
Jump-start your writing process!

Dr. Alison Gibson

Step 1:

Understand the Assignment

Understand the Assignment

1. Assignment Directions
2. Rubric
3. Examples

Assignment Directions

1. Circle the verbs.
2. Identify the genre.
3. Identify the audience, purpose, & context.

Rubric

1. Circle the verbs.
2. Identify differences between assessment values.
3. Identify which criteria are more and less important.

Examples

1. Ask your professor for examples.
2. Reverse outline.
3. Identify strengths and weaknesses.

Step 2:
Pre-Writing

Waiting for the perfect moment



A



B

Starting anyway



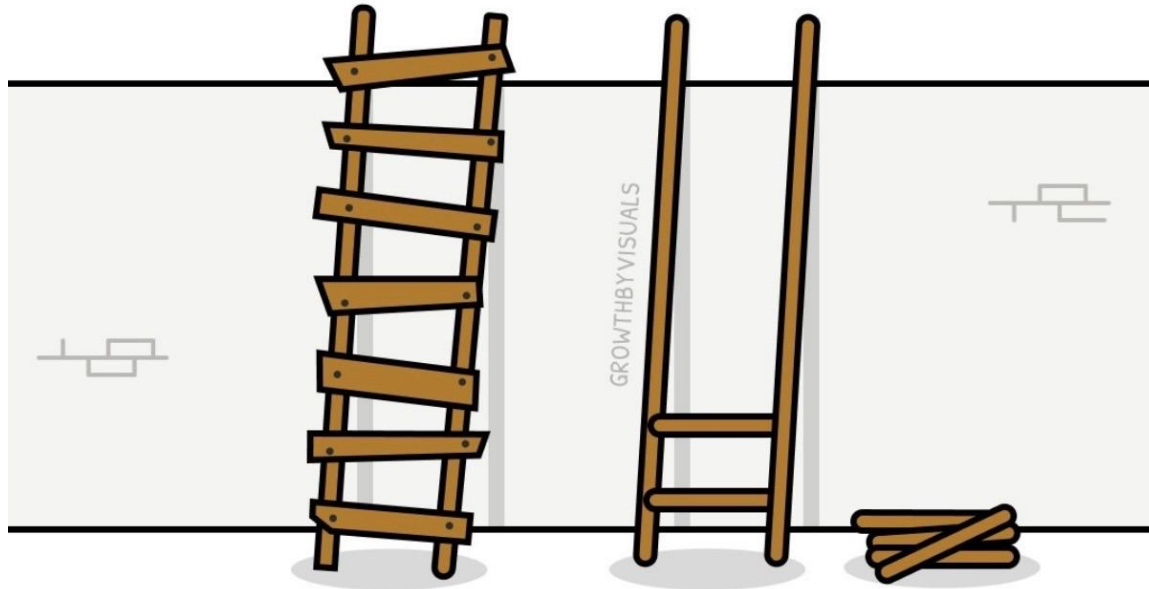
A



B

GROWTHBYVISUALS

Ugly action beats unfinished perfection



Free Write

Choose a topic.

Set a timer. (10 min or less)

Write anything you think!

Free Write

How old are bicycles? I know maybe mid-19th century, but when is the first mass-produced bike available to the public. The first bikes were hilarious with their giant front wheels and tiny back wheels and awkward pedal positions. I wonder what the logic of that design was. Did the wheel engineers of the time know something we don't? Bicycles are common now but when could a family just go buy a bike? ~~or~~ IF the expansion of bicycle use has any connection to the industrial revolution, that could be a factor in the development of urban transportation systems.

Freewrite 28 June 2010

Comin.

My best accomplishment? Probably when I won my scholarship through the university. I was so proud of myself and what I had achieved. But then again, getting the summer job as a paid actor was a dream come true! I also think of accomplishment when I think about how I went from a pity casting as a background singer in *Oliver!* to stage manager my second semester of my freshman year at college, then was cast in bigger and bigger roles until I was the lead in *Insane with Power*. So my journey in theatre is a pretty cool thing. But meeting my husband and falling in love and making a life with him was also pretty great. I guess I've had a lot of accomplishments. But what I've done with theatre stands out the most. If this is my topic, I need to know how to argue that is the biggest/best over the others. I think it's partly the time commitment, how hard I pushed myself, and that I had to learn to progress - it didn't come naturally. I fought for it. That is definitely an accomplishment.

Free Writing Rules

Don't worry about grammar, punctuation or spelling.

Feel free to use any format you like:

- bullet points
- questions
- drawings

Don't worry about coherence: no beginning, middle, and end needed

Don't stop writing until the timer ends!

Keeping it all in your head



Writing it down



After the Free Write

Reread you writing.

Underline or circle ideas that stand out to you.

Next step options:

Another free write on the circled idea

Concept map on the circled idea

Outline or "walk and talk" on the circled idea

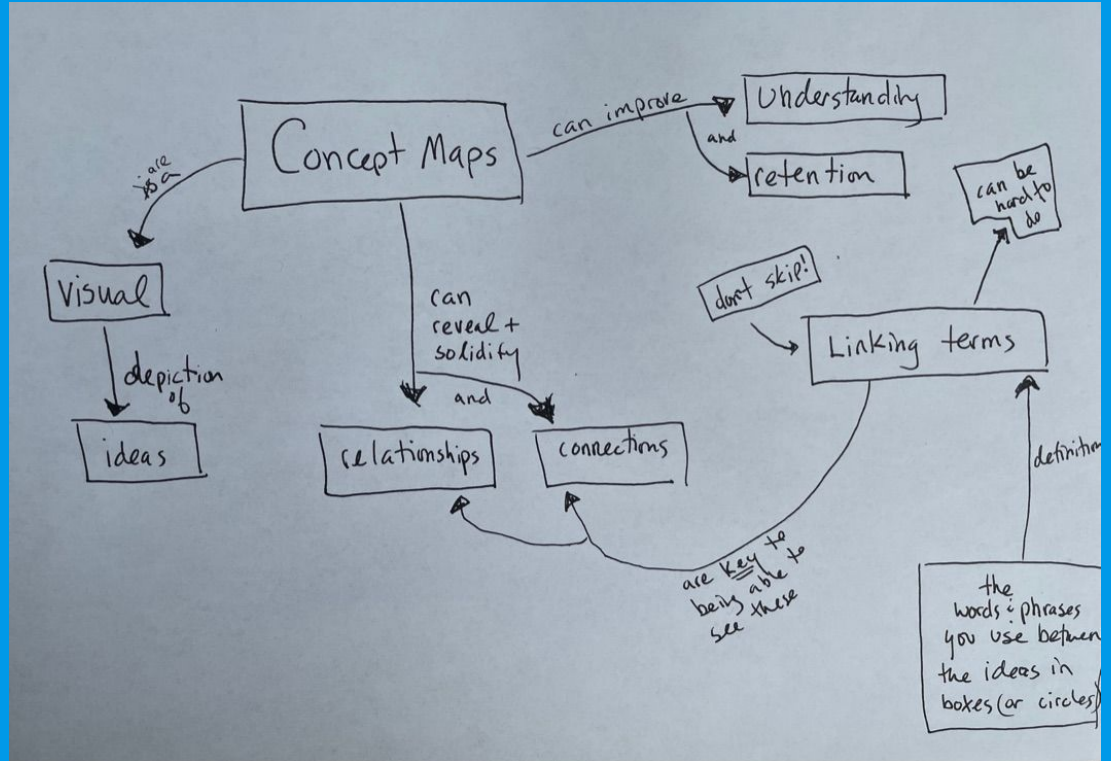
Gavin.
Freewrite 28 June 2010

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Concept map

Concept maps are visual representations of information.

Concept maps are especially useful for students who learn better visually, although they can benefit any type of learner.





Why make a concept map?

→ **Chunking**

Concept maps help you to see the big picture: by starting with higher-level concepts, concept maps help you [chunk](#) information based on meaningful connections.

→ **Organization**

Finding connections between concepts enables you to organize before drafting.

→ **Simple**

Just come up with words– not complete sentences. Have fun with colors and shapes!

How to Improve as a Writer

Technology

Pre-Writing Techniques

Reverse
Outlining

Writer's Block

Free Writing

Research

Recursive Processes

Concept Mapping

Vocabulary

Outlining

Editing

Walk and Talk

AI Writing Tools

Audience Awareness

Physicality

Writing Environments

Exercise and Creativity

Digital Writing

Lighting

Genre Conventions

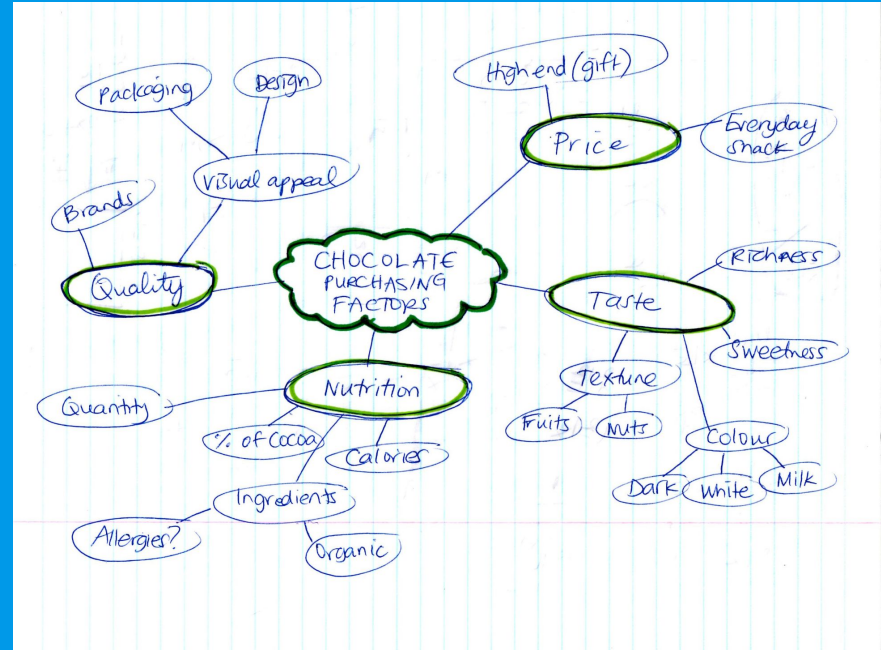
Sound

Rhetorical
Awareness

Food

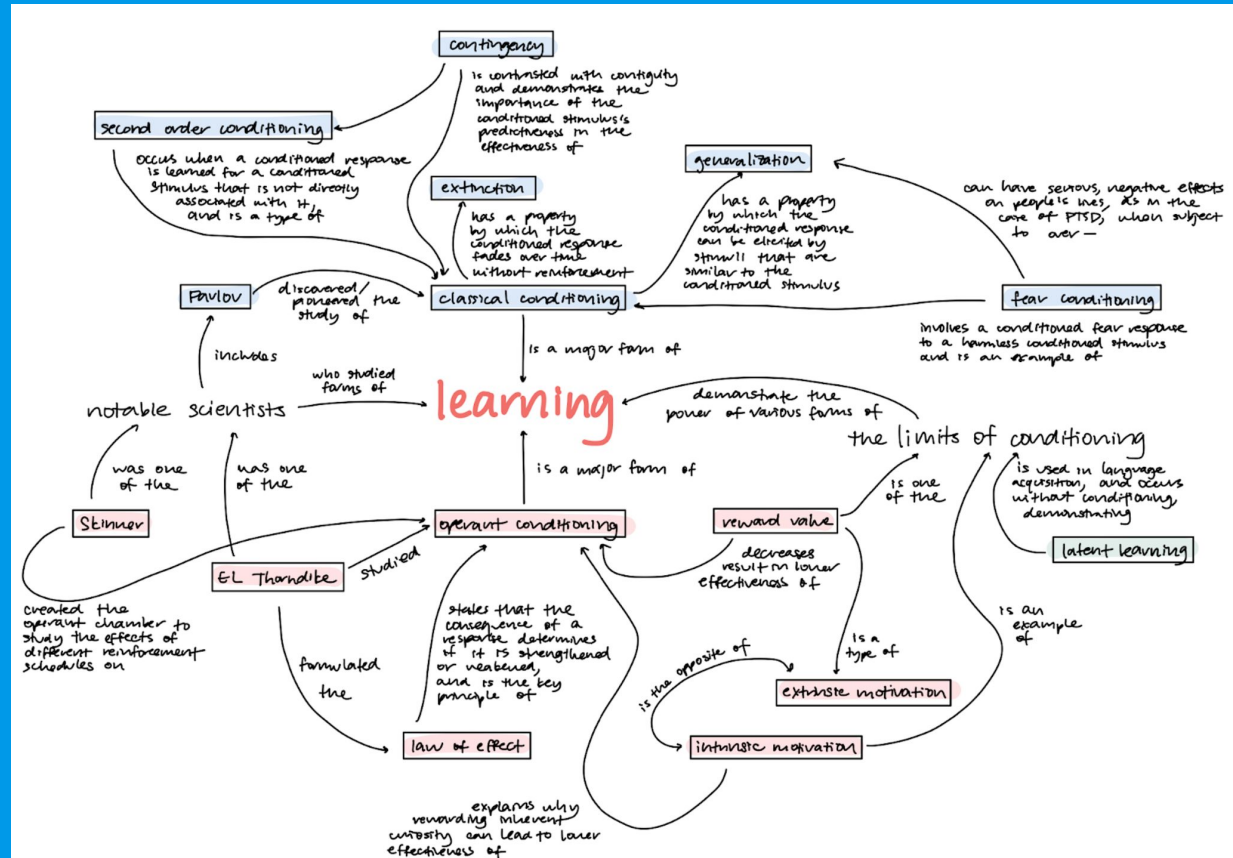
Develop your concept map

- Notice connections between concepts.
- Use circles, lines, and/or colors to indicate relationships between concepts.
- Add terms/categories as needed to clarify the relationship between larger and smaller groups.
- Feel free to erase, move, or rearrange terms so that their position on the page makes sense to you.

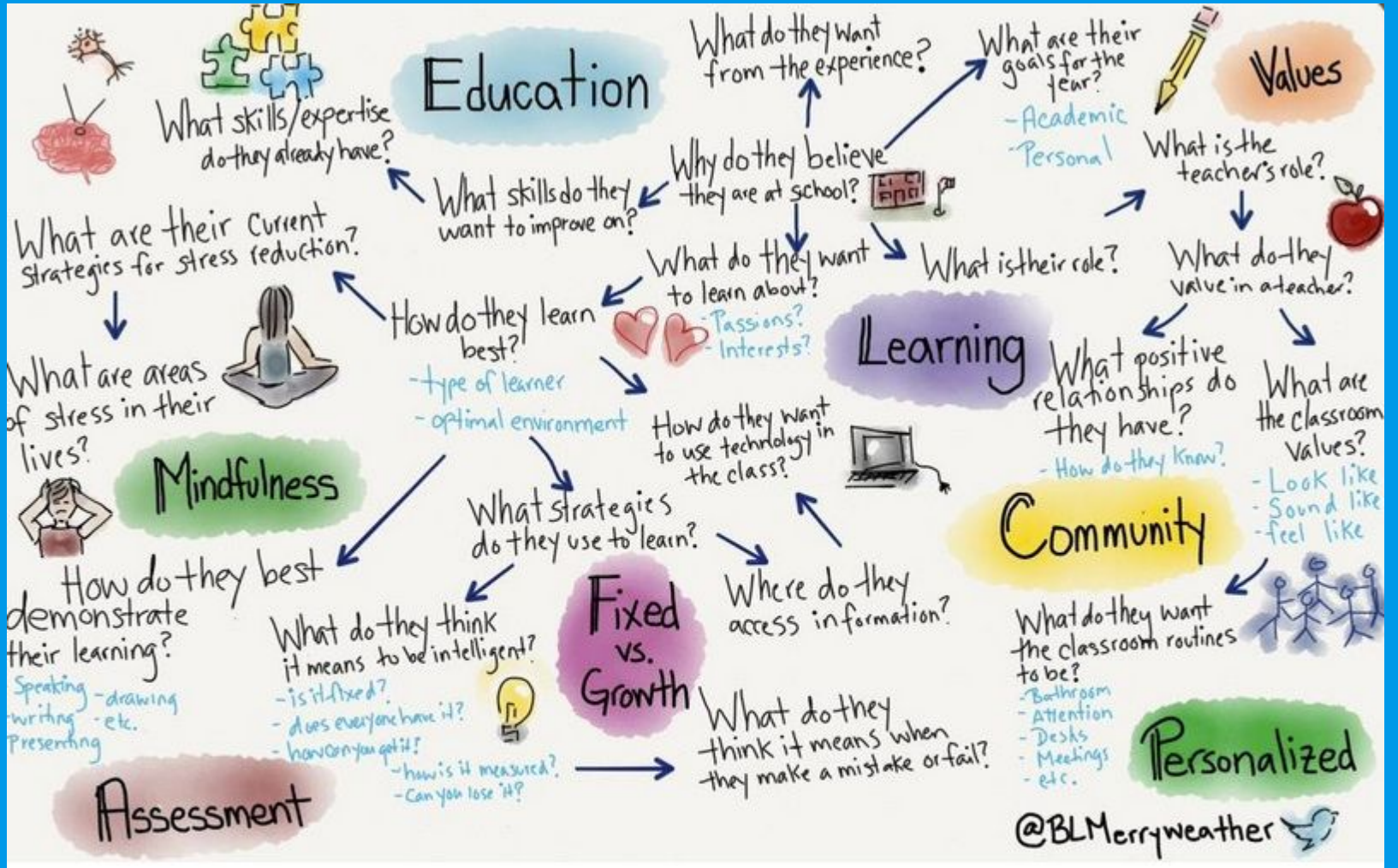


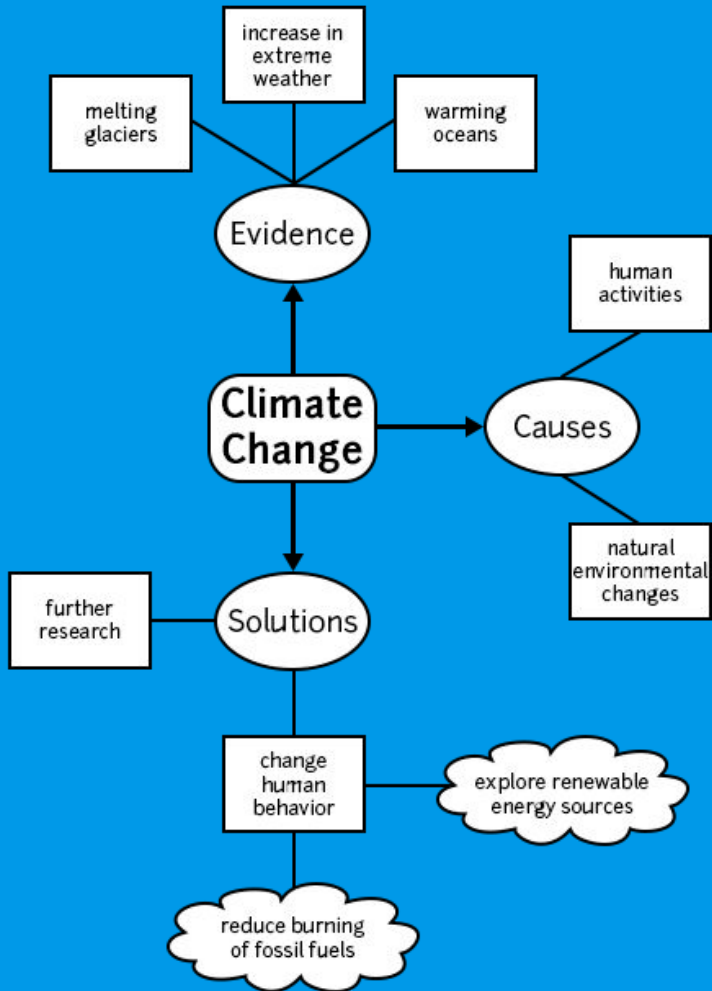
Add detail and edit

Add detail to clarify concepts.



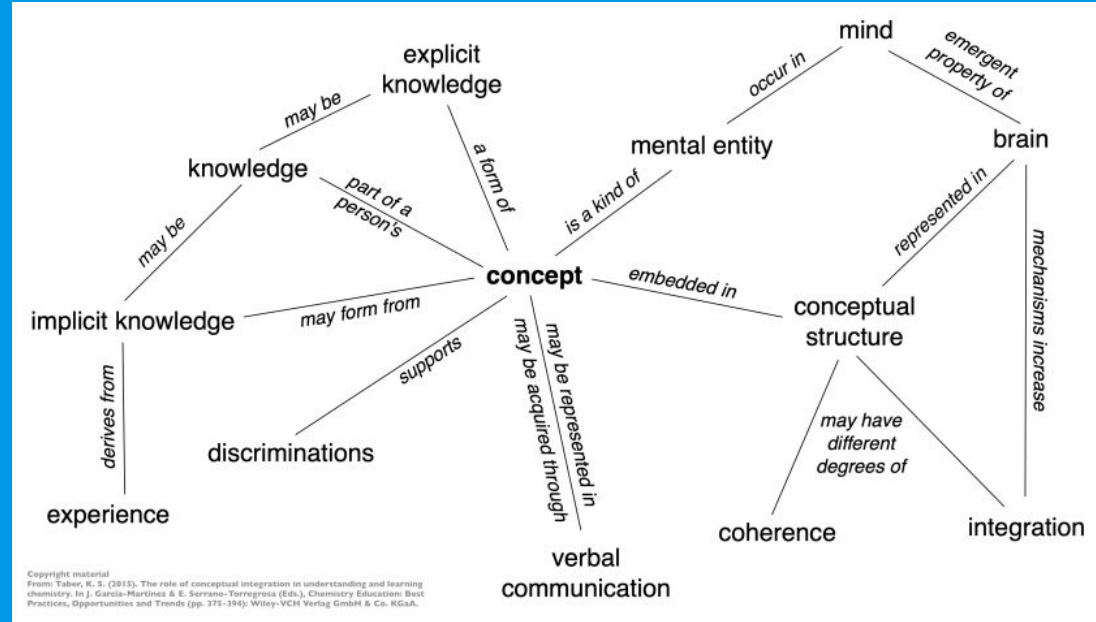
Use color and images.





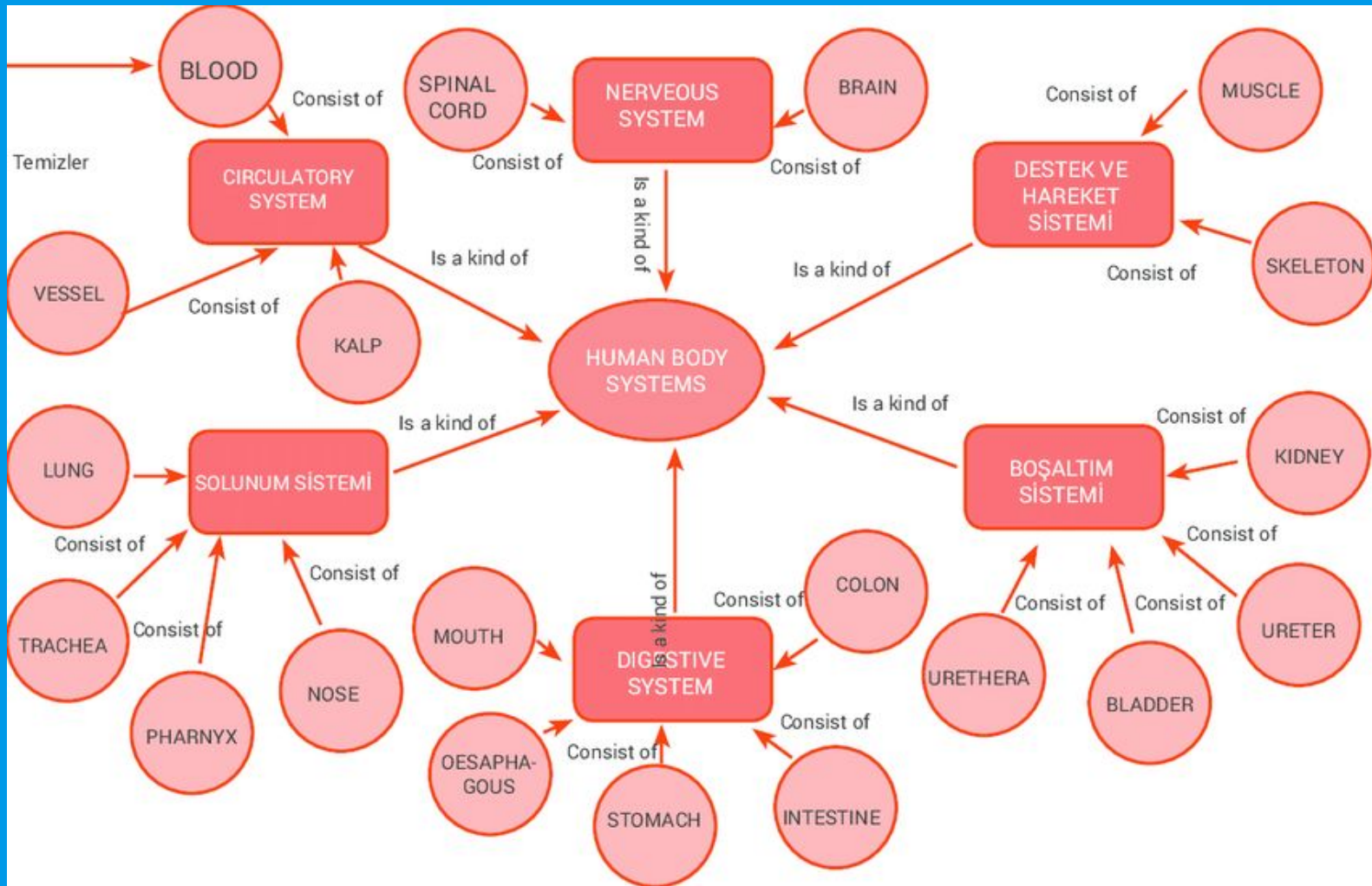
Vary shapes to indicate larger and smaller concepts.

Write on connecting lines to indicate relationships.



Copyright material
 From: Taber, K. S. (2015). The role of conceptual integration in understanding and learning chemistry. In J. Garcia-Martinez & E. Serrano-Torregrossa (Eds.), Chemistry Education: Best Practices, Opportunities and Trends (pp. 375-394). Wiley-VCH Verlag GmbH & Co. KGaA.

Create a digital version of your concept map.



Step 3:
Research and Review

Research and Review



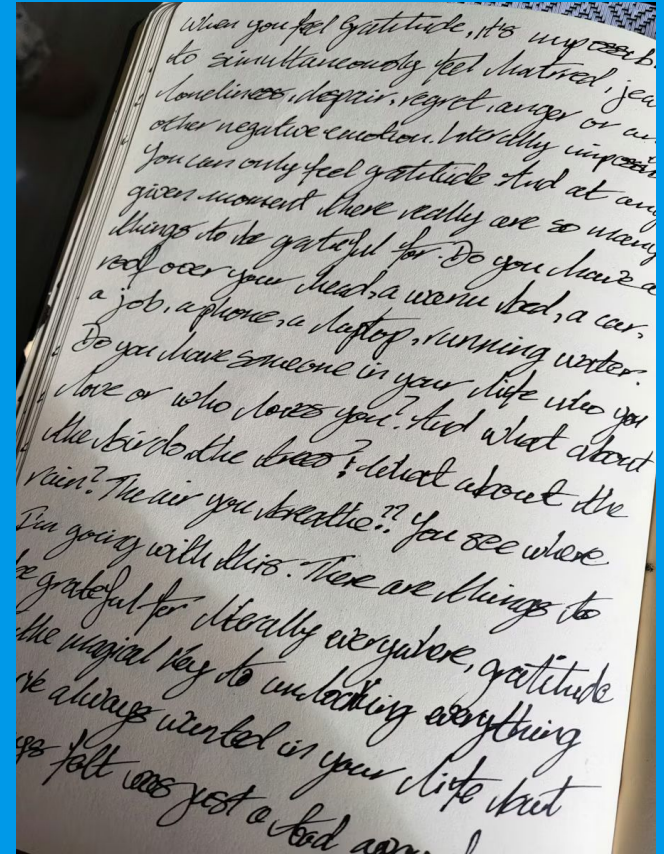
- gather and organize sources
- review class notes
- re-read key texts & annotate
- collect relevant passages

Consider using highlighters, sticky notes, & note cards!

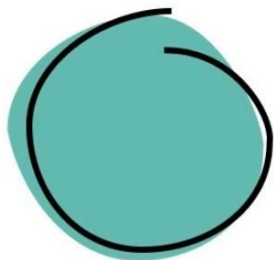
Step 4:
Drafting and Revising

Stinky First Draft (Anne Lamott)

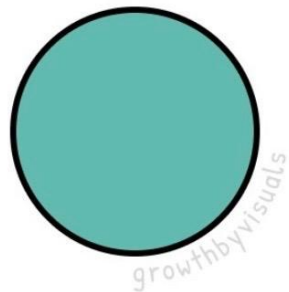
- "the child's draft"
- "the down draft"
- messy, silly
- grammar errors
- a complete draft
- attempts genre conventions
- generally follows assignment directions



JUST MAKE IT EXIST FIRST



YOU CAN MAKE IT GOOD LATER

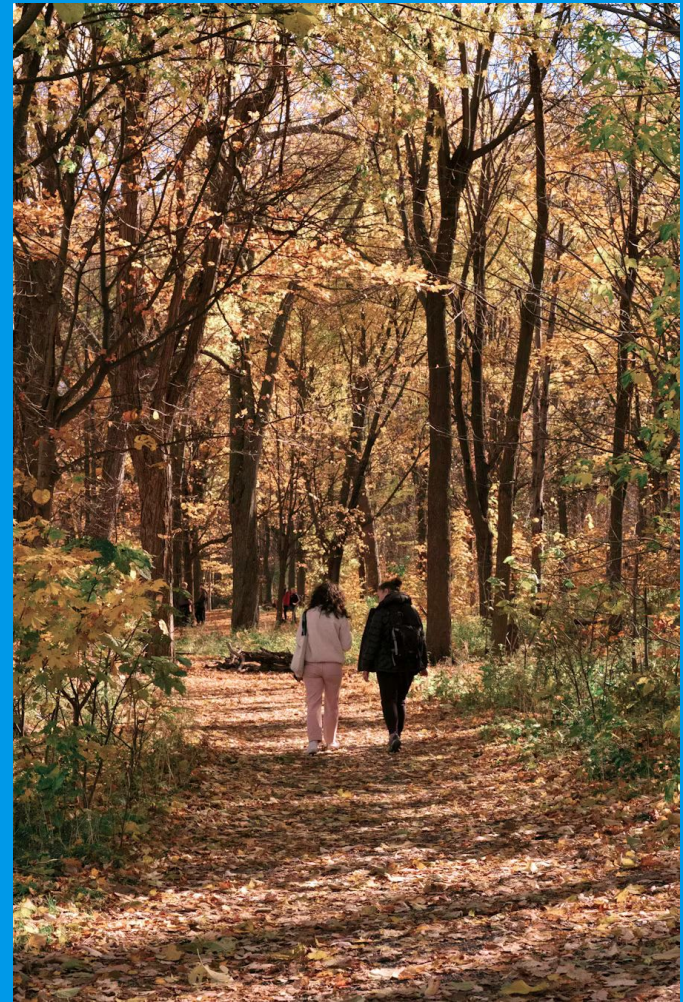


Walk and Talk

Talk with a friend, professor, or mentor about your topic.

Explain your ideas. Ask questions.

Record your conversation or take notes afterwards.



Play with different technologies

Write with pen and paper.

Use markers, poster paper, or other art supplies you like.



Second Draft

"Up Draft"

Start a new document.

Only copy and paste what you really love.

Rewrite, reorder, discover new ideas.

Avoid line editing.



Repeat!

Expert writers revise for new ideas, not to correct errors.

Step 5: Editing

Final Draft

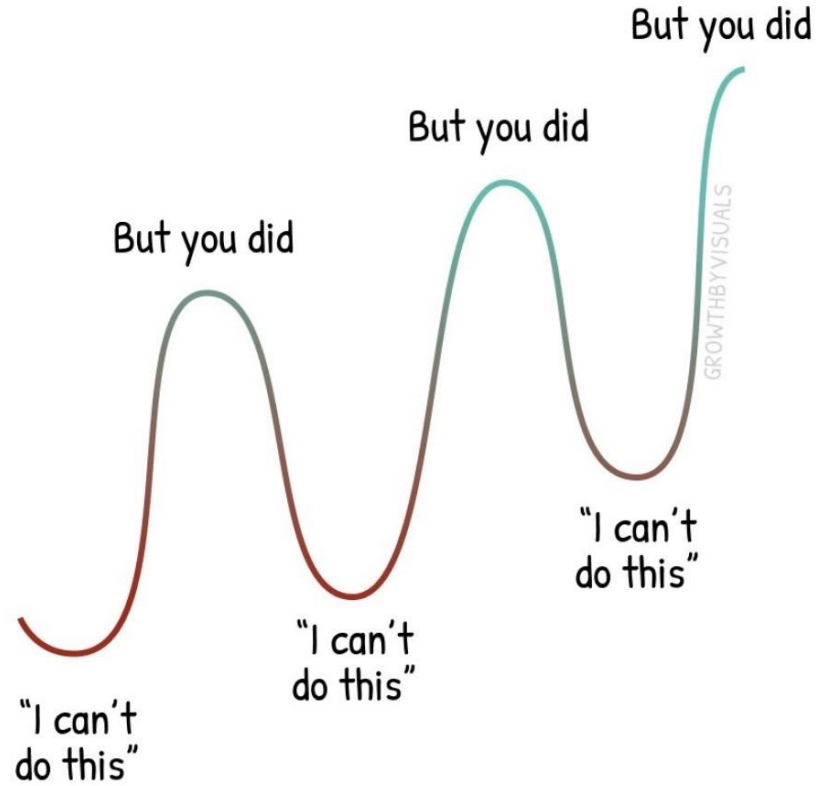
Attend to mechanics:
spelling, punctuation, &
grammar.

Reverse outline your writing.

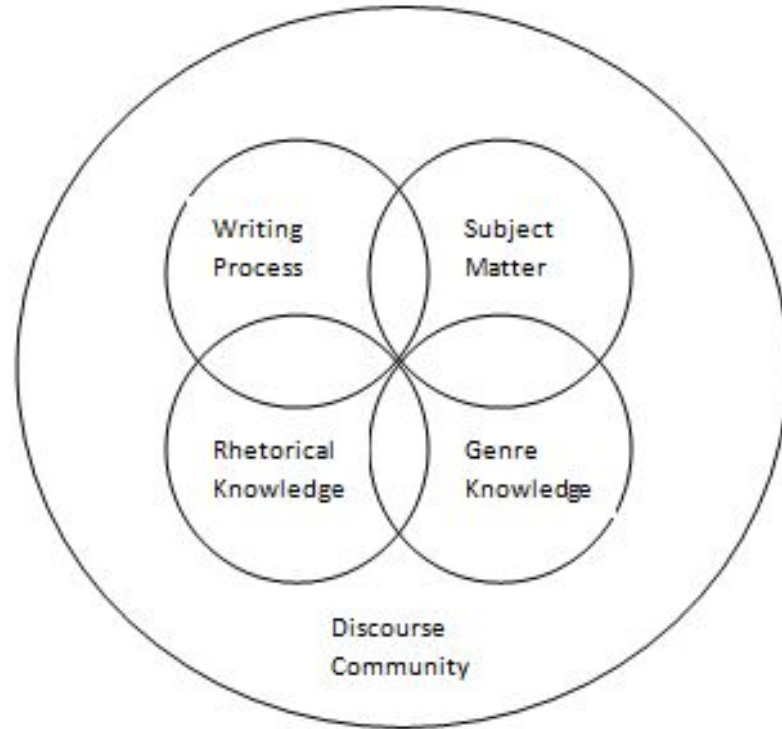
Review the rubric.



What do I do when I am stuck?



The Five Knowledge Domains



Beaufort, Anne. *College Writing and Beyond: A New Framework for University Writing Instruction*. Utah State UP, 2007.

Come to the Writing Center!



Make an appointment at wheaton.mywconline.com



- 30- and 60-minute appointments
- one-on-one
- any stage of the writing process
- in the library

Works Consulted

Beaufort, Anne. *College Writing and Beyond: A New Framework for University Writing Instruction*. Utah State UP, 2007.

"Concept Maps." The Learning Center, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.
<https://learningcenter.unc.edu/tips-and-tools/using-concept-maps/>

"Freewriting." The Learning Hub, University of Illinois Springfield.
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Unsplash. <https://unsplash.com/> Accessed 4 Mar 2026.