Clustering and Mind Mapping might look similar at a first glance, but they differ in function and process of creation.
On this page, you can find the instructions and an example for a Cluster. On the next page, we will show you how a Mind Map works.

What is a Cluster?

Clustering is a creative writing strategy in which you create associations based on a central word, phrase or topic – the cluster core.
The aim is to visualize your train of thought and to generate as many uncensored ideas as possible within a short time.

How does it work?

1. Fetch a pen or pencil, a highlighter and a piece of paper. Put the paper horizontally in front of you.
2. Write the topic of your writing assignment in the center and circle it. This is your cluster core.
3. Set a timer for a minimum of 3 or a maximum of 5 minutes.
4. Keep your pen(cil) in motion by writing down anything that comes to your mind – even if it does not appear 100% useful or relevant. Any and all associations are allowed. You can add new ideas anywhere on the page.
   Do not erase or cross out anything, and don't forget to connect your thoughts to each other as shown on the right. If you run out of ideas, return to the core and keep circling it with your pen(cil) until you get a new idea, or circle the last thought you wrote down.
   If you speak more than one language, you can write down thoughts in whichever language they come to your mind.
5. When the time is up, take a look at your Cluster. Were there any new ideas? Is there anything you'd like to follow up on? Highlight the most interesting items. You can consider writing a new Cluster with one of these at the core, and/or transferring some items into a Mind Map (see next page).
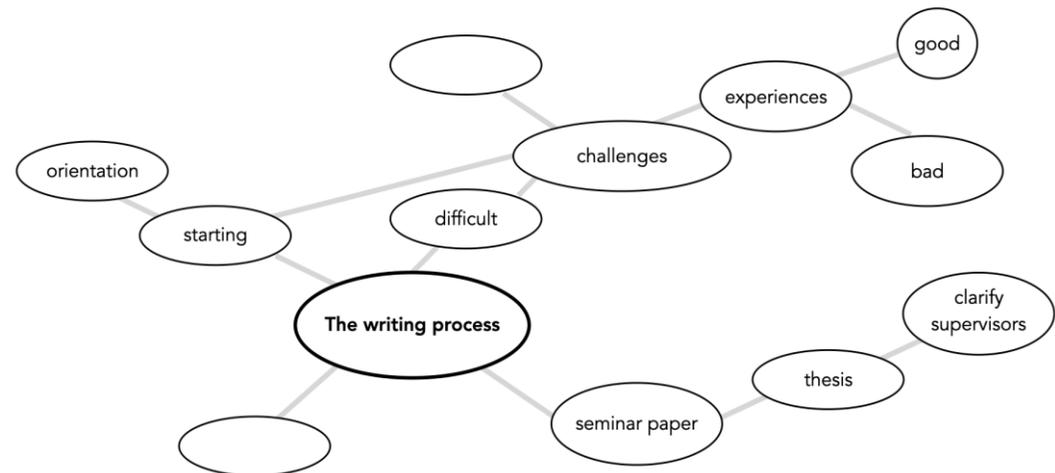

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SCHREIB ZENTRUM

What is a Mind Map?

A Mind Map is a creative writing strategy in which thoughts and ideas branch outward from a central topic in a hierarchical structure.
The aim is to organize the components of a text or project by clarifying the connections of the individual items to each other and structuring the topic. You can use a Mind Map to keep track of the key points in a source that you're reading, to create an outline for the content of your writing assignment, or to keep an overview of the tasks associated with the individual phases of your writing project.

How does it work?

1. Fetch a pen(cil) and a piece of paper. Put the paper horizontally in front of you. In addition, you can use adhesive notes to write on. This can make it easier to relocate items later if needed. You can also use different coloured pen(cil)s for different branches, or different kinds of relationships between components of the Mind Map. If you made a Cluster beforehand, you can transfer components of the Cluster into your Mind Map.
2. Write the topic of your writing assignment or the title of the text you're reading into the center. This is the core of your Mind Map.
3. Starting from the core, draw branches facing outwards as shown below. Each main branch can split into several sub-branches as necessary.
4. Label each branch with a key word, or write it onto an adhesive note.
5. Keep adding and labeling branches and check how individual items are related to one another. The Mind Map should be logical and hierarchical. You can also write down what kind of relation exists between two terms or branches (e.g. X induces Y, or A consists of a, b and c.).
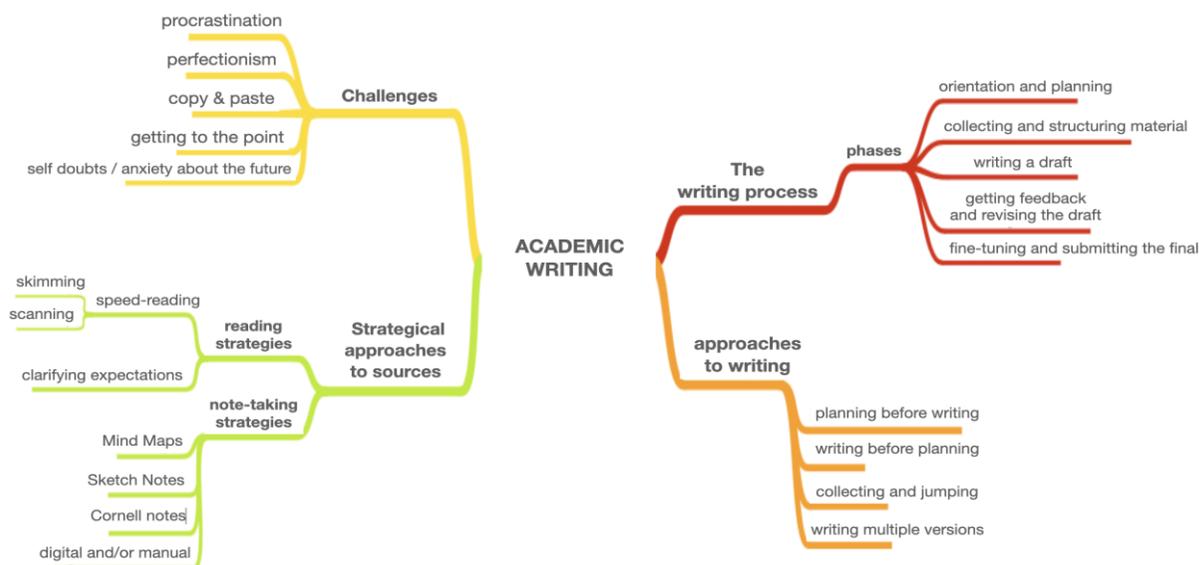
Translation and compilation of this handout by Juliane Homann and Julian Maresch (studierendenWERK BERLIN).

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