



# Presenting social policy material using mind-maps

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## What are mind maps?

A visual way of presenting information.

## Which courses/levels are you using them for?

Levels 2 and 3 currently, but they are a good way to present information at any level.

## How did you come to start using them?

I wanted a way of presenting information in a way that was easier for some students to grasp. I started to do this in various diagrammatic forms, and only later came across the term 'mind map'.

## Have you made changes in the process of developing the idea?

Initially I used them to present ideas/information, for example in a seminar. But I now use them in a variety of ways, such as to illustrate the way in which units in a degree link up and to try and illustrate that the units that students study are not isolated 'blocks'. Because they can be used to illustrate the links between levels as well as between units, they are a good way of helping students put their degree in context, and can help them think about using information across units. For instance, this can encourage them in applying theories and concepts learned in one unit to another.

Some of my students now also use mind maps as a way of developing a focus for their final level independent study. They start by putting all the aspects of a topic that they are interested in and the possible links to other potential areas for discussion on a piece of paper (usually far too many!). At this point they usually realise that it is impossible to cover all this and start to narrow the topic down, in order to give focus their study. They might do this by, for example, asking questions such as:

- What is it feasible to actually do given the timescale etc (size of study, methods etc)
- Which questions would I need to ask in order to fulfil the objectives of the study?
- Do I need to cover all the areas initially set out in order to fulfil my objectives?
- What can I cut out?

In this way they gradually cut out areas until they are hopefully left with a fairly specific area/question to address. A range of mind maps used in this way, can also be used to illustrate the way their thinking has progressed.

## Benefits to students

Particularly useful in demonstrating linkages, both within and between units/modules. The use of 'mind maps' to illustrate points and to demonstrate the overarching nature of the subject areas and the way in which the various components within degrees link up, enables students to take a broader view and can encourage more insightful work from those who are able to make these links.

## Benefits for the tutor?

Another way of presenting information and encouraging students to think. Seeing the students grasp information and develop new approaches to learning.

## Feedback

Student feedback is very positive. My experience is that once they learn about mind maps they then often start to apply this method elsewhere of their own accord, such as in their independent studies.



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