

MINDMAPPING AND BRAINSTORMING

This tip sheet shows a process for brainstorming a topic. Brainstorming is a thinking process for recalling what you know about a topic and is a preliminary step to making a mindmap.

Brainstorming

How to brainstorm

Write your topic on a piece of paper. Quickly write down anything that comes to mind – work freely. Write key words (see Figure 1). There is no need to categorise your information at this stage. Keep writing until you can't think of anything new.



Figure 1. An initial brainstorm

Organise the brainstorm

Next, go through all of your points. Cross out those that are not relevant or useful and take note of those that are most important for your topic. Look for connections between the ideas (see Figure 2). From this brainstorm, you can use the relevant points to develop a mindmap.

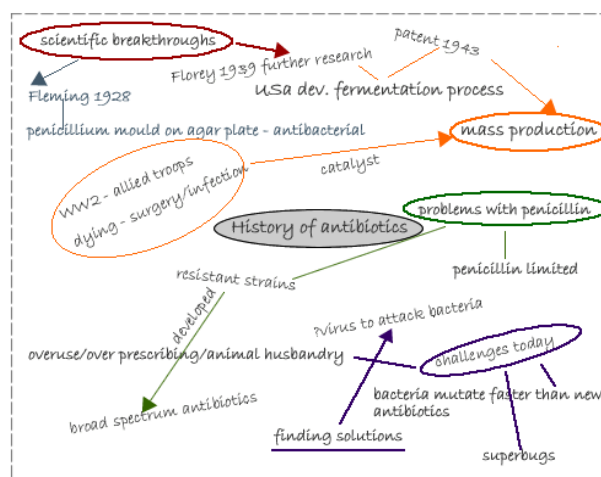


Figure 2. Organising the brainstorm

Mindmapping

Mindmapping is a visual representation of your thinking on a topic. It groups similar ideas together, helping to show the relationship between various points and ideas.

Drawing a mindmap involves gathering in all your ideas about a particular concept and organising them into a pattern that shows the relationships between the ideas. These are similar to concept maps, and the terms are sometimes used interchangeably. You can order information according to importance, comparison and contrast of different points, and show problem-solution and cause-effect relationships. Mindmaps let you see the big picture of a topic and make connections between details.

How to draw a mindmap

1. Write the topic in a circle in the centre of a piece of paper (in landscape orientation).
2. For each of the main points, draw arms out from the circle.
3. Write the key words of the main point along each arm or at the end.
4. Draw smaller arms out from the main arms and write the sub-points that relate to each main point. Continue with smaller arms if you have other points or examples for the sub-points.

Note: There is software available that can be used to create mindmaps or concept maps electronically.

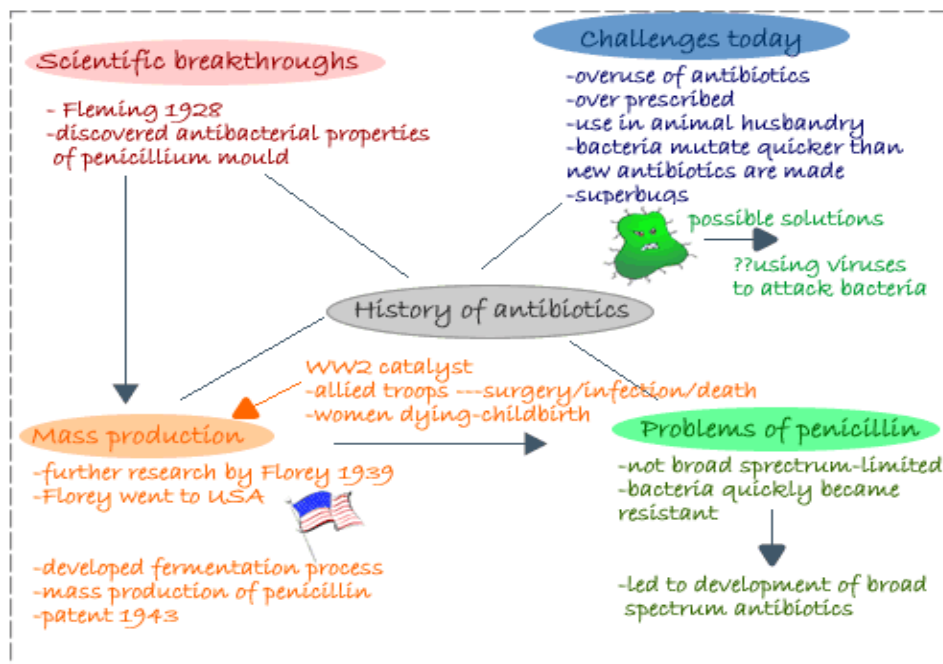


Figure 3. A mindmap

Uses for mindmaps

You can use mindmaps to help with various aspects of your study. Some examples include:

- using detailed mindmaps as tools for organising and planning assignments
- drawing more involved mindmaps complete with diagrams and colour as permanent records of topics or courses
- drawing quick, sketchy mindmaps to help you revise your last class or lecture
- preparing a mind map to revise a unit of work or study module for an exam
- using mindmaps to take notes in a lecture or while reading.