

Mind Mapping and Memorising techniques

1 Mind Mapping

The Mind Map technique is used in a wide variety of areas, but its prime application can still be found in memorising through correct classifications and visualisation. It is a form of ‘radiant thinking’ (Buzan with Buzan, 2006) which builds on the working of the brain by drawing and mapping information through networks of interconnected keywords – in much the same vein as neurons in the brain interconnect information. Using keywords instead of whole sentences – after which they are organised in hierarchies – is the most effective way of memorising and storing information (Kersbergen, 2007). Some books (cf. Parker with Stone, 2003) even use ‘bookmaps’ to help students understand and memorise their texts better. Big companies like Boeing or BP also increasingly make use of Mind Maps (Buzan with Buzan, 2006). Note-taking using mind maps is an increasingly common technique. Additionally ‘speed-learning’ is becoming popular. This technique combines Mind Mapping with speed reading (⊕C11). Four characteristics define a Mind Map:

- The subject or central theme is in the middle of the map
- The branches connected to this central subject are the main themes
- The further you are away from the central theme, the less important the information is to the central theme
- All the branches are identified by keywords or key notes. The branches take the form of a neural structure.

2 Skimming

Many students create problems because they - unknowingly - study mainly with their medium-term memory (MTM). At secondary school knowledge was automatically transferred to the short-term memory (STM). The teacher performed an important function in this process by structuring and repeating material. At university you have to do this yourself by including time for repetition in your weekly schedule every third day, and by allowing time to digest the material. Even with completely new material you start by asking yourself questions on the basis of the book’s contents (⊕C3) for example. Skim through the book, look at the source: note technical terms, headings and tables and figures. By being inquisitive, you activate your long-term memory (LTM), particularly the third department. When you begin to read in detail, keep the original questions in mind. At the end of each paragraph, summarise what you have read, think about new questions, which contributes to the expansion of the catalogue in your third department. Ask yourself whether there are other theories, what presumptions there might be with this approach and what other applications could be relevant. These activities do not have to take much time and your interest could grow (⊕C5).

3 SQ3R

The SQ3R technique is an active reading approach to store the information in the medium and long-term memory. It specifies the five steps students can go through when reading a text: (1) Survey (getting a general idea of the content). (2) Question (ask what a text is about: who, what, when, where, why and how). (3) Read (while marking keywords). (4) Recite or Recall (try to recall what has been read e.g. on the basis of mind maps). (5) Review (flip through the text and check whether all questions from step 2 have been addressed).

4 Note-taking

Two approaches to note-taking can be adopted: linear and pattern notes. When reading a book, they can serve as memory aids. When used as a technique during an interview (⊕D3) they serve as the most important input for the interview transcript and ultimately the

research report. Linear note-taking can focus on (1) quotes, (2) summary (in your own words) or (3) outline (main structure). Depending on the aim of the notes, all three techniques can be combined. Outlines can also be drawn as a pattern. The more you do this applying a graphical Mind Map, the more you might consider using a specialised technique: Mind Map Organic Study Technique (MMost).

[www.skillsheets.com for more detailed information on these techniques, examples and exercises]