

Studying with Mind Maps

Why do mind maps work?

Structure reduces cognitive overload: breaking big topics into branches (chunking) lowers cognitive load and helps you see the whole system.

Dual coding: words and simple visuals (branches, colours, etc.) create multiple memory pathways including recall.

Connections: branches make relationships (e.g. cause and effect, classification, identifying process) explicit, which aids understanding and analysis of topics.

Active retrieval: redrawing mind maps from memory, or using mind maps as a blurting technique, is a fast way to self-test for weak spots before exams.

When should you use mind maps?

- Lectures or readings with many subtopics
- Problem-heavy courses
- Essay exams
- Before exams to compress notes into smaller systems to rehearse from memory

Mind Map Steps

- 1) Write the central topic in the middle
- 2) Add the first level of branches for major categories. Use key words instead of full sentences.
- 3) Attach keywords (not sentences) to each branch. Add sub-branches and repeat until all content is represented
- 4) Use icons/colour sparingly
- 5) Finish with a 30-second scan to spot gaps; star the weakest branches to revisit

Your Mind Map:

