

# MIND MAPS AS LEARNING AND REVISION AIDS

## Introduction

This section of the web-site contains a few examples of a learning tool which I developed as an undergraduate student at Warwick in the 1980s, and which I have used with some cohorts of my students since I began teaching in 1990.

The tool is a simple flow chart (or 'mind map'), which enabled me to see on one (very large) piece of paper the main structure and various levels of substantive content of each topic that I was preparing for examination purposes.

The flow chart method rests on the fairly obvious premise that it is easier to understand and remember material about a given topic if one can see the all relevant information at the same time, and if that information is presented physically in a way which is consistent with a regularly used code.

The charts are all geared towards providing a core of knowledge for a 45 minute exam condition essay, which is likely to consist of 800-1000 words. The charts used here are aimed at consolidating a level of knowledge and understanding which would suffice – if the student can write coherently and fluently – for students whose grade ambitions are set at the low-mid 2.1 level.

I would not wish to be taken to be suggesting that students would be well-advised to assume that simply parrot-learning these charts is a sensible learning strategy to adopt. The charts are an aid to learning. They will be of no use to students who have not already gained a familiarity with the topic being addressed. They are likely to be most useful if individual students amend and adapt them in a fashion which displays the student's own attempts to make sense of a given topic.

My own development of the charts as a student rested on an assumption that each topic that I was studying could be broken down into a small number of 'big ideas'; that each 'big idea' was itself divisible into a small number of 'little ideas', and that each 'little idea' could be explored by a small number of seminal cases, statutes, historical events or theoretical concepts. I also assumed that it was important that I could show my examiners in a brief introduction and conclusion that I appreciated why a topic was important, and that I could show that I understood how any topic might link up with other topics in the module or in other modules.

You will see from the maps included here that I soon decided that this tool would work best if different types of data were presented in different colours, and if the relative importance of each item was expressed by using different font sizes.

The original versions of these charts were handwritten on sheets of A3 paper folded into 3. These e-versions are on A4 sheets which should be printed out (on a colour printer) and then stuck side by side.

I and the publishing team at OUP would be interested to hear from both students and their teachers if this supplement to the web-site is a useful learning aid. If you have any views, please send them both to OUP and also to [i.d.loveland@city.ac.uk](mailto:i.d.loveland@city.ac.uk). If the response is favourable, we will put a larger number of topics on to the site for the start of the next academic year.

**Ian Loveland**  
London, Spring 2008

## The mind map code

### Colour chart

<u>Item</u>	<u>Colour</u>
<b>Case</b>	<b>Black</b>
<b>Statute</b>	<b>Red</b>
<b>Historical event</b>	<b>Blue</b>
<b>Institution</b>	<b>Brown</b>
<b>Academic authority</b>	<b>Green</b>
<b>Concept</b>	<b>Purple</b>

### Size chart

(may vary according to amount of text on chart)

Title	32 bold	black
Level 1 heading	24 bold	black
Level 2 heading	20 bold	black underline
Item; very important	20 bold	colour as item
Item; important	16 bold	colour as item
Text	12	colour as item