

Concept mapping

What is it?

Concept mapping is a tool that can be used for brainstorming, organizing information, creating a visual representation of material, and whatever else can be imagined! This tool is provided free online by a few sites, my favorite being <http://bubbl.us/edit.php>.

Who's doing it?

Teachers in many disciplines can use this tool, from English, to social studies, to the sciences. Anyone who needs to brainstorm can use this tool to create a map of topics and how they are related. It even lets you move and change the bubbles attachment after the bubble has been created. Perhaps it can be used as a scrambled timeline game for a history class, or a flow chart with missing pieces game for chemical reactions in the body. It might also be useful to science teachers to help convey concepts that happen in a specific order. For athletic training instructors and other medical professions, it may be useful in creating charts for differential diagnosis.

How does it work?

The first bubble is given. By clicking in the first bubble, you can enter text. Hitting enter or tab creates additional bubbles in the concept map. Enter creates a new level and tab creates another bubble within that level. During and after the creation of the map bubbles can be moved and reorganized. Each concept map created can be named and saved for later use. Links and images can also be created for sharing. Links can be to a read-only or editable map.

Why is it significant?

I think this tool is most significant as a visual organization tool, especially since it can be moved and rearranged after being created. It allows you to get each thought down and then put it into a useful order. This is especially helpful because the same map can be transformed from brainstorming to organizational mapping with by rearranging, adding, and deleting concepts created.

What are the downsides?

Regarding the web program, very little needs to be improved. In my use of the program, the only thing I wish I could do is change the shape of the bubbles. This may help me group a few additional bubbles into another category. More globally, concept mapping obviously doesn't apply to every lesson and is limited to lessons that incorporate flow or grouping, mostly.

Where is it going?

I think there are many uses for concept mapping that are utilized infrequently. It is traditionally considered a brainstorming tool, but it can go beyond that. It also can be used for more than just writing and English related subjects, as it is in this case as a flow chart for evaluations or as a diagram to help make a differential diagnosis.

What are the implications for teaching and learning?

Concept mapping can be used as an active learning activity in class where students actively take part in visually organizing information into categories and into a flow. Rather than a teacher providing them with the organized information, students can create their own connections and make the map meaningful and useful to them individually. Hopefully allowing each student to individualize the concept map and direct their own learning, the material can be internalized and each student can create a meaningful attachment to the concepts.

Example???

Check out the screencast on how to create a concept map using bubble.us!

<http://www.screencast.com/t/ODY2MzRiNGY>

<http://bubbl.us/edit.php>

The screenshot shows the bubble.us website interface. The main content area displays a concept map about cranial nerves. The map consists of several interconnected nodes, each containing a description of a cranial nerve's function. The nodes are connected by lines, forming a hierarchical and branching structure. The nodes include:

- the olfactory (factory) smellist
- abducens abducts
- and in the eyes
- trochlear looks up
- the oculo motors pupils and goes crosseyed
- the optic sees
- trigeminal chews and feels
- facial smiles and tastes
- glossopharyngeal swallows the taste
- vestibulocochlear listens and walks the line
- accessory shrugs it off
- and vagus swallows the gag
- and hypoglossal sticks out the tongue

The interface also shows a sidebar on the right with options like 'Editing cranial nerves', 'Save', 'New', 'Load', 'Rename', 'Delete', and 'Sharing'. The bottom of the page features a 'Menu' button and a 'donate with PayPal' button.