Topic Development: Concept Mapping

Concept mapping is a way to organize and represent knowledge visually. It can help you brainstorm ideas for your writing, summarize and organize what you already know about a topic, and examine relationships between ideas. A concept map allows you to understand complex information or ideas “at a glance,” and is a useful tool to help you find an interesting topic for your paper. Concept maps can help writers narrow their topic from something broad like “obesity” to a more specific research question(s) such as “What are the societal influences that lead to obesity in American children, and what steps should we take toward prevention?”

Here’s an example of a concept map on the broad topic of ‘vegetarianism’:

Jim Kinnie, University of Rhode Island [http://www.uri.edu/library/staff_pages/kinnie/lib120/vegmap.gif](http://www.uri.edu/library/staff_pages/kinnie/lib120/vegmap.gif)

Technology to Support Concept Mapping

- [https://www.mindmeister.com/](https://www.mindmeister.com/)
- [https://www.mindomo.com/](https://www.mindomo.com/)
- [http://mind42.com/](http://mind42.com/)
- [https://coggle.it/gallery](https://coggle.it/gallery)
- [https://bubbl.us/](https://bubbl.us/)

Adapted from [https://www.lib.washington.edu/teaching/examples/bcusp135/rwj3](https://www.lib.washington.edu/teaching/examples/bcusp135/rwj3)
Your Concept Map

Get started by watching this YouTube video on concept mapping: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KhgxuNvbNrA

Now you’ll create a concept map as a way to organize the thinking you’ve done so far, and to brainstorm ideas about your topic. Using the space below, start by placing your initial topic in the center—this is the “you are here” that represents the beginning of your research. Near this central topic write subquestions and subtopics. Around your central topic, write important concepts, questions, issues, people, and events. Draw lines or branches between related keywords/phrases and your topic, showing the relationship between items.