

Tool 7: Mind mapping tool

Phase	All phases, starting with phase 1
Sub-phase	
Name of tool	Mind mapping
Objective	Mind mapping is used to organize and explore ideas in a transparent and participative manner
Total time spent on this tool	Time taken can range from a few minutes to a 1-hour session, depending on the context.
Under which circumstances to use the tool	The tool is useful to generate creative ideas, structure thinking, plan activities and to organize material after a brainstorming session. It can be used to organise information connected to SWOT analysis and problem tree analysis. It can also be used to map out the whole planning process (see figure 1).
Main actor(s) responsible	Mind mapping can be used by the planning team and is very useful in participative sessions with a wider group of stakeholders.
Target / beneficiary	All those involved in the planning team and planning process can benefit from greater clarity and seeing clear linkages between activity areas.
Description of tool	<p>A mind map is a way to show and explore connections in a hierarchical manner. The starting point is the key issue being addressed. From this lines are drawn to the next level of activities or factors, and then the process is repeated. This is illustrated in figure 1. For example, a problem tree could be drawn with boxes for causes and effects. Each of these groups would then be subdivided. A SWOT analysis can also use a mind map to explore causes and effects related to the factors influencing desired outcomes.</p> <p>A mind map can be built in many ways from a drawing on a piece of paper, though participative processes using cards to stand-alone and group access software. Software references are given in the references section. The description here assumes using a computer or tablet based app, but the principles are the same as using pen and paper or cards.</p> <p><u>Step 1</u>: Put the key issue or objective in the centre</p> <p><u>Step 2</u>: Put down the main components or groups of factors or actions (depending on the subject)</p> <p><u>Step 3</u>: from each of these repeat the action – resulting in a hierarchy of ideas. It is good to work quickly, capture ideas and</p>

	<p>later come back and organize.</p> <p><u>Step 4</u>: Re-organise the ideas as appropriate. In software versions it is very easy to expand and contract branches and drag groups to new locations.</p> <p><u>Step 5</u>: Use the mind map to communicate and discuss ideas (it is useful to use a projector for this, if available). It can also be used to structure ideas for a report.</p>
<p>Advantages and disadvantages of this tool</p>	<p><u>Advantages (+)</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> + Stimulates thinking and organizing thoughts + Simple to use + Can be used solo and in groups + Makes ideas and assumptions transparent + Links well with other tools + Can be used with and without software + Software is easily and freely available + Documentation of results is easy to do <p><u>Disadvantages (-)</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – May seem abstract to those unused to the idea (it is a matter of taste)
<p>Related tools</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ SWOT analysis ▪ Problem tree analysis ▪ SMART objectives ▪ Logical Framework ▪ Gantt chart

References and further resources

Generally accessible documents:

Serrat, O. (2009) [Drawing mind maps](#). *Knowledge Solutions*, no. 40, 3 p.

Software

A web search will provide many sources. The following list gives some examples.

Free software includes:

Freemind (Windows)

Mindmeister (IOS and Android) – can be used to a limited extent free. Useful for shared access.

Paid software includes Xmind and MindManager (Windows and Mac). Mindmanager is very powerful and links to project management, but is expensive.

iThoughts (IOS and Mac)

SimpleMind (Android)

Academic documents (access may be limited):

Buzan, T and Buzan, B. (1995) *The mind map book*, London, BBC Books.