

Mind maps

Some children have poorly developed internal storage systems for their vocabulary. This means that they can find it difficult to learn and remember new words. They may also have difficulty 'finding' the words that they want when they want them; we call these 'word-finding difficulties'.

A child who is having trouble finding the word they want to use may:

- Say nothing
- Say the wrong word(s)
- Say the wrong sounds in words

Mind maps are a way of helping children to store and therefore access information and words. They help the child to record information using colour, visual symbols, imagination, pictures and words.

Mind maps can help in the following ways:

- Memory is facilitated by ideas being linked together in a strongly visual way
- The more connections that we can make between ideas and words, the more likely we are to remember where we have stored them
- Mind maps provide a visual representation of the types of connections that need to be made in the brain
- They make use of the functions of the left and right sides of the brain. This gives us a better chance of remembering the information

The aim of mind maps is to:

- Strengthen the semantic (meaning) links between words
- Improve classification and organisation of material
- Develop memory strategies
- Help word retrieval by creating relationships and categories of words

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How to draw mind maps:

- As far as possible, the mind map needs to be developed and produced by the child. This will make it more meaningful to them, making it more likely that they will remember the information in it
- Place a picture, drawing or real object representing the key theme in the middle of the page. Then draw thick lines branching out from this; major information is written on these thick lines. Thinner lines branch out from these thick lines; other information is written on these thinner lines
- Keep written words to a necessary minimum
- Use photos, drawings, symbols or even real objects
- Use lots of colours
- Use smell! (e.g. scented pens)

Ways of using mind maps:

- As a whole class, small group, or individual activity
- Before introducing a topic, to explore prior knowledge
- Gradually adding to the Mind Map as new ideas emerge
- As wall displays
- To send home so that parents can be aware of and support the vocabulary
- After the topic, to recap learning