



# How to Mindmap

Are you interested in improving your planning? How about generating ideas or having an overview of something you're working on - for life, for work, even for school? This simple device can even improve your memory!

## Lists v maps

I'm a great one for making lists. I always have one for the supermarket so I don't stray into the 'aisles of temptation'. Lists are a useful tool, but

- They don't help us to think creatively
- They don't encourage us to group our ideas into similar themes
- They don't enable us to expand our thinking
- They don't push us to drill down into greater detail
- They're not memorable

They are perfectly ok in some situations, but they can be limiting.

So how is mind-mapping different?

## Benefits of mind-mapping

- It spreads your thinking out
- It encourages you to think of more and more ideas, with one idea sparking another, and another
- It helps you to leave no stone unturned when you're planning and you can add to it as things occur to you
- Nothing has to be 'in order'
- With the use of colour and images it makes things memorable
- A map on one side of A4 can summarise reams of notes and, written in a way that's meaningful to you, will give you a clear overview and be the perfect aide-memoire

When I was at school I was hopeless at revising. I would read the first paragraph again and again then I'd need a coffee, then something to eat and then maybe I would just catch up on that TV show before I started over.

I would make copious notes during lessons or in the library, but then when I came to revise I had no system, and trying to re-read fourteen pages of notes just sent me to sleep - How much simpler if I'd known about mind maps.

## How to create a mind map

The best way to learn is to try it out. So let's start with something easy - preparing for a holiday.

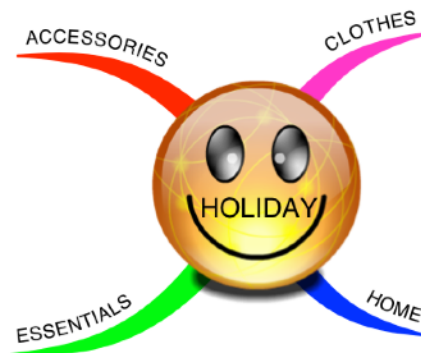
### Step 1

Draw a circle and write your main subject in the centre. HOLIDAY in this case.



### Step 2

Think of the main things that you need to think about when you're getting ready for a holiday, draw the branches as lines and write the headings on the lines.



For our example, we'll have just four main branches - you can always add more later if you think you need them. So let's say, Clothes, Accessories, Essentials and Home.

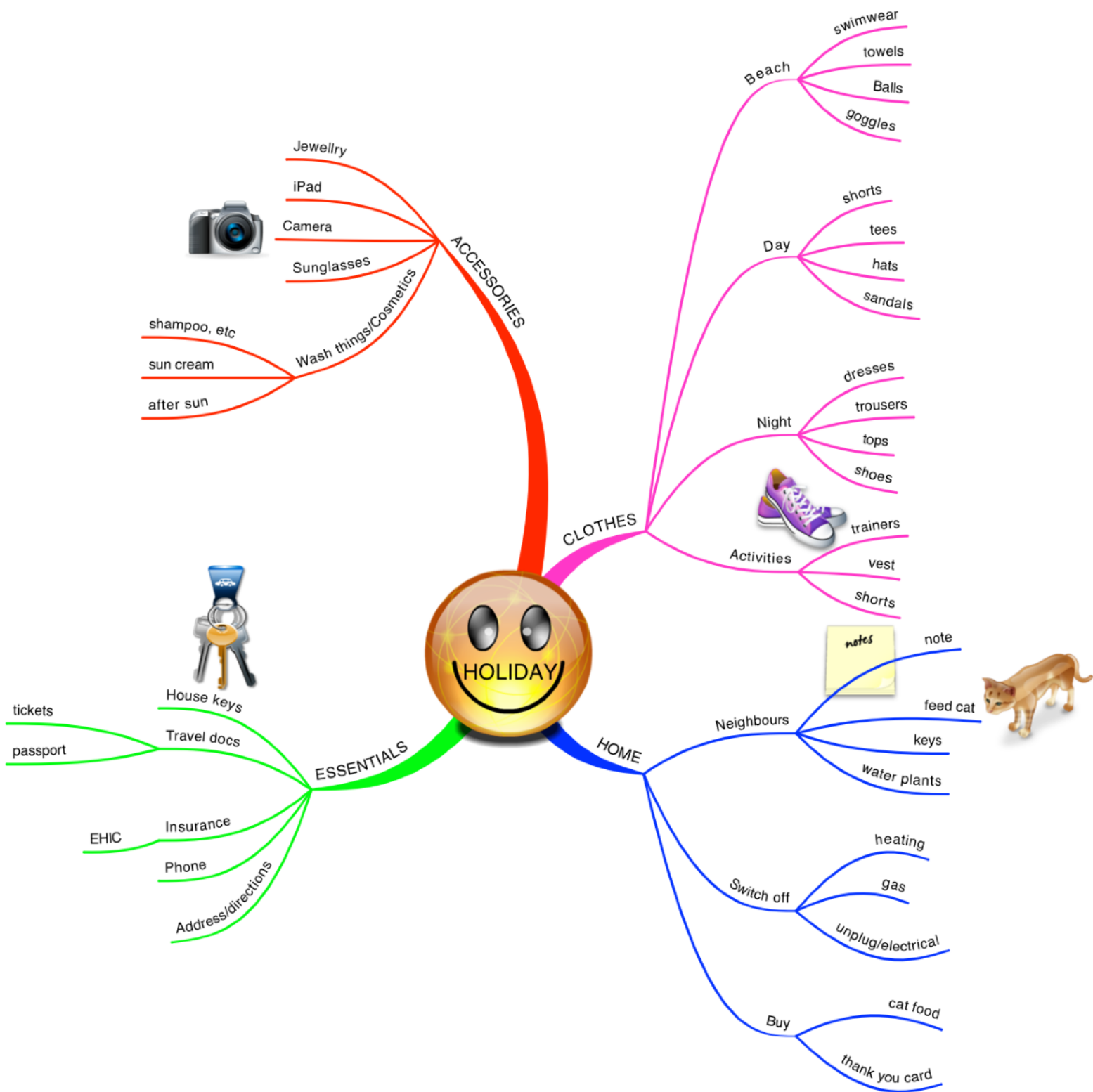
### Step 3

Now brainstorm everything you need to remember to do before you leave for holiday. As you come up with each idea, think about which branch it will be associated with.

For example you may want to let the neighbours know, so you would draw a line coming from the main branch Home, and write 'neighbours' on it.

From Essentials you may have further branches for 'passport', 'tickets', 'money'.

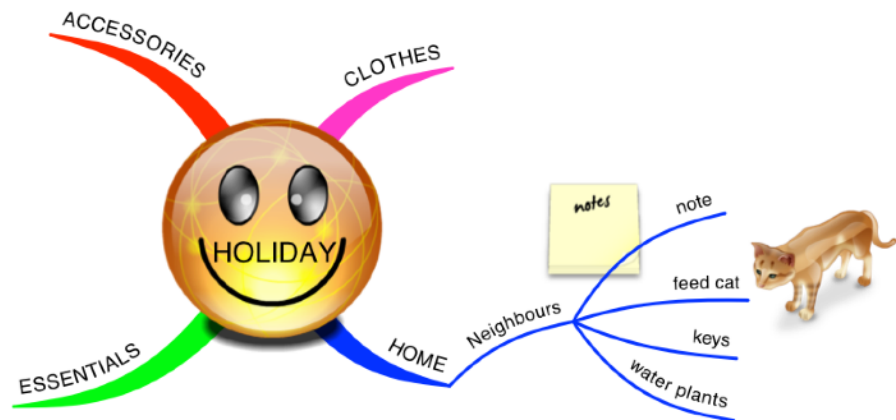
From Accessories, 'camera', 'sunglasses', 'iPod' and so on.



#### Step 4

Keep building out as one idea or thought sparks another.

For example you may decide that you're going to ask your neighbours to look after the cat, and while they're round at yours, water the plants.



So coming off your 'Neighbours' branch will be further small branches with 'feed cat', 'keys', 'water plants' and so on.

From your 'passport' line, you may have 'check date'.

From your 'camera' it may be 'charger', 'memory cards', you get the drift.

#### Step 4

Keep going till you've exhausted your ideas, then, if you have the opportunity, ask someone else to cast their eye over your map.

If they are going to benefit from the content of the map too, they will undoubtedly have something to add.

#### Step 5

Your mind map is a living document, so add to it as you think of things, and tick or cross anything off that is completed.

#### Step 6

Keep your mind map somewhere safe to use the next time you need it.

Now let's try something a little more work-related.

## So, we want to think about complaint handling in our business

### Step 1

Again, we'll start with our subject in the middle.



### Step 2

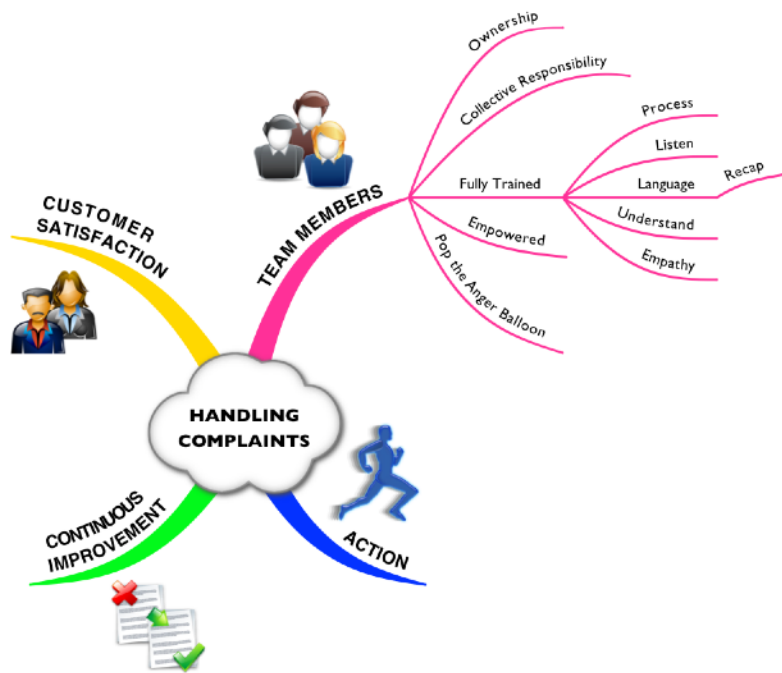
We'll think about our main themes and write them on our main branches.



### Step 3

We'll think about all of those areas that are related to our main branches, and add each idea as a sub-branch.

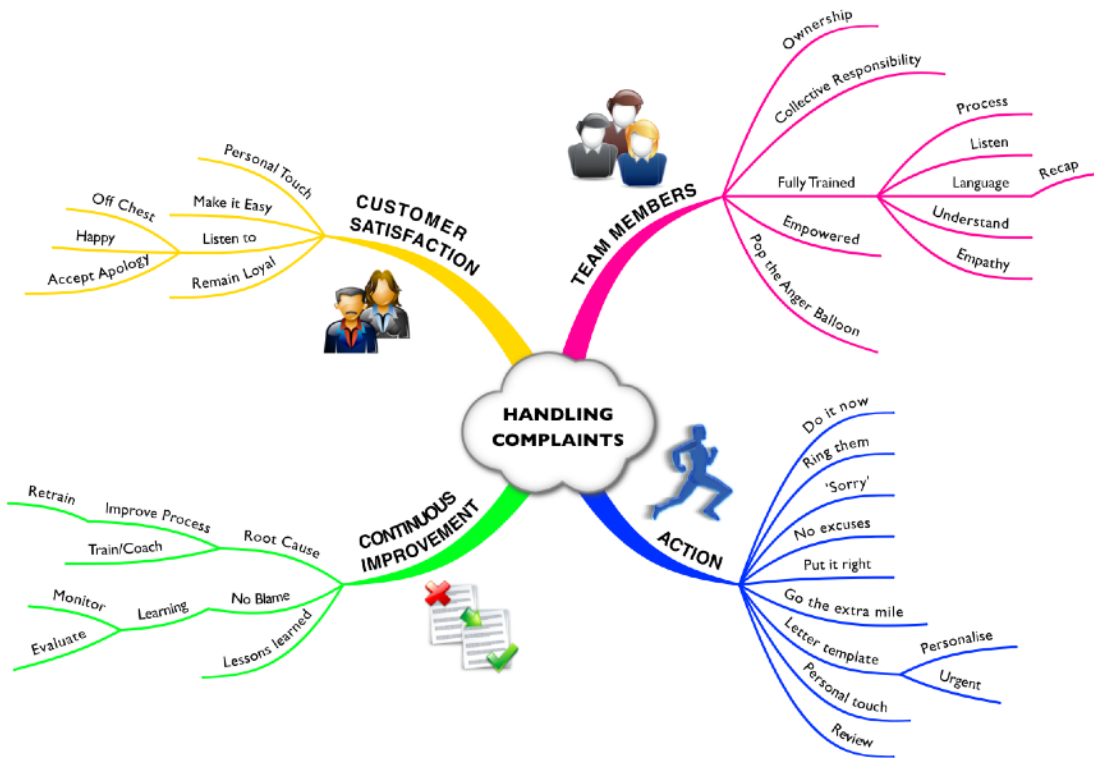
For example, to 'Team Members' we'll add 'ownership', 'listen', 'apologise' and so on.



### Step 4

We'll continue generating ideas, and adding them to the appropriate branch, or creating a new branch if a thought is unrelated to anything already on our map.

If we haven't involved the team in creating the mind map, we'll ask them to look at it now, and see if there is anything that they would add.



### Step 5

Once the whole team is happy that we have all of the essentials on our map, then we can begin to create a complaint handling system that delivers everything that we have agreed is important, confident that we will cover all the bases.

### Step 6

We'll file our mind map with copies of our new complaint handling procedures and templates, as the perfect reference document to keep us on track.

### Guidelines

- Strictly speaking each branch should just contain one word, but I would say make your map your own, whatever works for you.
- You can write your maps by hand or you can use computer programmes which make colour and images a whole lot easier.
- Remember what you are trying to achieve e.g. if you're planning your holiday the mindmap is more of a plan and aide-memoire, whereas if you're trying to create something that you will memorise, then images and colour are really effective.
- Use mindmaps as a creative idea generator, as in our example
- Use them to kick start your thinking whatever it is you're doing; they're quick, easy and addictive!

In summary:

