

Generate - Sort - Connect - Elaborate: Concept Map

Select a topic, concept or issue for which you want to map your understanding.

- **Generate** a list of ideas and initial thoughts that come to mind when you think about this topic or issue.
- **Sort** your ideas according to how central or tangential they are. Place central ideas near the centre and more tangential ideas toward the outside of the page.
- **Connect** your ideas by drawing connecting lines between ideas that have something in common. Explain and write in a short sentence how the ideas are connected.
- **Elaborate** on any of the ideas/ thoughts you have written so far by adding new ideas that expand, extend or add to your initial ideas.

purpose

This routine activates prior knowledge and helps to generate ideas about a topic. It also facilitates making connections among ideas. Concept maps help to uncover mental models of a topic in a non-linear way.

Synthesising
& Organising
Ideas

PURPOSE

What kind of thinking does this routine encourage?

This routine activates prior knowledge and helps generate ideas about a topic. It also facilitates making connections among ideas. Concept maps help to uncover mental models of a topic in a non-linear way.

APPLICATION

When and where can it be used?

Use this routine:

- As a pre-assessment to examine prior knowledge.
- To collectively generate a list of concepts/ topics studied, e.g. in Mathematics.
- As a post or ongoing assessment to see knowledge and understanding of topic/ concepts.

ASSESSMENT

How can I use this routine as an assessment?

Using this routine gives a wealth of assessment information about what learners know and how they see that knowledge related and connected to the whole.

- *Are students able to differentiate between key ideas and peripheral ones?*
- *Have they identified the most important ideas?*
- *The ways the ideas are elaborated gives an indication of the depth of learners' understanding.*
- *What sort of connections are they making?*
- *Look for connections that are more than obvious and show insights in the deep structure of the ideas.*

LAUNCH

What are the steps needed for starting and using this routine?

1. **Set up** → Explain purpose of a concept map as a way of showing one's thinking.
2. **Generate** → Generate a list of words, ideas, or aspects associated with the topic. This step is designed to produce an initial list of ideas.
3. **Sort** → Invite learners to sort ideas according to how central or tangential they are, placing central ideas near the centre and more peripheral ideas towards the outside. This often results in rich debating priorities.
4. **Connect** → Connect their ideas by drawing lines between ideas that share a connection and to briefly explain this connection by writing it out on the line.
5. **Elaborate** → Pick a few central ideas and elaborate upon them, creating subcategories that break the ideas into smaller parts.
6. **Share the thinking** → Learners pair up with another student or group to share concept maps. Focus discussion on the choices made in constructing the map and when there were debates or questions about placement or connections.

Adapted by Alice Vigors 2017