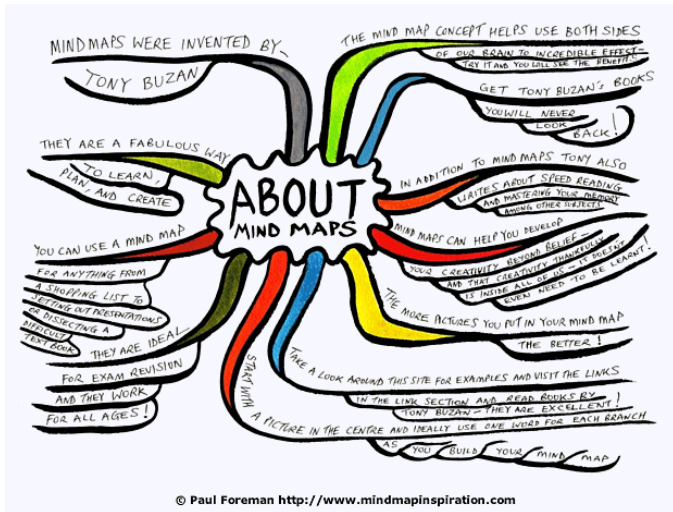


Using Microsoft Word to Build Mind Maps

Source: <http://www.makeuseof.com/tag/build-mind-map-microsoft-word/>



It is said that an average person has 12,000 to 50,000 thoughts in a day. Of course, a genius might have more than you and I, but the figure mentioned was the hypothetical traffic that goes on in our brain. Our thoughts rarely go from Point A to Point B in a straight line. More likely, they flit about like a firefly caught in a jar.

This is where a tool like a **Mind Map** comes in use. A mind map is not a case sheet for a psychologist but simply a diagram that helps to connect related ideas or concepts around a central thought.

Try it out if you haven't before...it is a great idea-capturing device to bring some order to the chaos that's our brain.

By putting down ideas or thoughts on a mind map, the brain is encouraged to think from every aspect. A mind map also encourages brainstorming. It forces the brain to think in terms of relationships between ideas rather than forcing everything into hierarchies or lists. The bottom line about mind mapping is that it's all about 'visuals' — words connected to graphical elements that makes it easy for us to take in large amount of data.

There are specialized applications for creating mind maps. But the simplest tool could be a paper and some pens. The second simplest when you don't have software installed could be to create a mind map in **MS Word**. But first...

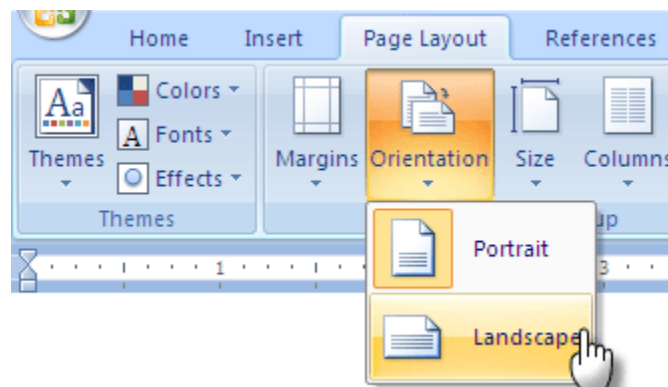
Simple Rules For Effective Mind Maps

- Think of the central idea and write it down in the middle.
- Think of related ideas and place them radially around the central idea. Connect all ideas with meaningful relationships. Use lines, colored lines, shapes, pictures, etc. to graphically describe ideas and relationships.
- Leave lots of space between ideas because new filler ideas and relationships will come in as the mind map grows.
- Go with the flow.

Simple Mind Maps in MS Word Using Illustration Tools

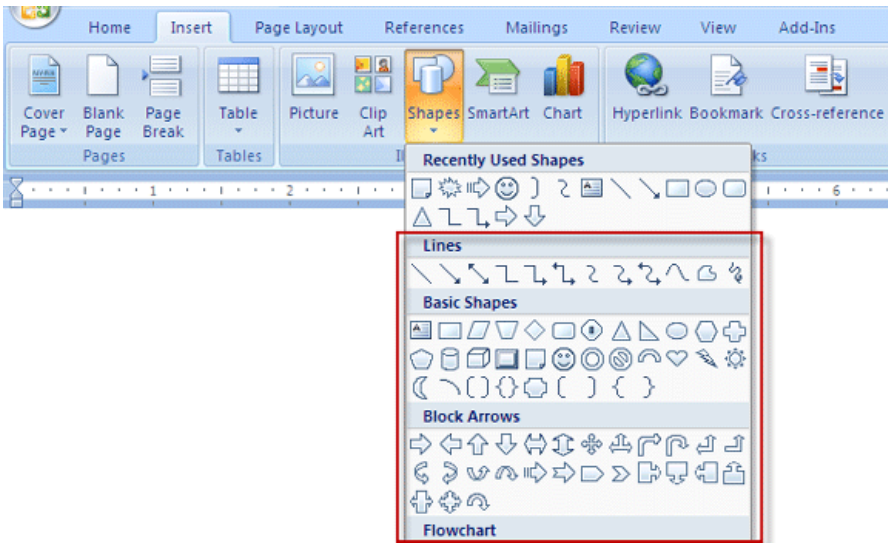
Creating a mind map in Word is easy with basic shapes and flowcharts. Extended by other illustration tools like Callouts, Lines and Clip Art and a pinch of creativity; MS Word can effectively become a mind mapping tool. Let's look at the tools we can use to construct a mind map.

The landscape mode gives the most horizontal area to work with. In a *New Word Document*, select *Page Layout – Orientation – Landscape*. If you want to finally print it, select the right *Size* in the *Page Setup* group.

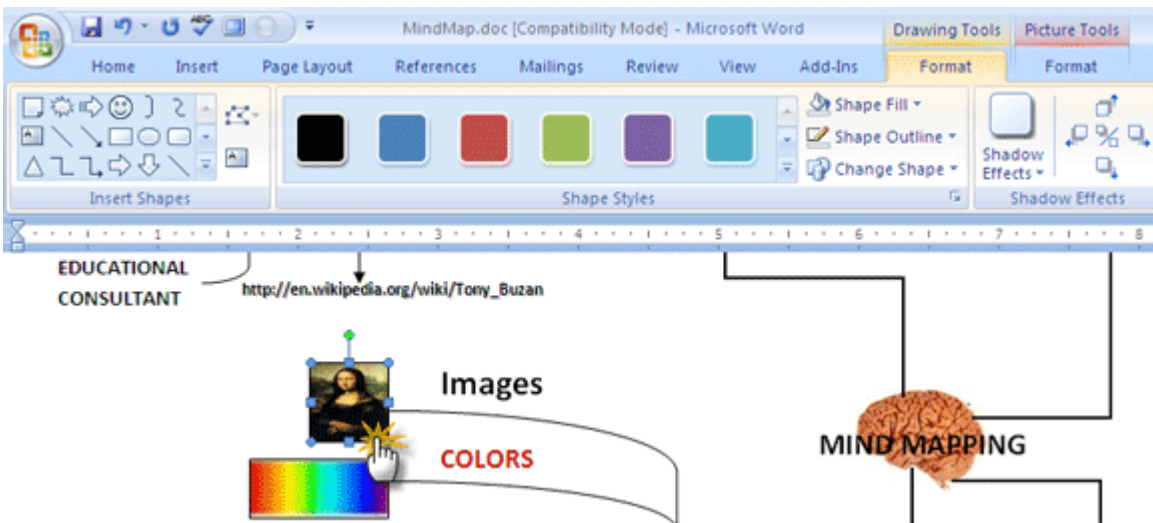


Most of the tools we can use lie in the *Illustrations* group on the *Insert* tab.

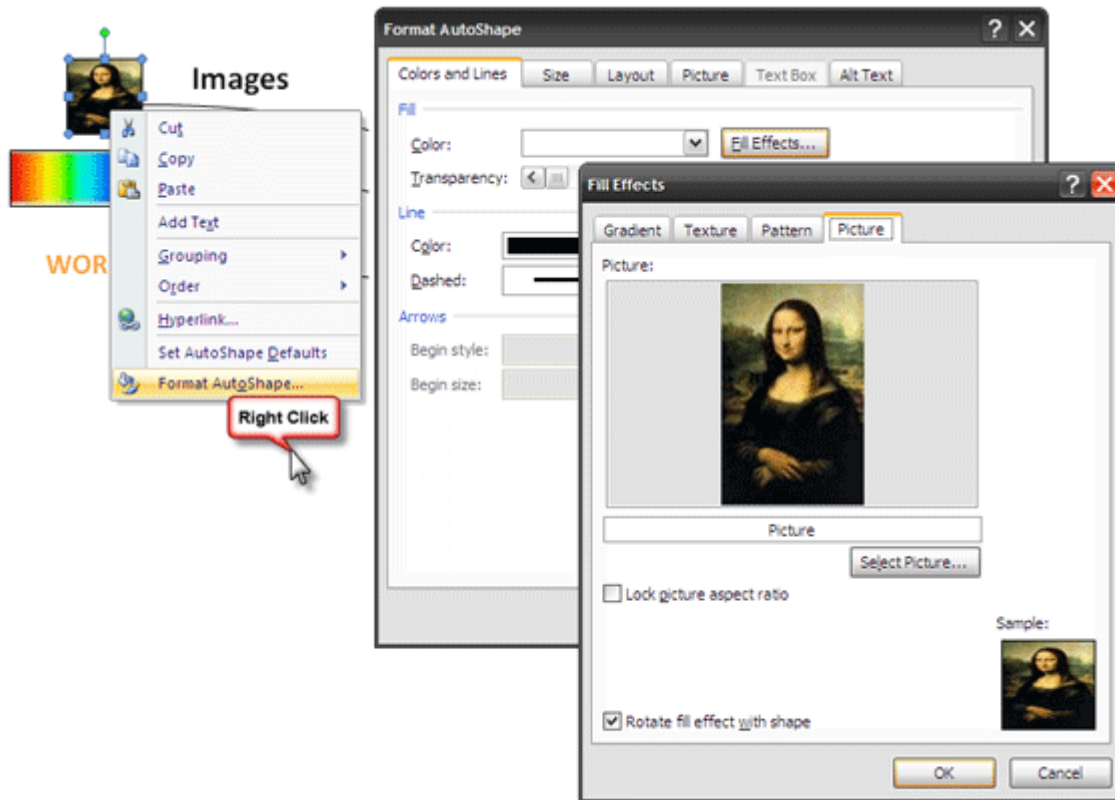
Click on *Shapes* which has all basic building blocks for a mind map. Simple shapes like ovals or rounded rectangles can be used to represent the central ideas. All shapes can be easily labeled with **Text Box**. Lines and arrows can be stretched out and connected to represent relationships. Shapes as all other elements can be copied and pasted, thus helping to put down the main ideas rapidly as nodes and sub-nodes.



All elements can of course, be elaborated using the full range of the *Drawing Tools*. Drawing the first shape brings up the contextual *Drawing Tools* tab. The best thing is that a mouse-over on any tool gives us a live preview of how the diagram is turning out.

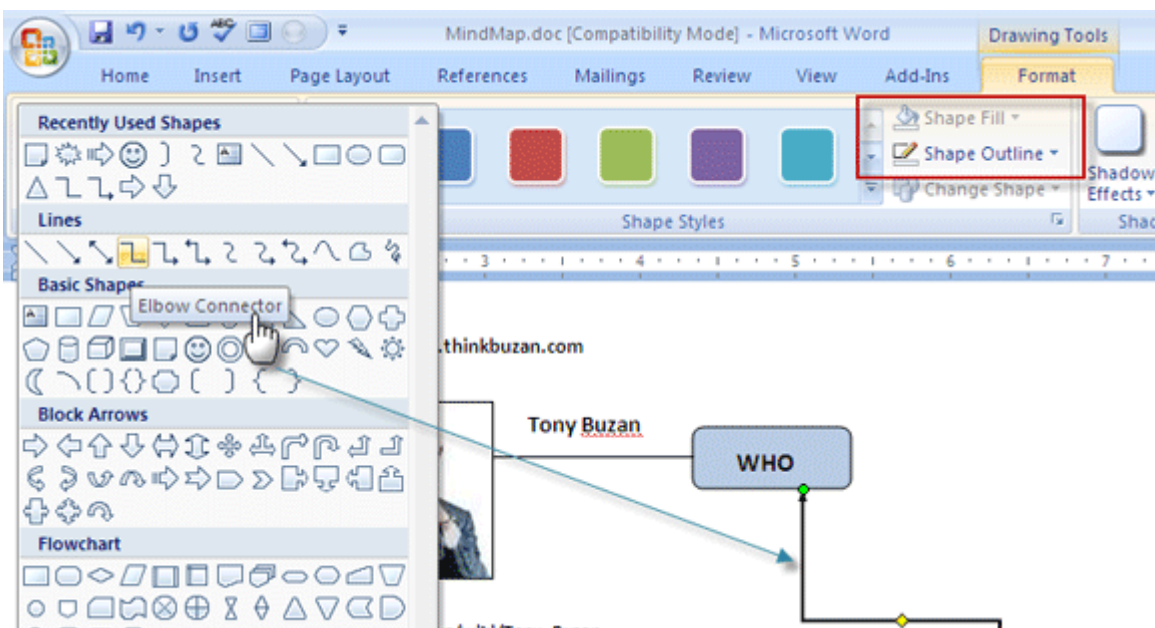


To change the properties of the shape, right click on the selected shape and select *Format AutoShape* from the context menu.



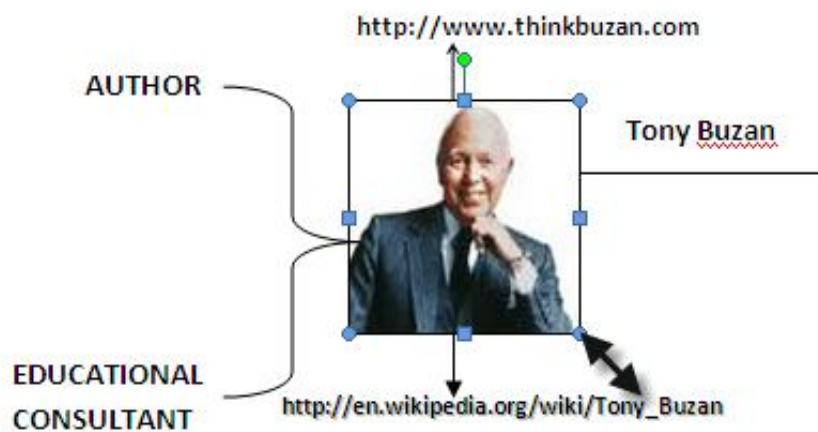
Making Lines/Connectors

Lines are also *AutoShapes* and their look or angles of rotation can be similarly changed from *Format AutoShape* or from the Ribbon (double click on the shape to bring up the *Format* tab).



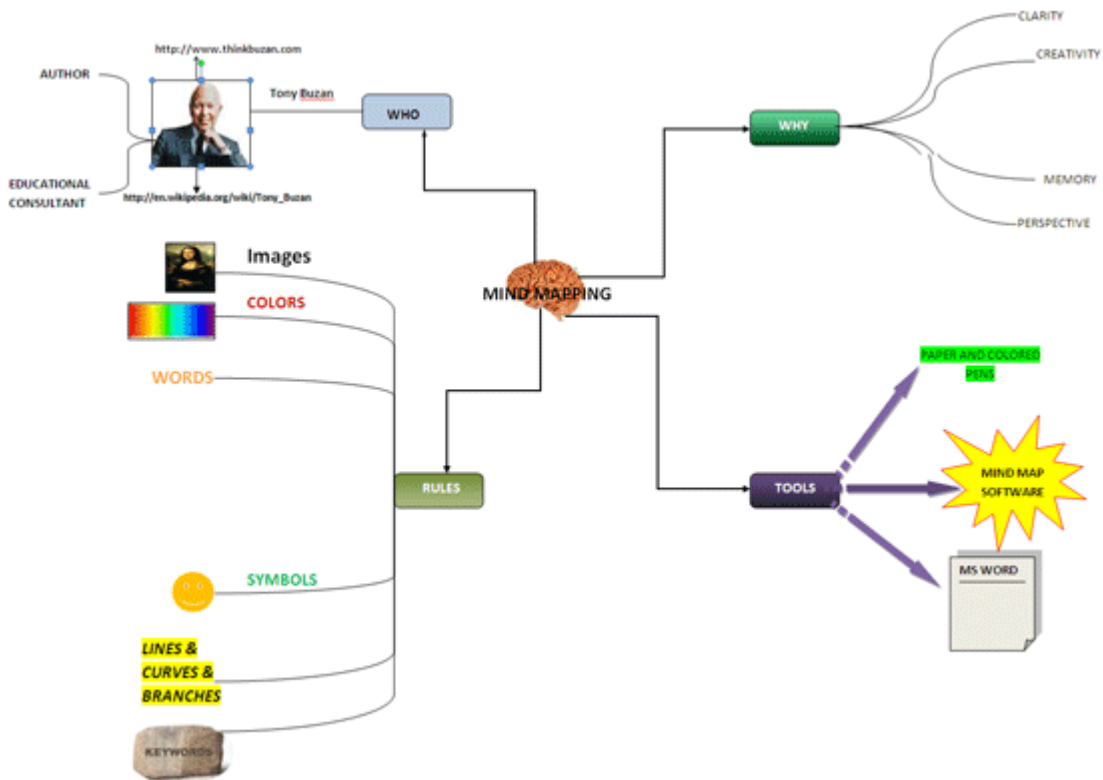
Shapes and lines can be labeled with text to define the relationships. However, MS Word limits text orientation to vertical or horizontal. Text cannot be rotated to an angle as in PowerPoint, just yet. (Though, in MS Word 2010, one can). Callouts can be used to mark out extra data.

Mind maps can be illustrated with images from the *Clip Art* gallery or from an image on the hard drive. While inserting images, use the corner handles to define the size of the image.



Creating a mind map in Word can be extended by adding hyperlinks to external sources. Though, a workaround to add notes or attachments within the MS Word file is not there.

Here is a mind map that explains the various elements of what else, but a...mind map!



MS Word (and even MS PowerPoint) is useful as a rapid tool for building a mind map. It's better than a pen and paper, because you can easily update it by adding or rearranging the topics. You can copy it to the other Office programs and if need be, even print it out. Presenting it with PowerPoint or email sharing are added options.

MS Word is not a dedicated tool for creating mind maps. Tools like [FreePlane](#) have greater flexibility. Just to cite one feature, it's not possible to collapse and open the branch nodes in MS Word.

But MS Word *can make* mind maps.