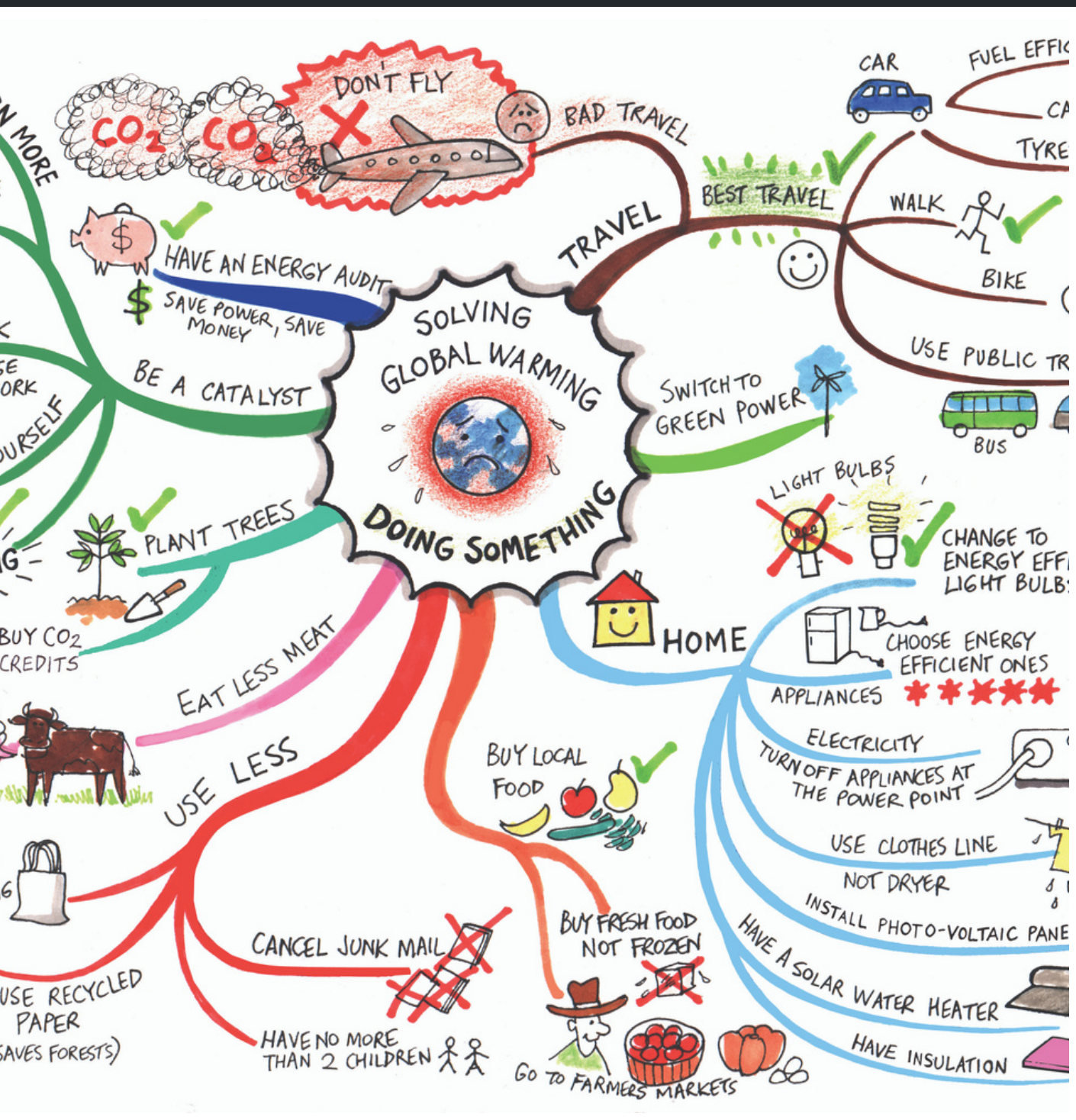




The mind mapper's TOOLKIT

BY DR JANE GENOVESE



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MY STORY



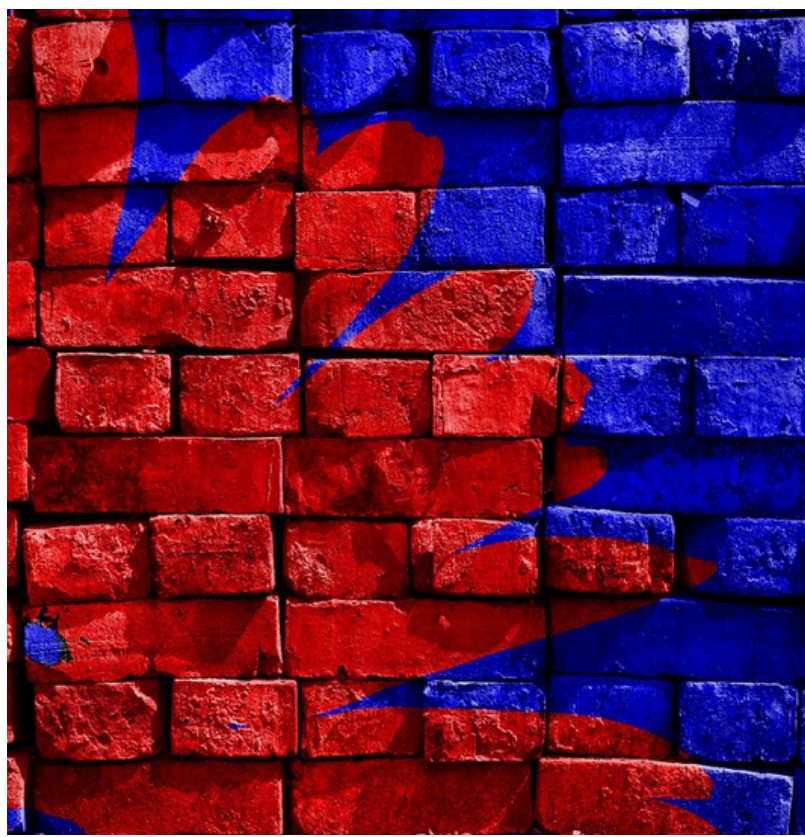
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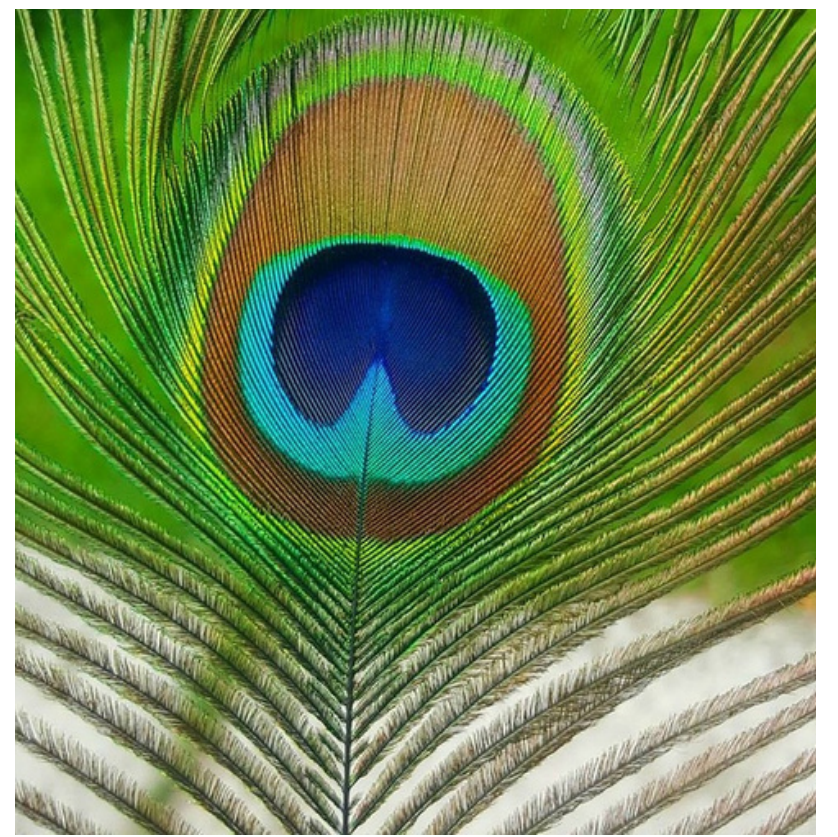
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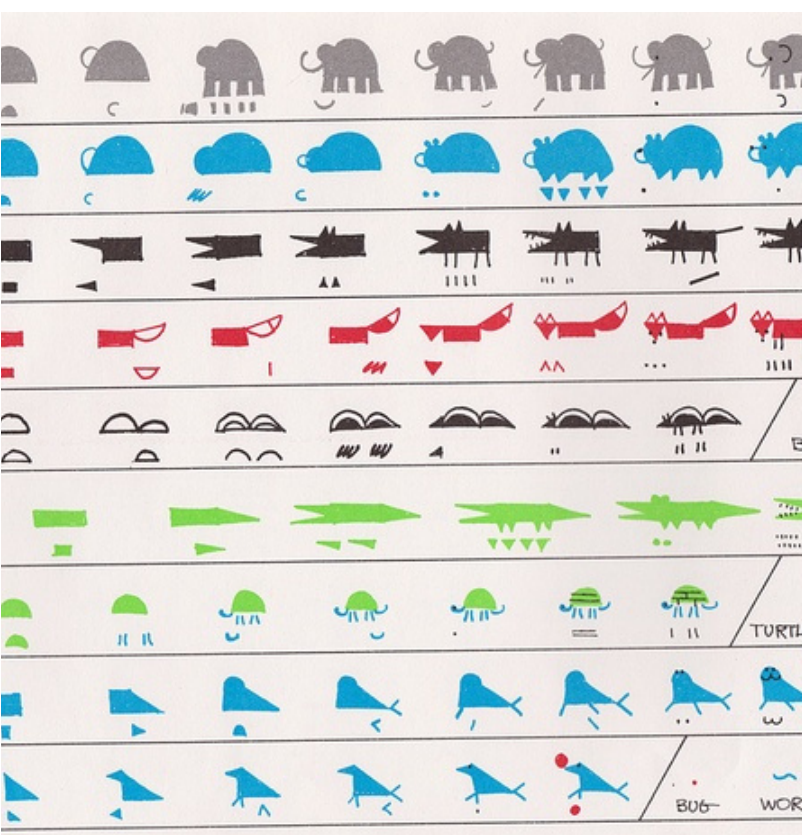
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THE LIFE CHANGING MAGIC OF MIND MAPPING

MY STORY: FROM EPIC FAILURE TO STUDY SUCCESS

How would you feel if you got 1 out of 20 (5%) for a test or exam? Upset? Embarrassed? This happened to me for my first test at university.

Still to this day I can remember the awkward feeling of taking the test, flipping through my books trying to find the answer to the question in front of me. I had no idea what I was doing.

I knew that I didn't get 5% because I was stupid. Walking out of that test I knew what was missing was an effective way to study. I had managed to get good marks in high school by rote learning. The problem was I never really understood what I was learning!

All of this changed when I learnt how to mind map at university.

In order to pass the unit and stay in law school, I had to do well in the final exam (it was worth 70% of my overall grade).

So here's what I did: I left my big textbooks at home and all I brought in to the final exam was a file of simple mind maps I had created.

Still to this day, I can remember the sense of calm and control I experienced while taking that exam. I had mastered the content. I understood it.

A few weeks later I got my exam paper back. I had passed with flying colours. I had survived my first semester of university.

That was 20 years ago.

So what's happened since then?

I went on to complete degrees in Law and Psychology, scored in the top 2% of my university, and was awarded a scholarship to do a PhD (which I completed in 2017). I am almost certain that without mind mapping I would not have made it through my university studies.

In this toolkit, I'm going to give you everything you need to create mind maps to help you master your subjects. Read on!

MY LAW SCHOOL MIND MAPS

JUST A SMALL SELECTION (I CREATED HUNDREDS MORE)



Art of smart study

BETHANY HIATT

Year 12 was not an enjoyable experience for Jane Genovese because she did not know how to study effectively, so she is determined to stop others making the same mistakes.

She found high school stressful and continually told herself she was stupid. It was only by trial and error that she found study techniques that helped her.

For the past four years, she has been running workshops in schools on goal setting, memory techniques, exam strategies and getting organised. She recently published a comic book on study skills called Smart Study.

Ms Genovese, 26, uses her personal story of failing her first assessment in her law and psychology course at Murdoch University, where her mind blanked and she achieved just 5 per cent, to inspire students.

“In high school, I thought the only way to study was reading my books over and over again,” she said. “I did quite well but it was a struggle. I spent hours reading books to the point that I ruined my eyesight. I have to wear glasses now just because I did not know how to study effectively.”

Even though she got into the course she wanted, she came very close to dropping out after that disastrous first test.

But learning mind-mapping and positive-thinking skills made all the difference. Last year, she graduated with first-class honours and is now working on a PhD.

Ms Genovese said excelling in exams was not just about learning and revising. Students also had to be able to retrieve easily and quickly the information they had stored away. Mind-mapping was the strategy which made the biggest difference to the way she learnt. Visualising information in a crazy, intertwined format and connecting it to something they already knew helped people retain it better.

“I was like a parrot. I could repeat all these facts but I never truly understood what I was studying,” she said. “I went from learning information at a superficial level to deeply understanding the ideas.”

Ms Genovese said many students had bad experiences with mind-mapping because it was often taught incorrectly. She led in by teaching students a simple technique in which they memorised a list of 10 words by connecting them to a rhyme. Mind-mapping did not work for everyone but she encouraged all students to experiment to find what worked best for them.



Jane Genovese runs workshops for students on exam study.

Picture: Dione Davidson

Students should also be aware that positive thinking was a big part of getting through Year 12. They should be careful about what they told themselves about their exams.

“A lot of them are telling themselves things like ‘I can’t do it, I’m going to panic, my mind is going to go blank, I’m not going to get into the uni course I want to do’,” she said. “And all of that is really just a waste of their energy. It can become a self-fulfilling prophecy and really get in the way of them just getting on doing the study they need to do.”

Procrastination was a huge barrier for most students. She recommended breaking tasks down into bite-sized chunks, so they didn’t feel overwhelmed.

Students also had to battle against the lure of distractions such as SMS messages on their phone or the social networking site Facebook.

“They find studying some of their subjects is really painful, so they are going to want to go on Facebook,” she said.

“For many students, it’s better to go

to an environment where there are none of those distractions.”

She also suggested that students wrote questions on flash cards with the answer on the back and then asked parents or friends to test them so they could practise retrieving information quickly.

It was important to take frequent breaks, likening students’ minds to the battery in their iPod or mobile phone — they went flat.

“Study for 45 minutes, then have a five or 10-minute break,” she said. “I recommend doing a bit of exercise. It doesn’t have to be going to the gym, just going outside, getting some fresh air.”

Students were probably under more pressure than they were when she was at school and faced more distractions. “I never had a mobile phone when I was going through high school,” she said. “I think it’s much harder for young people today.”

More information:

www.learningfundamentals.com.au

MAKING SENSE OF MIND MAPS

WHAT'S A MIND MAP?

AND WHY SHOULD I DO IT?



I'M SO GLAD YOU ASKED!

A mind map is a more visual way of taking notes and learning information. Mind maps contain words, colours, lines, and pictures.

Mind maps allow you to see the big picture and how different ideas are to connected to one another.

Mind maps can help clarify your thinking, simplify complex ideas, and memorise information more effectively.

Finally, mind maps allow you to be creative. This makes it easier for you stay engaged with the course content.

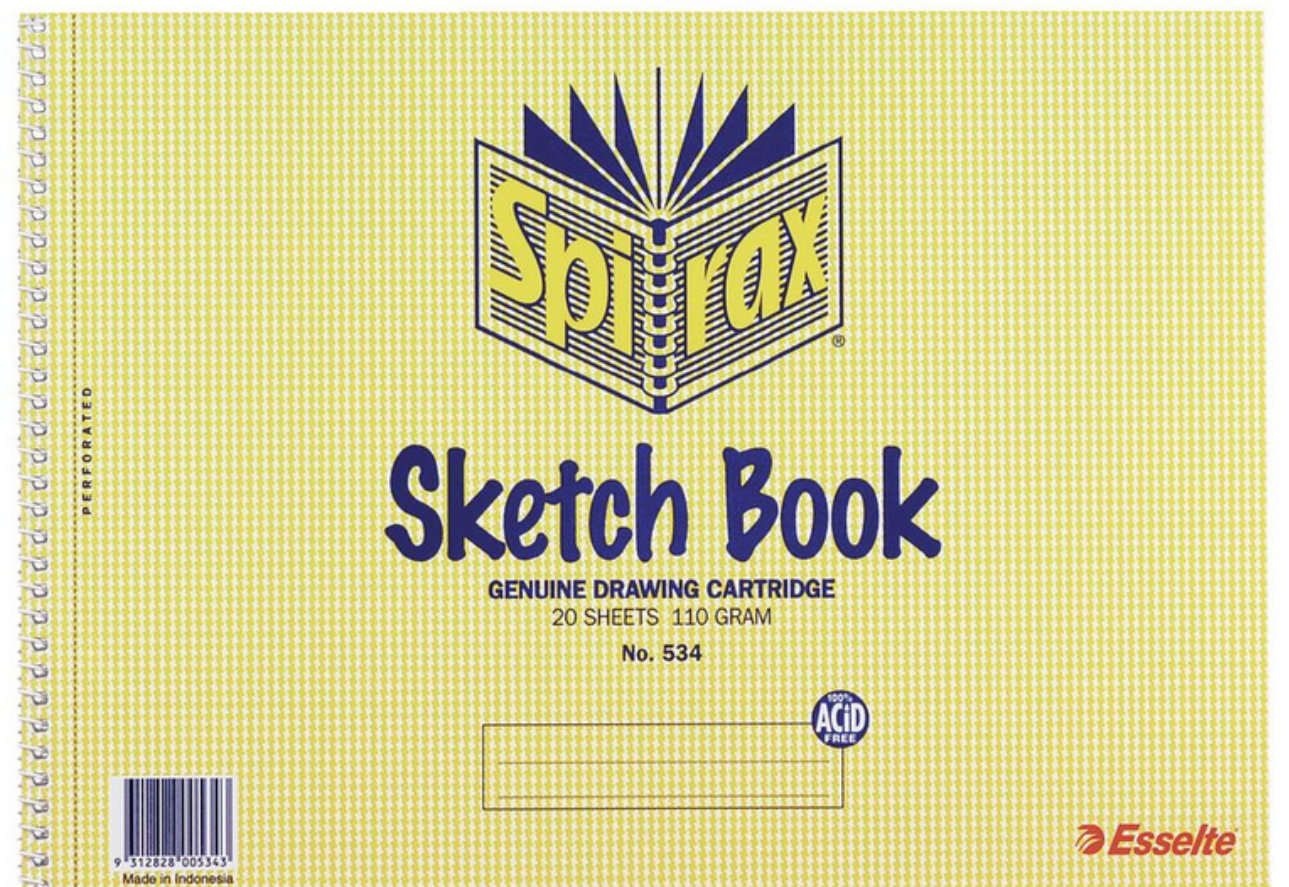
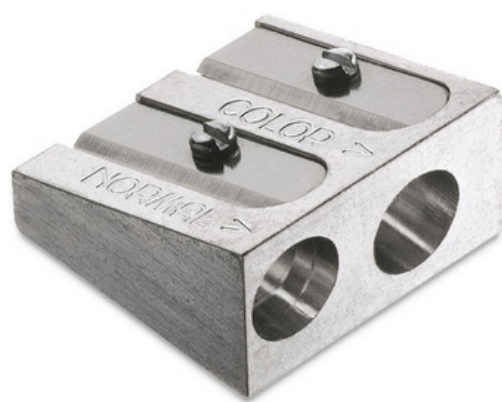
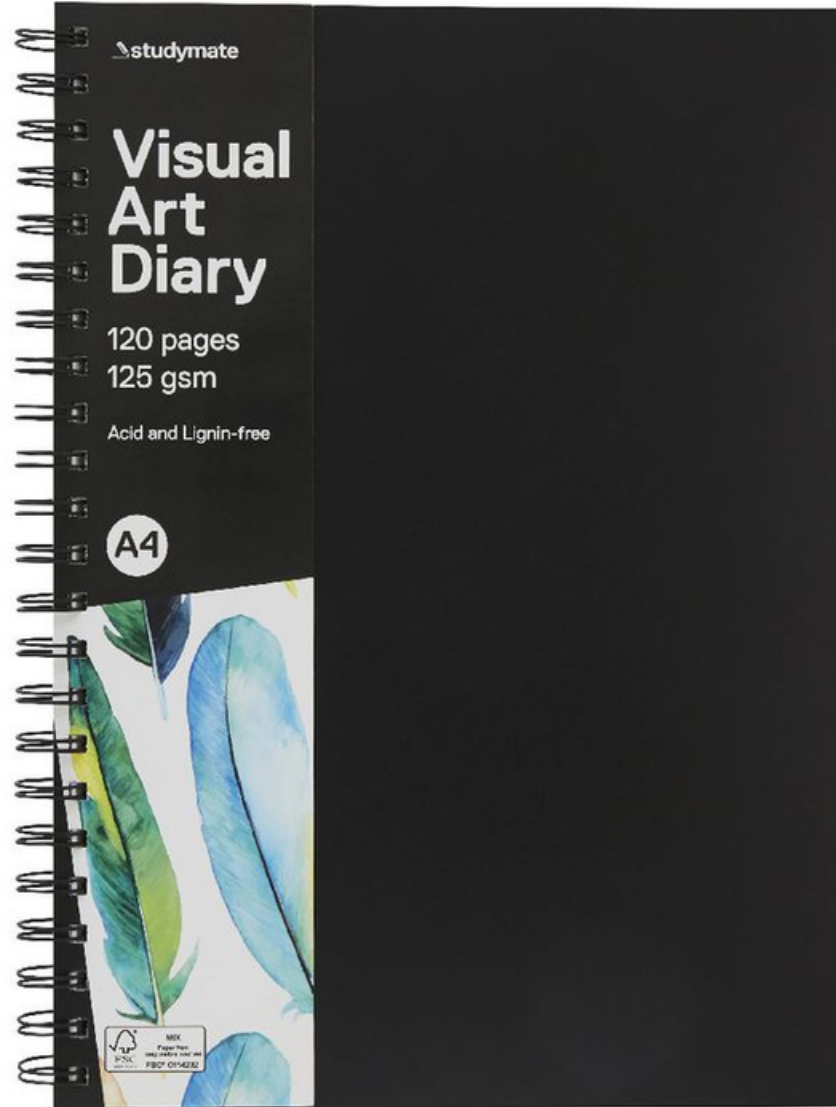
"HOW DO I CREATE A MIND MAP?"

It's easy and I'll show you how.
But first you need to grab a few tools.

BEFORE YOU GET STARTED

SET YOURSELF UP

SOME HANDY TOOLS TO GET THE JOB DONE



WARNING

THE DANGERS OF HAVING TOO MANY COLOURED PENS
AND FANCY STATIONERY



THE PARADOX OF CHOICE

I used to think having more pens meant more mind mapping. But it doesn't work like that.

A giant selection of pens in different shades of colour can look pretty. But it's a trap. Lots of pens will slow you down and stress you out.

Research has found too much choice results in stress and overwhelm.

Too much choice can lead to decision fatigue.

Fancy stationery may intimidate you and make it harder for you to start mind mapping.

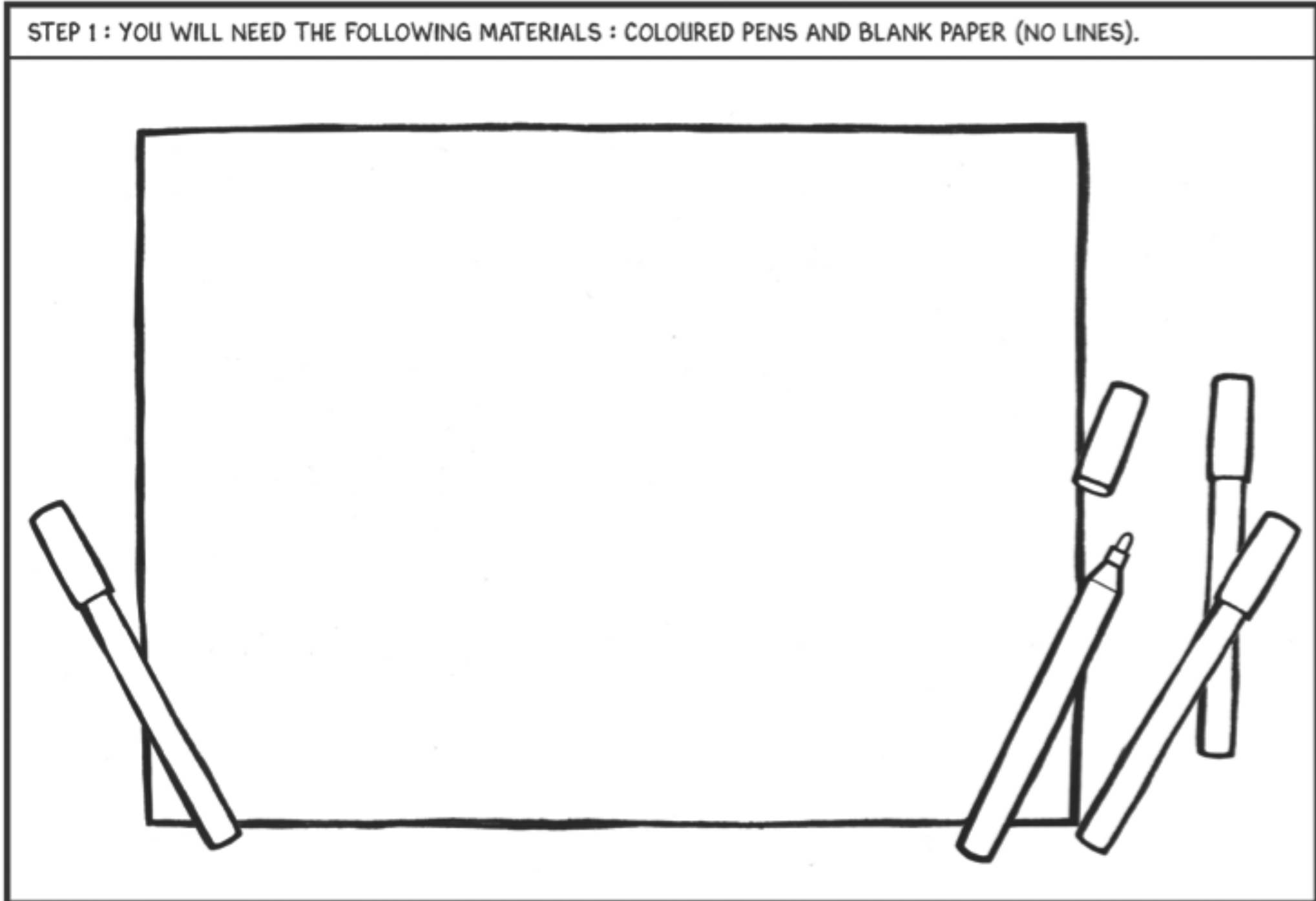


LIMIT YOUR PEN SELECTION TO NO MORE THAN 12 COLOURS. THE AIM IS TO SPEND MORE TIME MIND MAPPING AND LESS TIME STATIONERY SHOPPING.

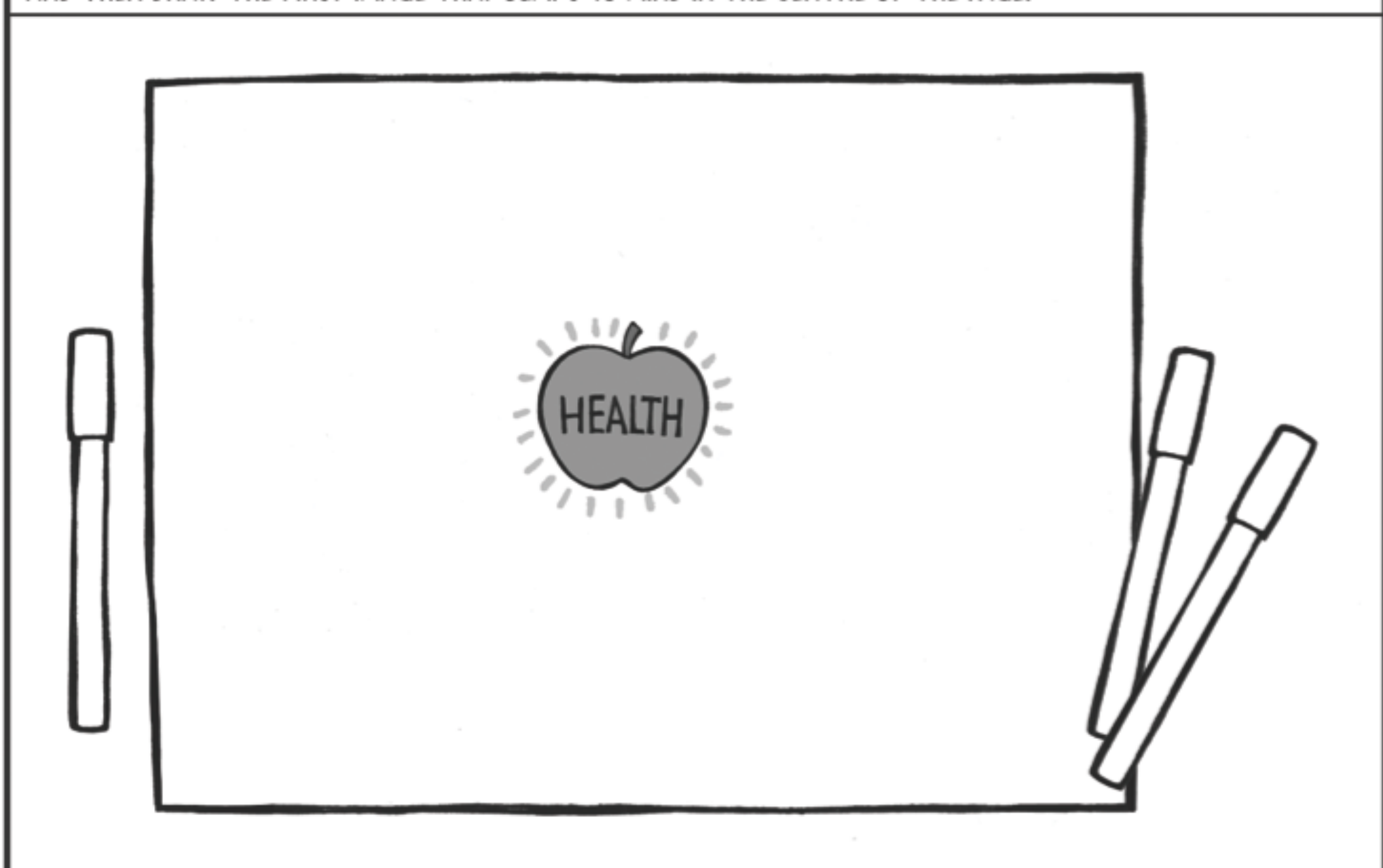
HOW TO MINDMAP

A STEP BY STEP PROCESS FROM MY BOOK
'SMART STUDY: HOW TO STUDY LESS AND GET MORE'

STEP 1 : YOU WILL NEED THE FOLLOWING MATERIALS : COLOURED PENS AND BLANK PAPER (NO LINES).



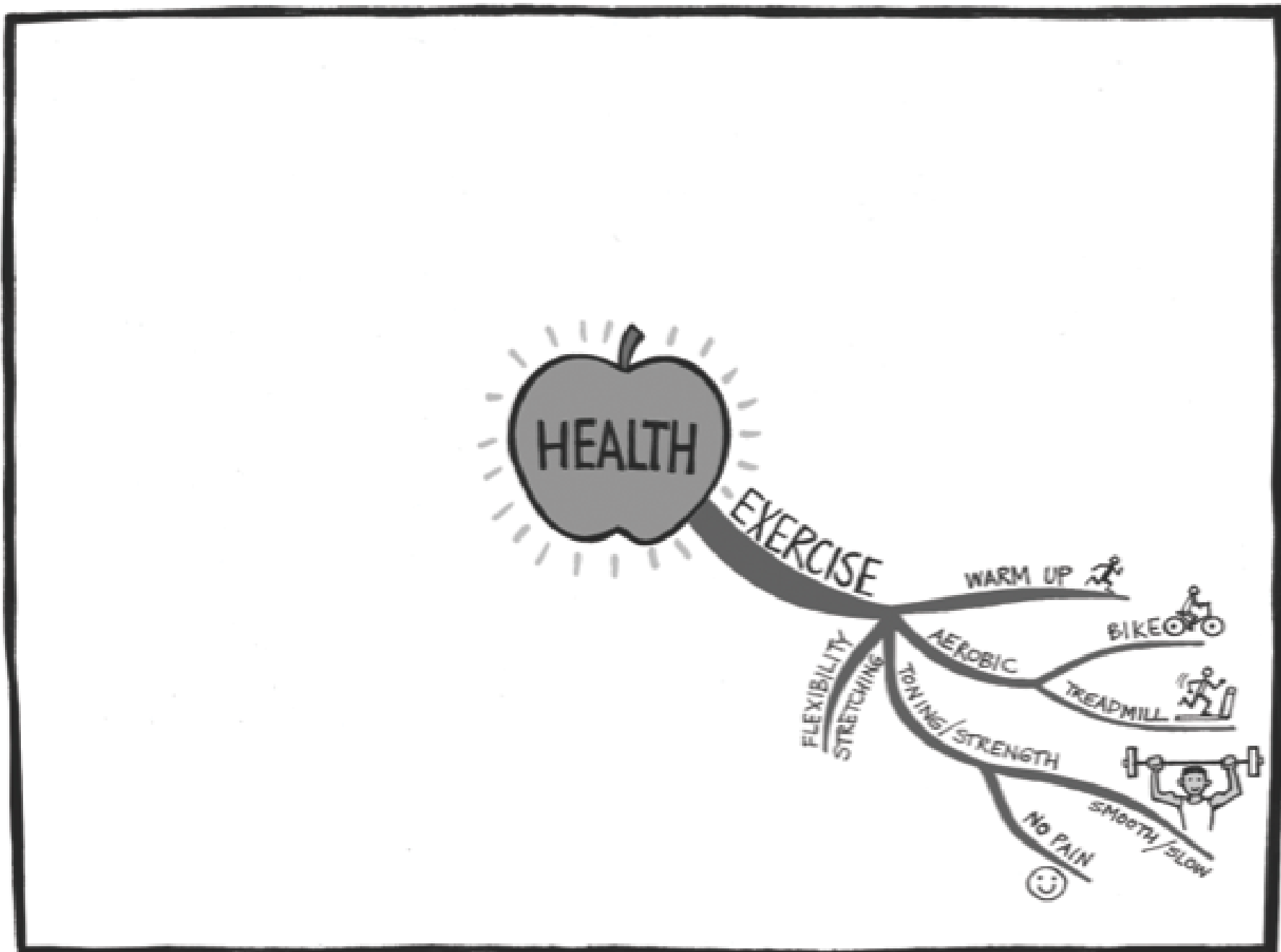
STEP 2 : MAKE SURE YOUR PAGE IS TURNED SIDWAYS (LANDSCAPE STYLE), THINK OF YOUR TOPIC FOR A MOMENT AND THEN DRAW THE FIRST IMAGE THAT JUMPS TO MIND IN THE CENTRE OF THE PAGE.



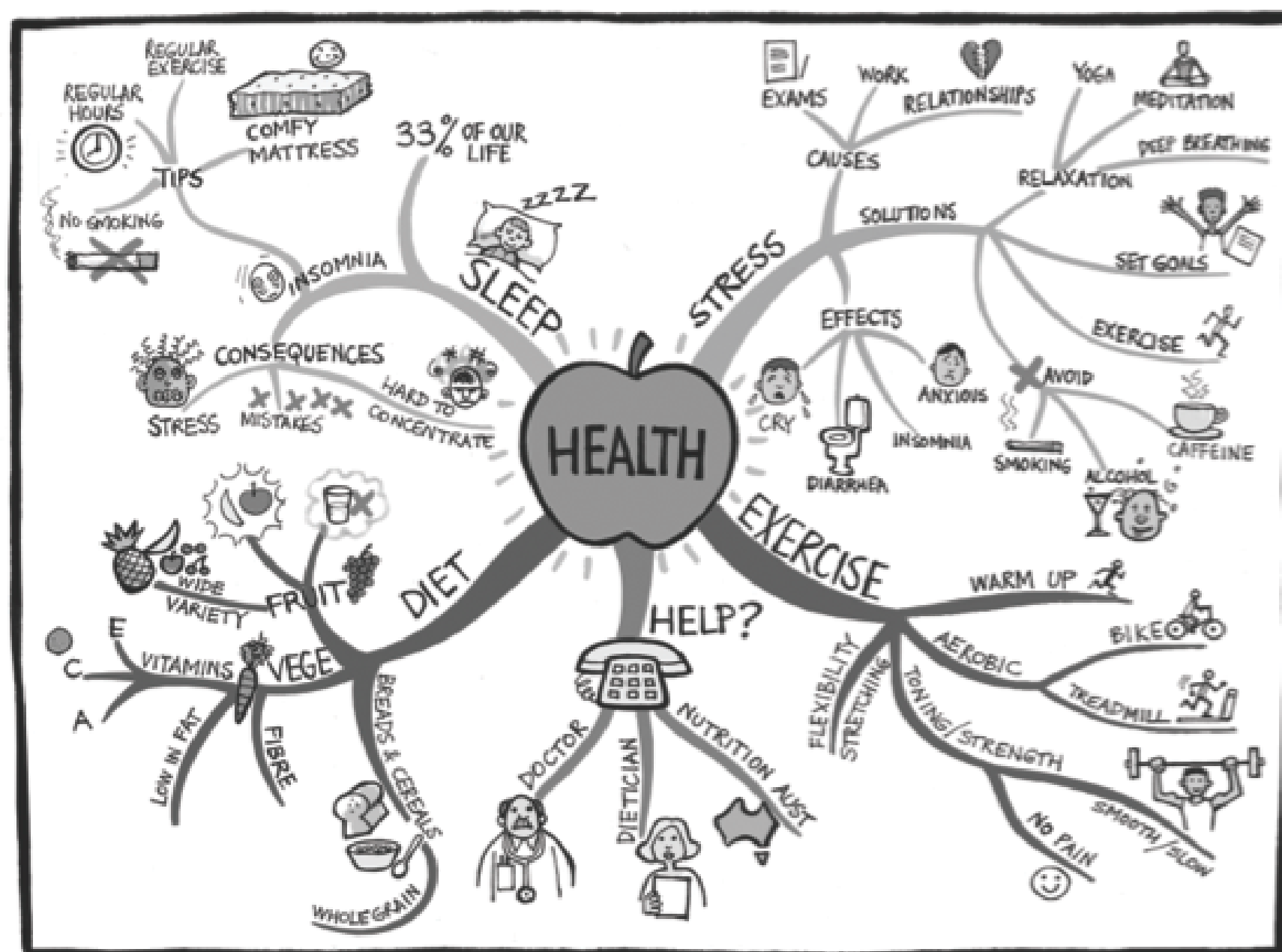
STEP 3 : BRANCH OFF. THINK OF THE BRANCH AS BEING LIKE A CHAPTER IN A BOOK. IT'S ONE OF YOUR MAIN IDEAS.



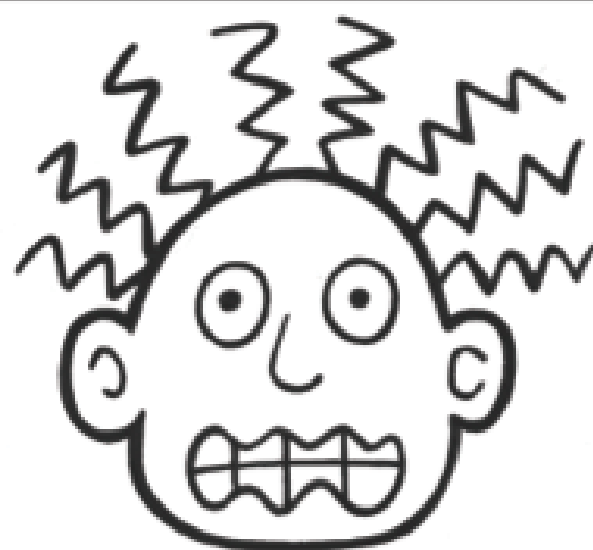
STEP 4 : NEXT CREATE YOUR SUB-BRANCHES. THESE BRANCHES ARE LIKE THE SUB-HEADINGS WITHIN THE CHAPTER OF A BOOK. FROM THE ENDS OF THESE BRANCHES, YOU CAN CREATE MORE BRANCHES. (WHAT YOU ARE DOING IS CREATING ASSOCIATIONS BETWEEN DIFFERENT IDEAS).



STEP 5 : DRAW PICTURES. IF I TOLD YOU "DON'T THINK ABOUT MONKEYS", WHAT WOULD COME TO MIND? THE PICTURE OF MONKEYS! MY POINT IS, WE THINK IN PICTURES, NOT IN WORDS. THE MORE EXAGGERATED YOU MAKE THE IMAGES ON YOUR MIND MAP, THE EASIER IT WILL BE FOR YOU TO RECALL THEM.



EXAMPLES OF EXAGGERATED IMAGES



STRESS



INSOMNIA



HARD TO CONCENTRATE



CRY

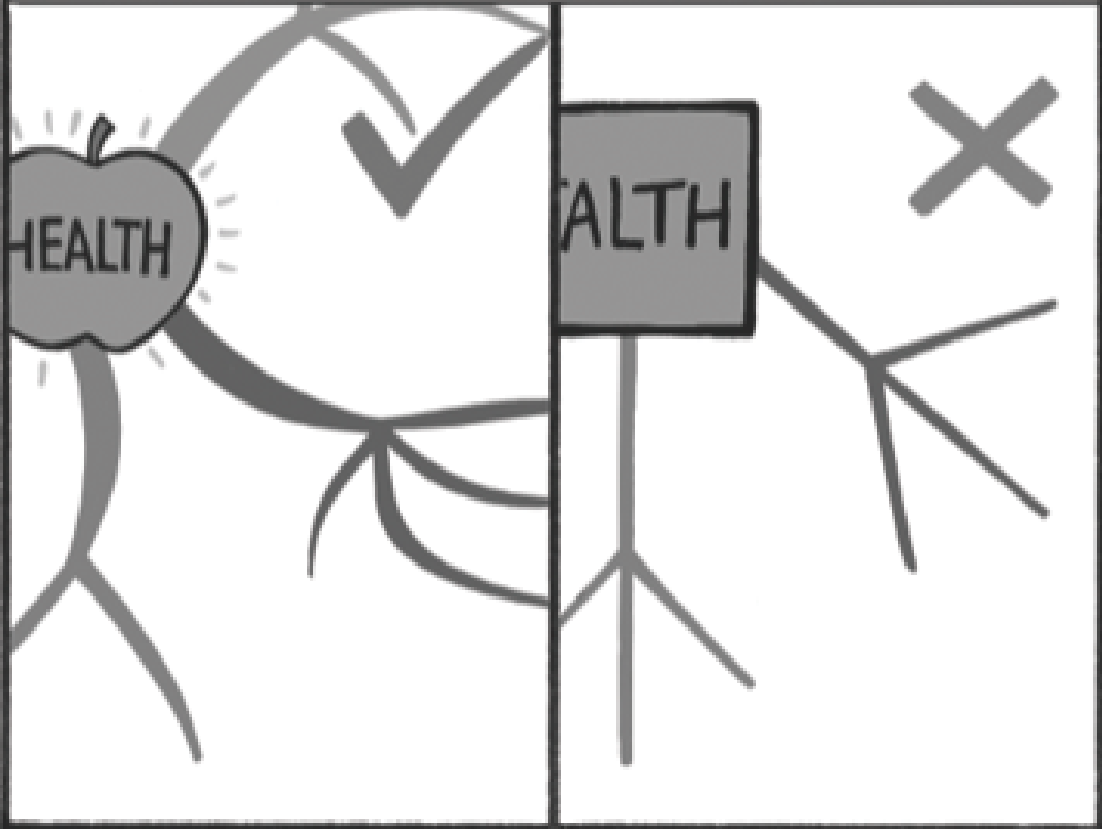


SET GOALS

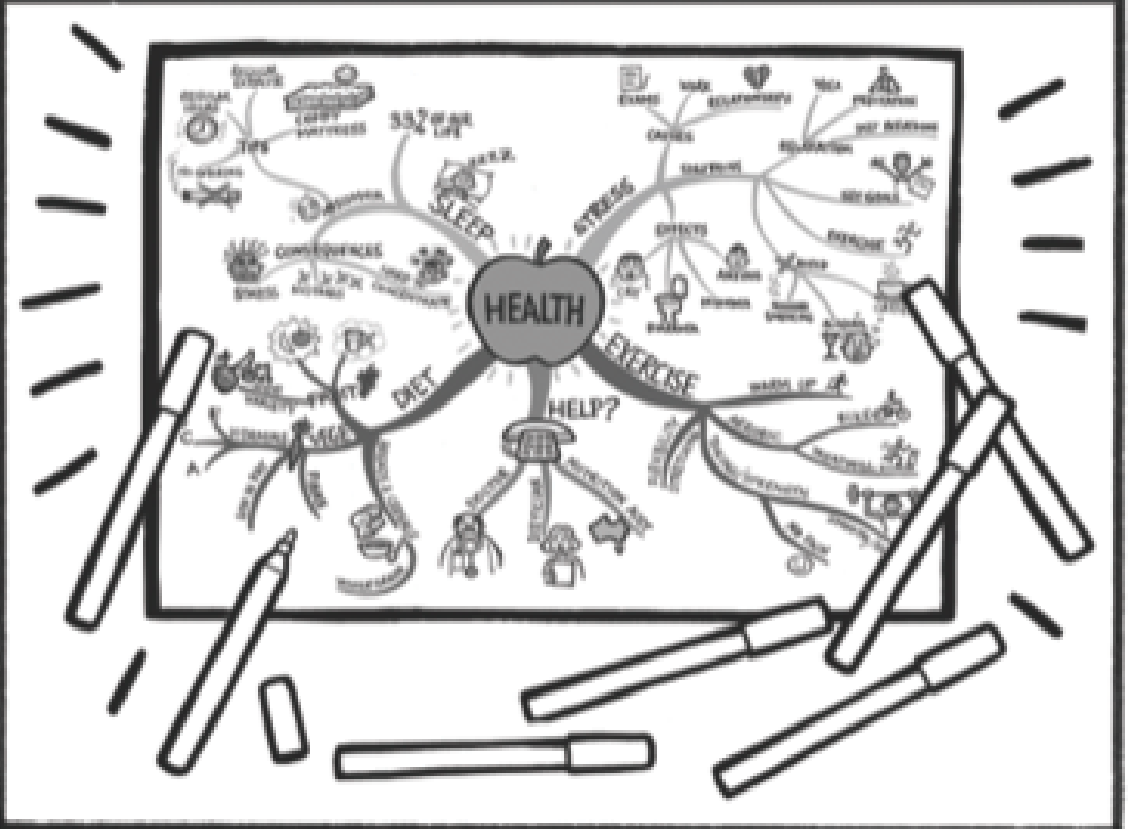


ALCOHOL

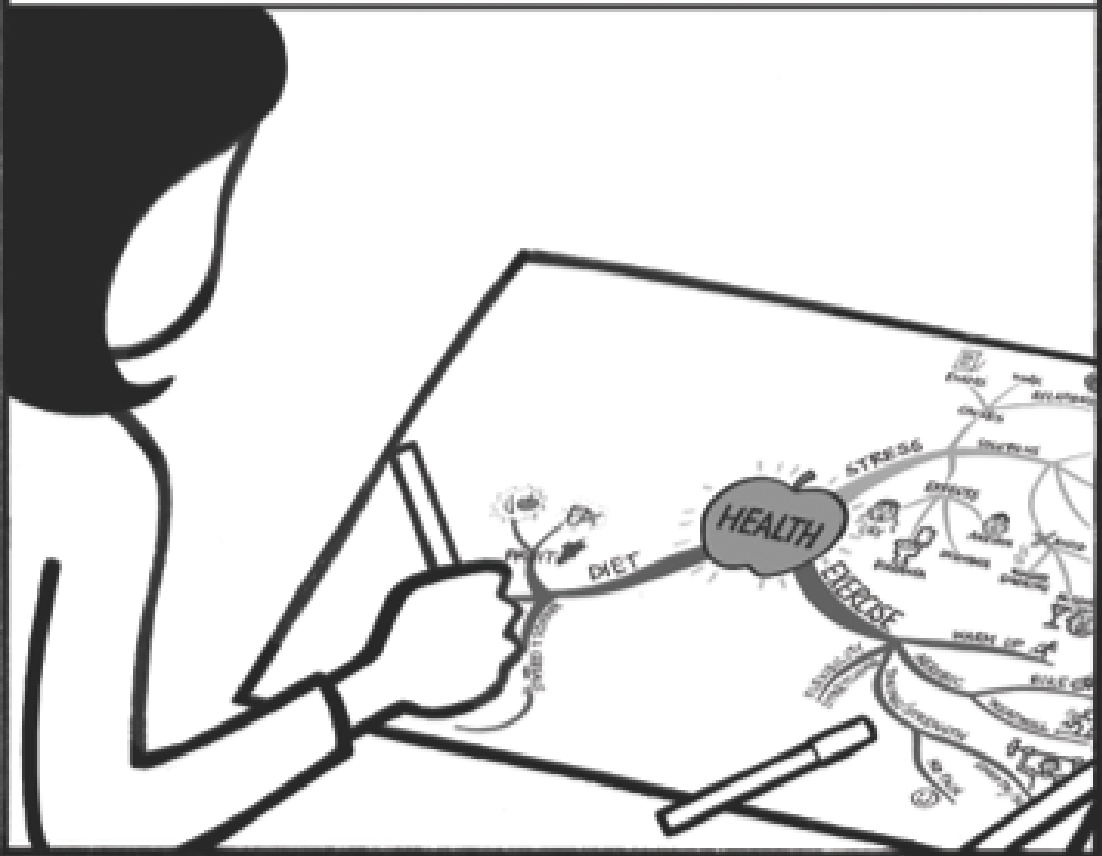
* TIP : MAKE SURE YOUR BRANCHES ARE CURVED. THE HUMAN BRAIN RESPONDS BETTER TO CURVED LINES THAN STRAIGHT LINES.



THE BRAIN IS ALSO STIMULATED BY THE USE OF COLOUR, SO USE AS MANY DIFFERENT COLOURS AS POSSIBLE ON YOUR MIND MAP.



IF YOU GET BORED WITH WORKING ON A CERTAIN BRANCH, MOVE ON AND START CREATING ANOTHER BRANCH. THE KEY IS NOT TO GET BOGGED DOWN.



THE ACT OF CREATING A MIND MAP HELPS YOU UNDERSTAND THE SUBJECT AT A DEEP LEVEL. IT ALSO HELPS YOU TO ORGANISE AND CLARIFY YOUR THOUGHTS.



LEARNING TO MIND MAP IS LIKE LEARNING TO DRIVE A CAR.

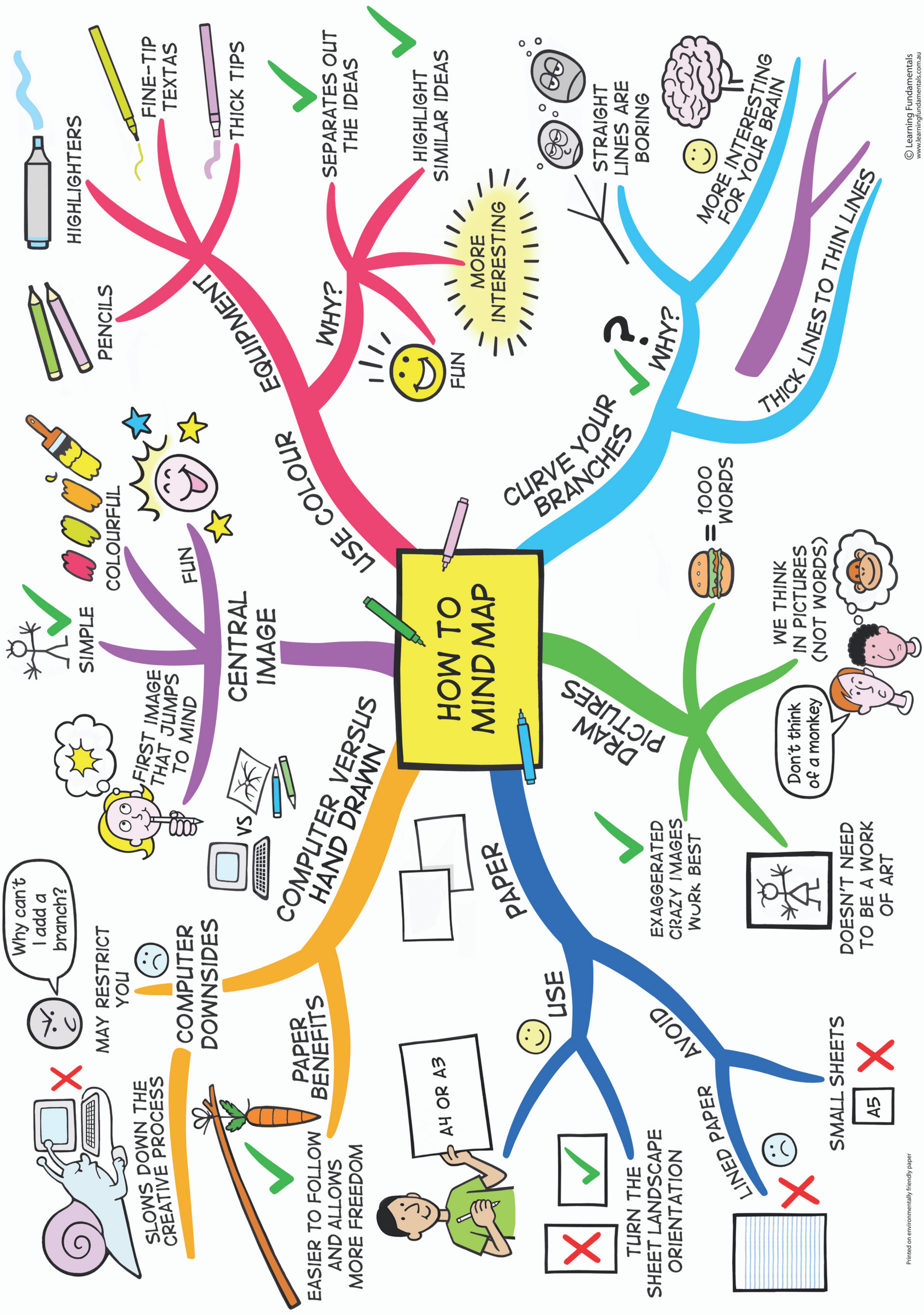


THE FIRST TIME YOU TRY TO DO IT YOU MAY FEEL AWKWARD AND A LITTLE SELF-CONSCIOUS.



BUT THE MORE YOU DO IT, THE EASIER IT BECOMES.





NOW IT'S OVER TO YOU...

THE 15 MINUTE MIND MAP CHALLENGE

HERE'S HOW IT WORKS...

Set aside 15 minutes to understand some information or nut out a problem you've been grappling with by creating a mind map.

Clear a space at your desk. Grab some coloured pens, a sheet of A3 or A4 paper, a timer and work through the information (drawing pictures and capturing key ideas as you go).

When a little negative voice says, *"That looks like rubbish. You can't draw"*, keep going. Remember, this isn't about creating a work of art.

When you get bogged down, create another branch. The key is to keep moving. Mind map as if you're on fire.

Treat this as a fun experiment. Maybe it will work. Maybe it won't. But like anything in life, you won't know unless you give it a shot.

Email me your finished mind map for extra imaginary bonus points!



THE TWO MOST COMMON BARRIERS TO MIND MAPPING

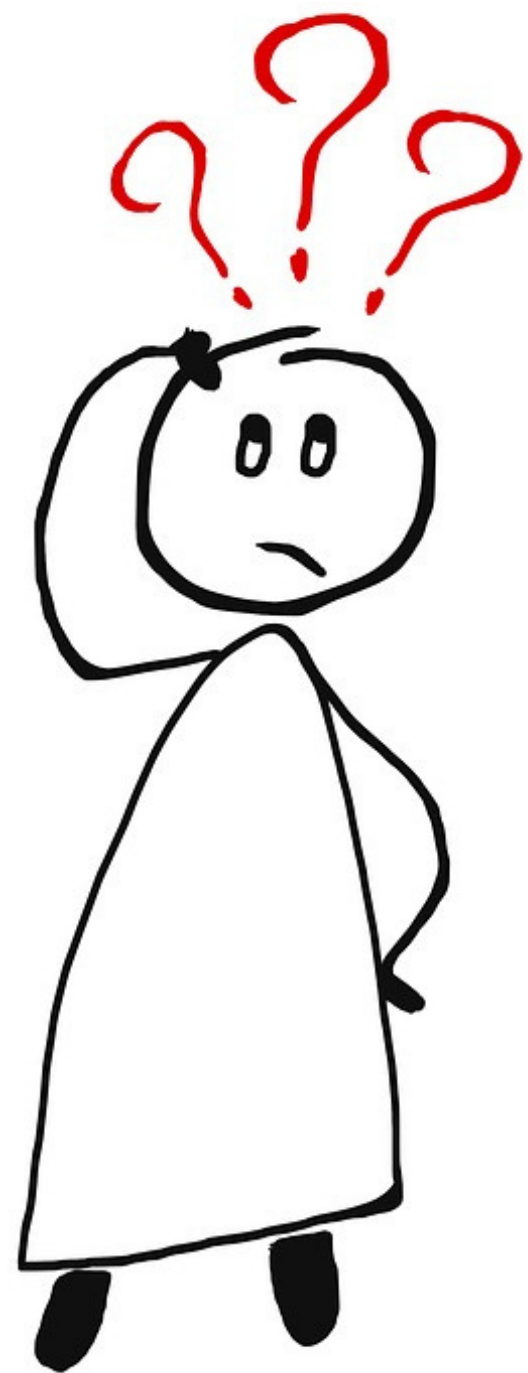
“I can’t draw” & “It takes too long”

“I can’t draw”: Actually, you can draw better than you think

Mind mapping is actually really easy to do. And you don’t need any artistic ability to mind map. If you can draw a stick figure, then you have what it takes.

My best advice: draw lots of pictures, even if they look like rubbish. When you get sick of drawing, take a deep breath and continue to draw some more pictures.

I can't say this enough: It's not about drawing pretty pictures. The aim of the game is to learn information at a deep level. Instead of pretty, go for absurd and ridiculous. Why? Because this will aid memory retention and recall.



“It takes too long”: There are ways to speed up the mind mapping process

Remember, mind mapping is like any skill. It takes practice. It can be a little slow at first. But once you clock up a few hours and get through your first few mind maps (these can feel a little awkward), you’ll find you’ll be mind mapping with such efficiency and speed.

There is no escaping the fact that mind mapping takes time. It takes effort. But all that being said, everything worth doing in life takes time and effort. The way I look at it is this is time and effort well spent.

When you mind map as you read, it can take two to three times longer to study. But start to see that extra time as an investment in your studies. Why? Because you're not going to get to the end of reading a chapter in your textbook and think, "*What was that all about?*" You will understand the content better. You will have a better chance of the information sticking.

Want to learn how to speed up the mind mapping process and draw better pictures? Read on!

MIND MAP HACKS

SIMPLE WAYS TO SPEED UP
THE MIND MAPPING PROCESS

1. Ditch your coloured pens

As much as I love colour, I have occasionally used just a black artline pen to create my mind maps when I've been short on time. By not having to change coloured pens, take lids off and put them back on again, and decide on what colour to use next, you can save a bit of time.

Your mind maps may not look as exciting but you can always add a bit of colour as you review your mind map content later on. I sometimes just circle key information in a coloured crayon or highlighter pen.

2. Don't ditch your coloured pens: Invest in a set of paintbrush style pens instead

It's a real shame to give up using coloured pens on your mind maps. The good news is you can keep using coloured pens by using a paintbrush style marker.

Here's the thing: most mind maps have branches that go thick to thin. To create this effect with a fine tip marker requires a lot of colouring in. However, by using a paintbrush pen you can create the thick to thin branch in a few simple strokes.

I have a set of Tombow dual brush pens. They are quite expensive but they are quality markers that will last several years. The small tip works well for creating smaller branches and the paintbrush style tip is perfect for creating the main branches.

Another thing I like about these pens is that the ink doesn't bleed through the paper like a lot of other fancy art pens tend to.

MIND MAP HACKS

CONTINUED...

3. Slap out your drawings

One of the biggest time wasters with mind mapping is being overly precious about your drawings. How many times have I seen a student spend ten minutes or more drawing a detailed, intricate central image on their mind maps? Too many times!

Don't lose sight of the reason you are mind mapping - it's to learn information at a deep level, not to get accepted into a fine arts program! So you can relax with your drawings. Stick figures will do the job.

4. Only mind map out the good stuff

In my experience mind maps work best when you're trying to understand complex ideas. Some information you need to absorb will be straightforward and can be put straight onto a flashcard (you may not need to mind map it). Other information won't be so relevant.

The bottom line is not everything needs to be mind mapped. As you read your book and mind map the information, ask yourself:

"Do I really need to know this?"

If the answer is no, then don't bother mind mapping it.

MIND MAP HACKS

CONTINUED...

5. Use A3 Paper

A3-size paper provides the perfect amount of space for mind mapping a topic. If you use A4 paper you may find yourself having to start new mind maps more regularly as a result of not being able to fit as much information on the page.

For this reason, I highly recommend using an A3-size visual art diary. It will reduce the number of central images you need to draw.

6. Mind map every day

Mind mapping is like any skill, the more you do it the better (and the faster) you'll get at it.

When I first started mind mapping I was quite slow in creating my mind maps. *"Am I doing this right?"* and *"My pictures look silly. I'd better start this mind map again"*, I would say. I wasted a lot of time worrying for nothing. But after a few weeks of practice, mind mapping became second nature to me.

If you mind map on a daily basis, you will be surprised at how fast you can get at pumping out mind maps.

All that being said, it's not a race. You need to allow yourself the time and space to think through an idea and draw it out in a way that will be memorable and meaningful to you.

MIND MAP HACKS CONTINUED...

7. Set up mind mapping cues

A clever strategy you can use to help you mind map more frequently is to leave the things you need to mind map (e.g., coloured pens, A3 paper, and textbook) lying around on surfaces where you work - on the kitchen table, on your desk, near the couch, etc.

When you set up 'mind mapping cues' like this, it makes it easier to get started. Whenever you've got a spare ten minutes you can sit down and start mind mapping out an idea.



A mind mapping cue set up on my kitchen table

DRAW BETTER PICTURES

I GET THAT A PRETTY PICTURE IS EASIER ON THE EYE

If you're not satisfied with your stick figures, the good news is you can improve your drawing skills and it doesn't have to take you years of hard work and practice.

My mother, Sharon, who produces all of the high quality mind maps you see featured on my website has been drawing since she was three. She slogged away at art school and as a children's illustrator for many years. Now, she whips out fun, little drawings at amazing speeds with ease while sitting in front of the TV or waiting for the bus.

My mum always tells me:

“The more you draw, the better you'll get”.

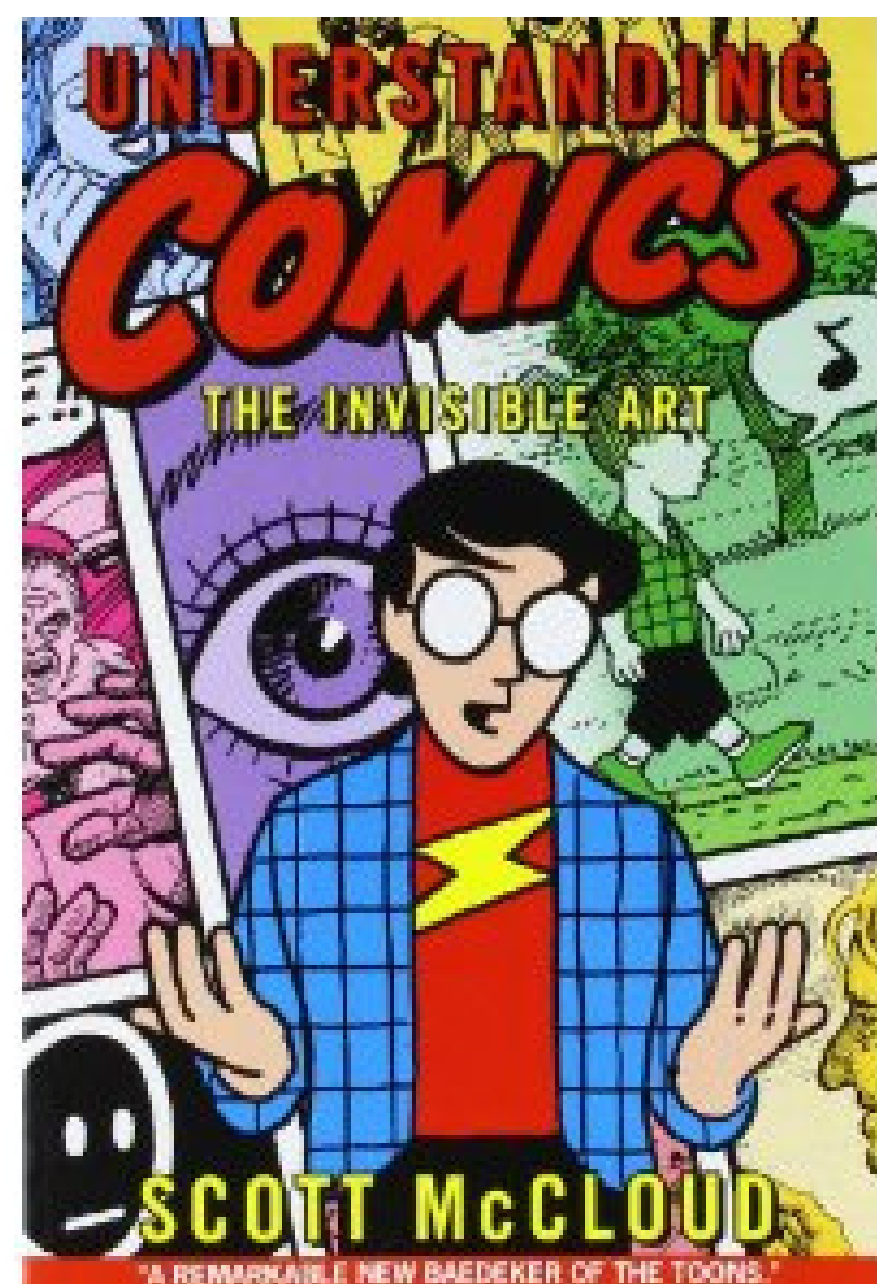
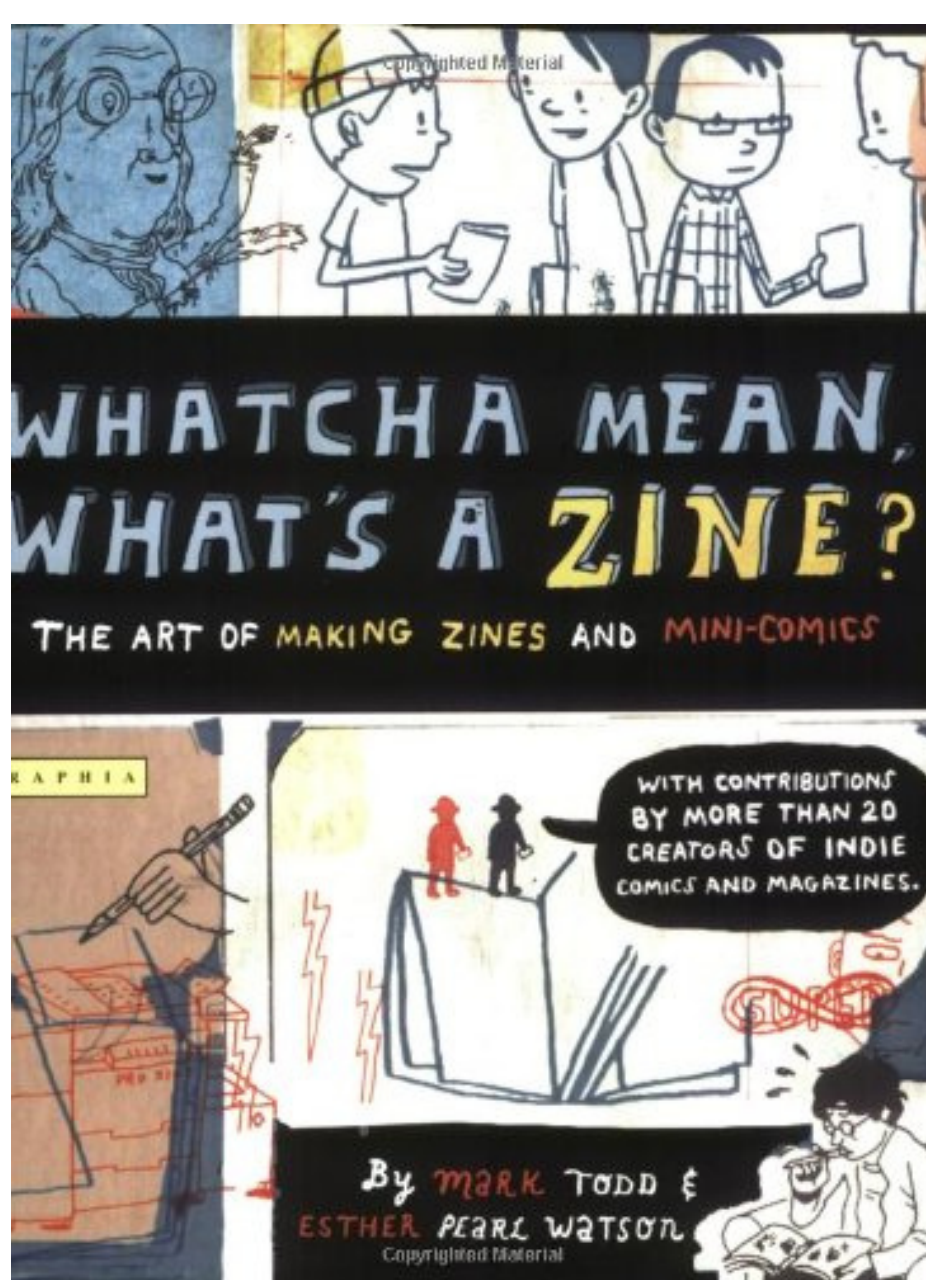
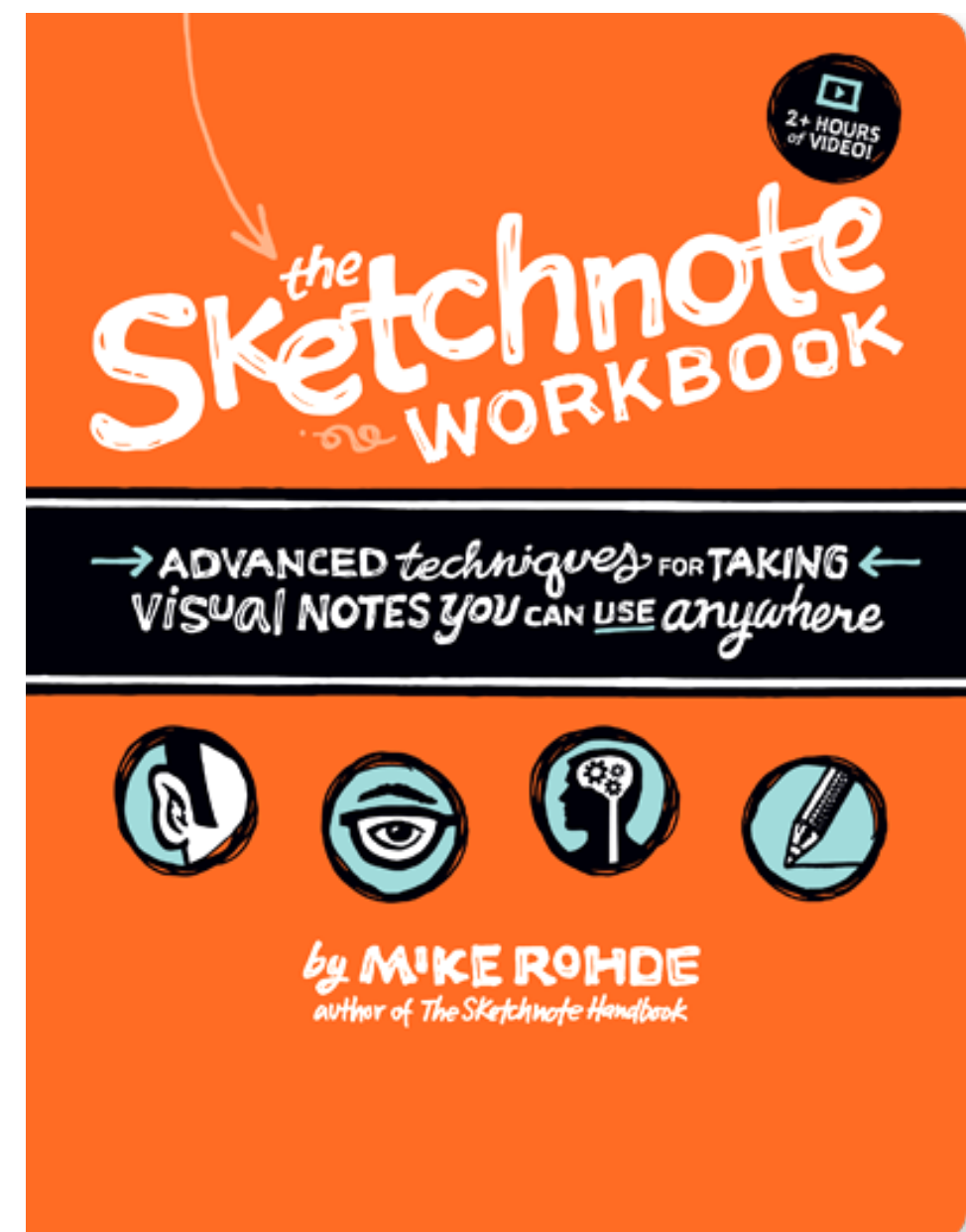
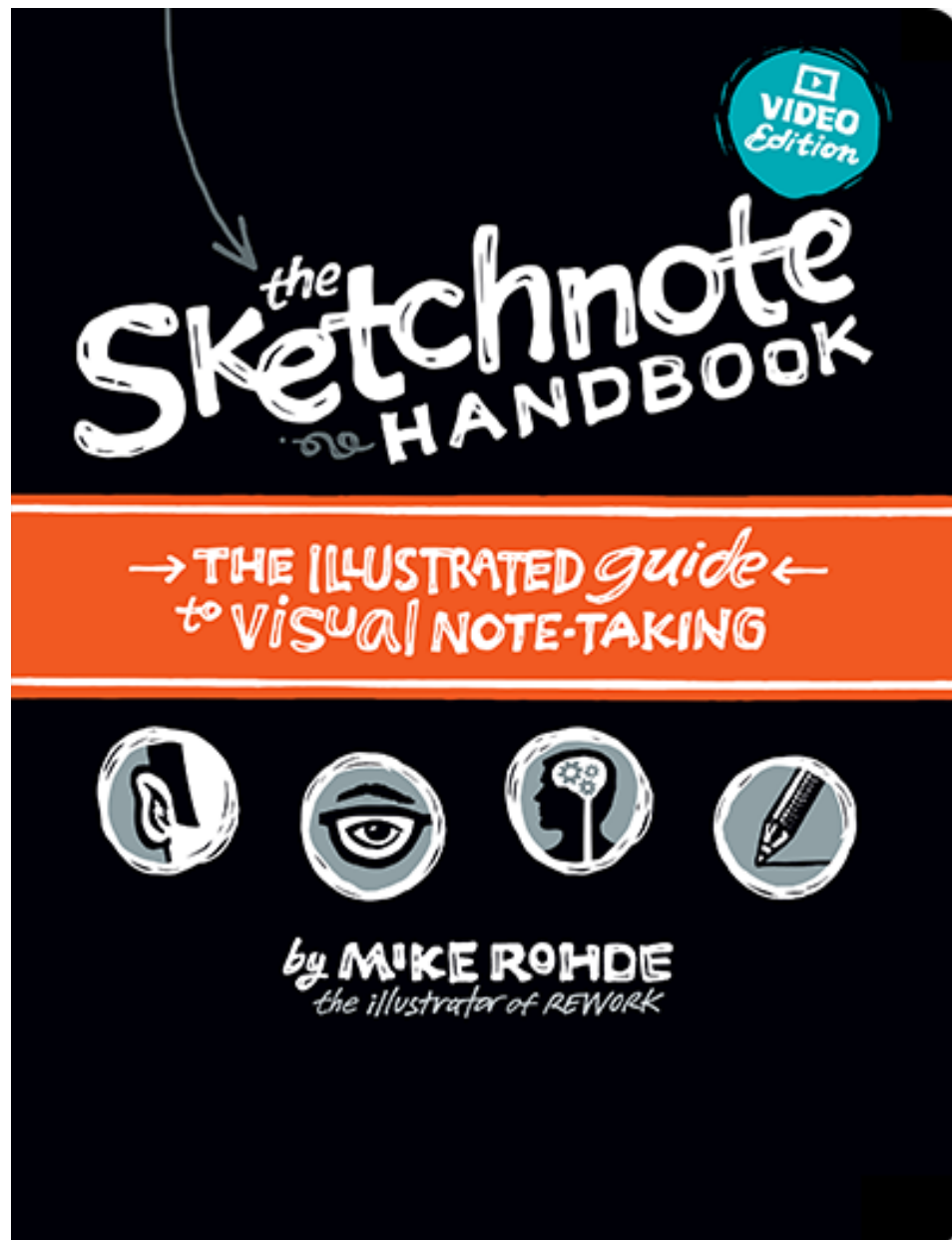
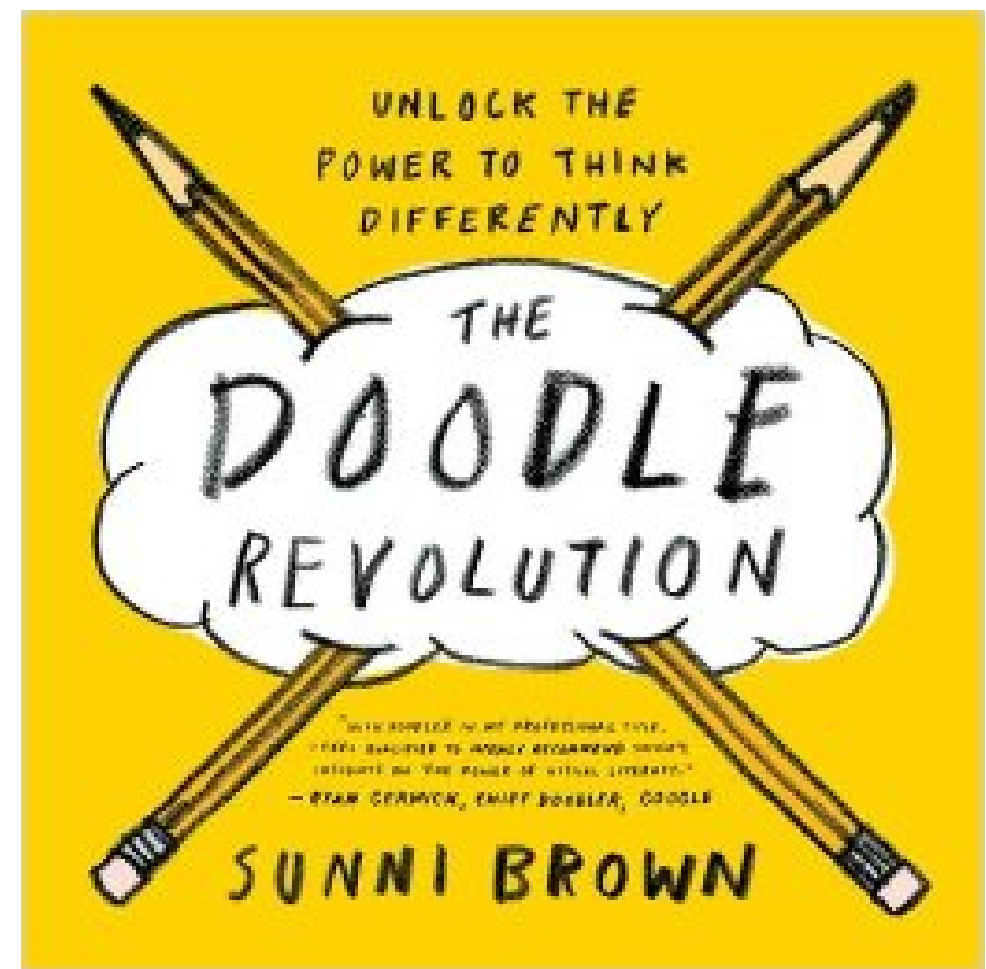
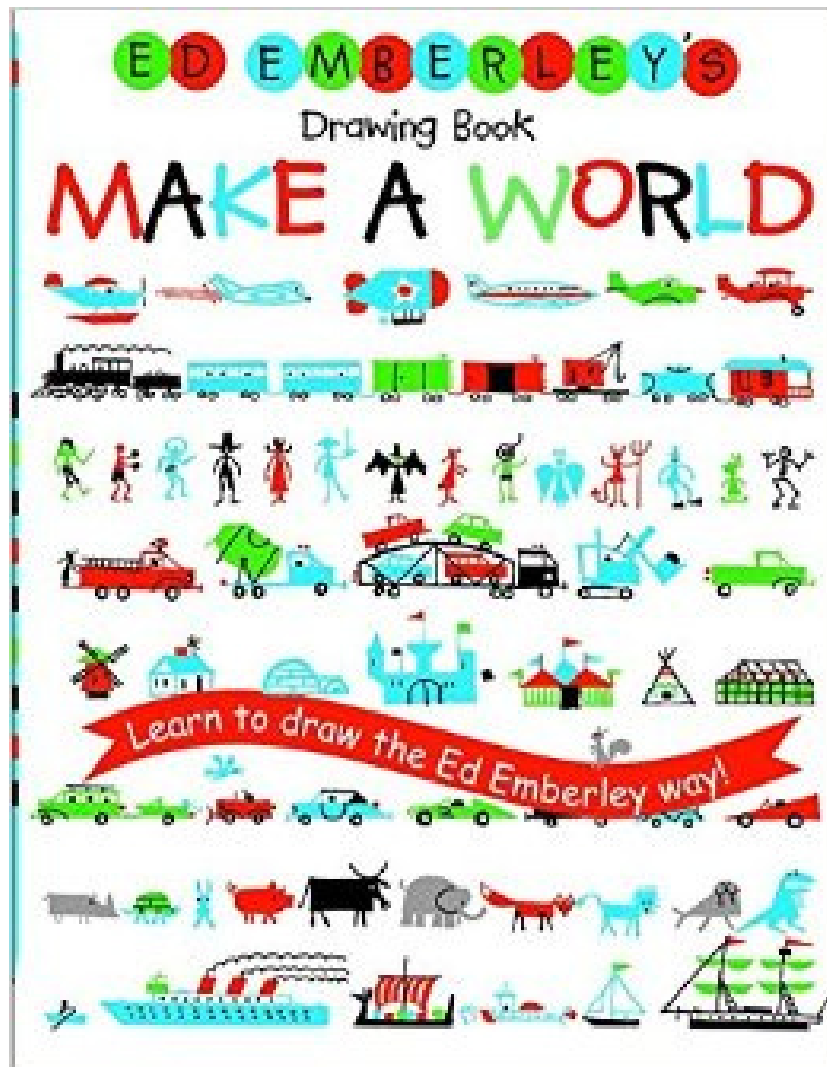
And you know what? She's right. Practice makes a big difference.

But let's say you want to improve your drawing skills and don't have years to devote to this activity like my mum did. How can you fast track your drawing skills and take them to the next level?

There are some amazing resources out there that show you how to draw the basics. And the basics are all you really need if you're taking visual notes for your subjects.

Check out the resources I recommend on the next page.

RESOURCES TO HELP YOU DRAW LIKE A PRO



HOW TO DEAL WITH MIND MAP SNOBS

PLEASE READ THE FOLLOWING QUOTES OUT LOUD
IN A PATRONISING, WHINY TONE:

“What is this thing you're drawing?
Are you back in primary school?
I thought this was university!”

“Isn't that cute!”

"That technique doesn't work
for me. I take notes on my
laptop!"

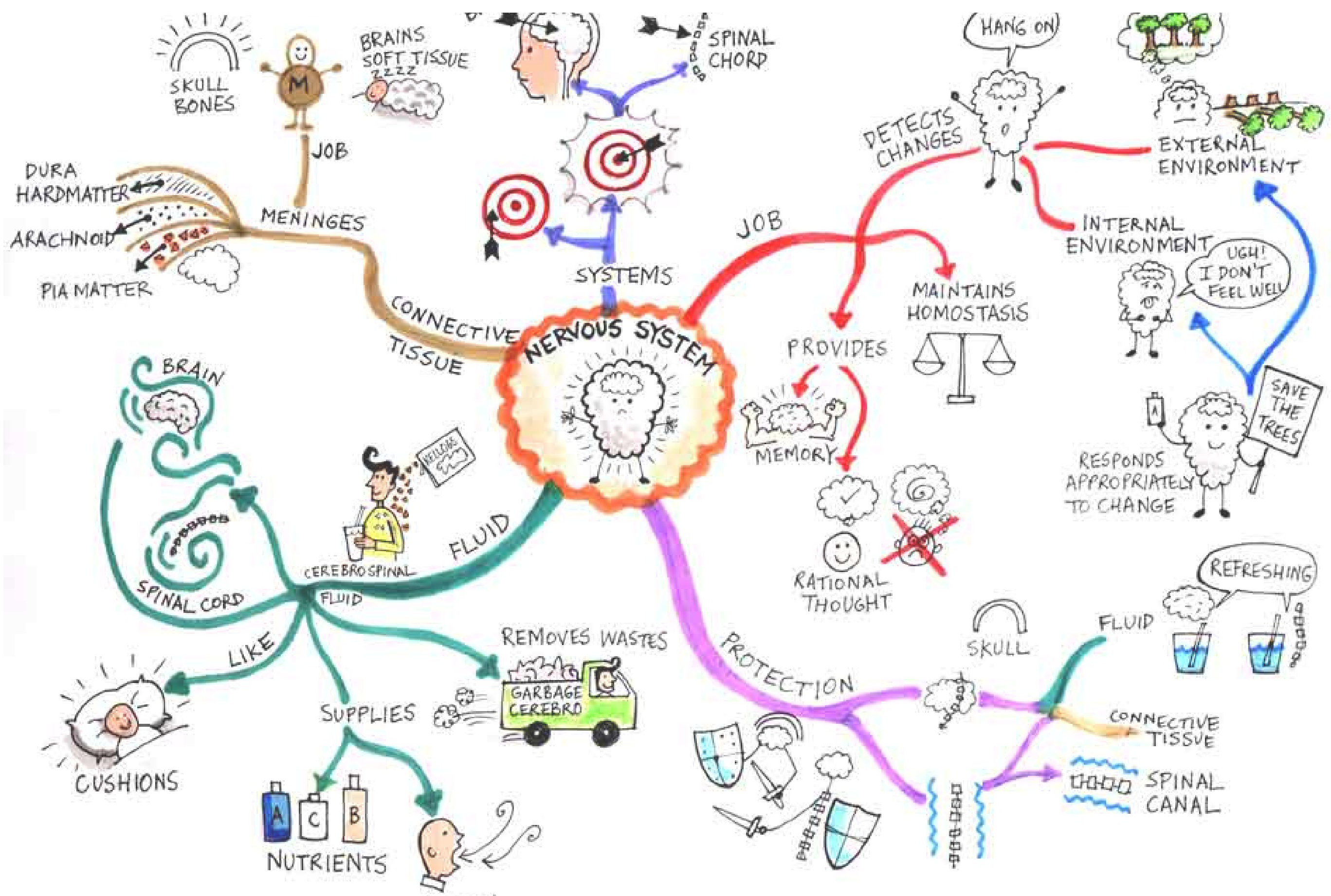
Some people can be patronising and even downright rude when they see you mind mapping. I experienced this several times when I was at Law school. “Isn't that cute!” students would say as they saw me mind map out legal ideas, legislation, and case law. But looking back, I can't help but think that maybe these students were slightly insecure and a little closed minded.

If someone makes a comment like *“Cute pictures!”* here's what you need to do:

Smile politely and say, *“Thanks. You have to do what works best for you. And this works for me”*, and carry on mind mapping.

When you start receiving amazing grades because you understand the material at a deep level, you'll have the last laugh.

Think mind mapping is a technique for only
primary school students? Think again!



WHY YOU NEED TO CREATE YOUR OWN MIND MAPS

(AND PREFERABLY WITH PEN AND PAPER)

A Year 11 student who studied human biology got really annoyed with me a few years ago. Why? Because I didn't give her a copy of the above mind map before her human biology test.

This is what she said to me during a presentation:

"If you had given me a copy of that mind map before the test, I would have done heaps better.

Thanks for nothing!"

I really don't think that mind map would have helped her much. Why?

Because she didn't create it.

You don't learn complex information by looking at someone else's mind map and absurd images. How you get the edge is by taking the time to think through the different ideas and map them out yourself.

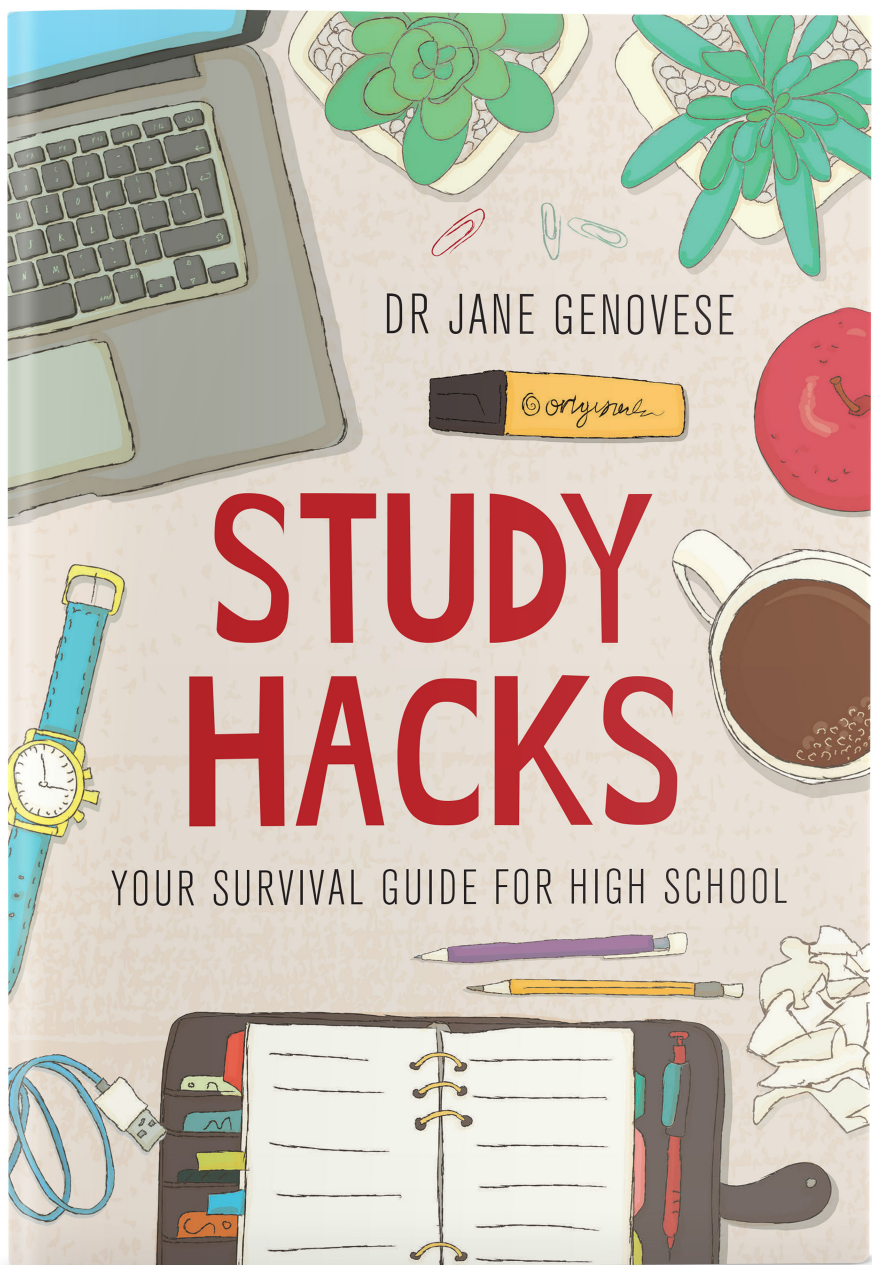
Sorry, there are no shortcuts. You have to put pen to paper. But the benefits will be well worth it.

So what are you waiting for? You've got nothing to lose and everything to gain. Give it a shot and let me know how you go.

Happy mind mapping!

OTHER RESOURCES

Interested in learning other ways to study more effectively? Check out this new book we've created.



Study Hacks: Your Survival Guide for High School

Forget the idea of reading your books over and over again or highlighting entire paragraphs of information. Old-fashioned study methods are painful, boring and not very effective. There is a better way. This book will show you how.

In Study Hacks you will learn:

- How to motivate yourself at anytime
- How to eat for maximum brain power
- How to be a 'completionist' (not a perfectionist)
- How to stop procrastinating
- How to study smarter, not harder
- How to manage technology and minimise distractions
- And much, much more!



"This book is great and more than a study guide. It is easy to read, with bite-size pieces of great, practical advice about how to develop and manage study skills with a healthy student lifestyle. Great for secondary students. I highly recommend it."

-Parent of secondary students



Study Hacks is available at www.learningfundamentals.com.au

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Dr Jane Genovese is the owner, coordinator, and presenter of Learning Fundamentals, an organisation that teaches students how to learn more effectively.

Jane delivers interactive presentations on effective study strategies, combating procrastination, exam preparation strategies, and how to focus in the age of distraction.



She graduated from Murdoch university in 2009 with a Bachelor of laws and Bachelor of psychology with first class honours and received a Vice Chancellor's Award for Academic Excellence. In 2017, she completed her doctoral thesis.

When Jane isn't delivering talks in schools or mind mapping, she enjoys lifting weights, making zines, and cooking plant-based meals with vegetables from her garden.

CONNECT WITH JANE

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Website: <https://www.learningfundamentals.com.au>



the end?

Actually this is the beginning of your journey at becoming masterful at learning.

Want to learn more creative and practical strategies to boost your grades and cut your study time in half?

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