Process: Cause and Effect

What are the causes and effects of this event?

What might happen next?

The Multi-Flow Map is used for **showing and analyzing cause and effect relationships**. In the center rectangle, write in an important event that occurred. On the left side of the event, write in the causes of the event, and on the right side, write in the effects of the events. As you identify more causes and effects add them to the map.

Bridge Map

Thinking Process: Seeing Analogies

What is the analogy being Used?

What is the guiding metaphor?

The Bridge Map provides a tool for applying the process of seeing analogies. On the line to the far left, write in the **relating factor**. The relating factor is the similar phrase that fits both sides of an analogy. On the top and bottom of the left side of the bridge, write in the first pair of “things” that have this relationship. On the right side of the bridge, write in the second pair of relationships that have the same relationship. The line of the bridge represents the relating factor that is “bridged over” from one side of the analogy to the other