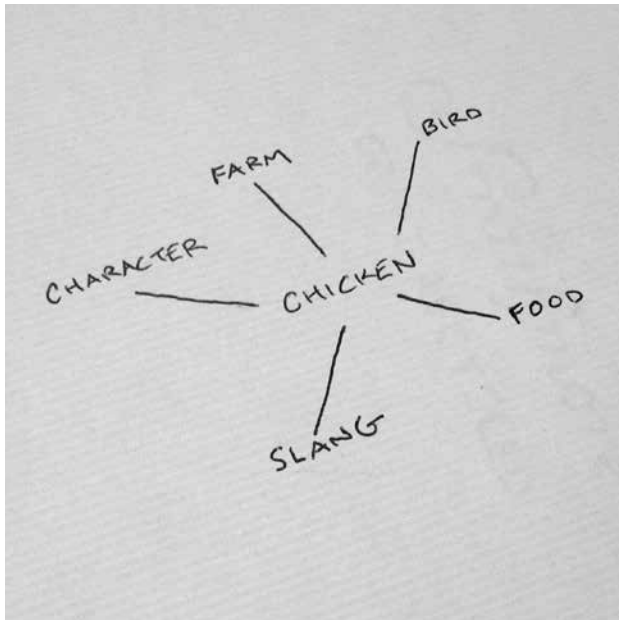


Mind-Mapping

A mind map is an alternative form of brainstorming that creates a diagram of ideas (and how they relate to each other) instead of a list of associations, as does conventional brainstorming. The benefits of the mind-map diagram are: that it allows one to follow how one association or idea leads to another; how associations along a particular path are grouped as similar; and it exposes how similar ideas may occur along completely different paths, which often leads to surprising and unexpected relationships between them that one might not intuitively reach otherwise.



The First Steps

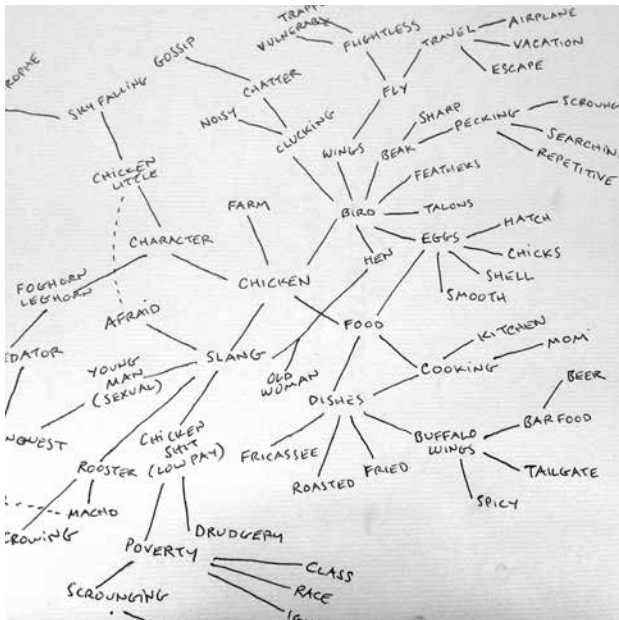
Begin with a single word that literally names the subject you're going to mind-map, placed in the middle of a relatively large sheet of paper so you have a lot of room to add information. Write at a size that's comfortable for you, but not so large that you use up a lot of space.

From this central subject word, draw a line in any direction to a basic aspect of the subject or an idea you associate with it; think about the subject's parts, its use or function, where the subject is found, cultural significance, and so on.

Branch Outward

Around each of the first individual branch ideas, follow the same process to flesh out associations related to each one's specific area of focus or sub-topic. From these more specific sub-topics, add branches that become increasingly detailed and specific, as far as you are able to go. If you run out of associations along a particular path, leave it for the time being and work along another path, branching it out in a similar way; you can always come back to a path or group of associations when a new one that is related comes to mind.

Mind-map the sub-topics relative to the central subject, but also free-associate from these subtopics in any way you like, even if not related to the main subject. Associations such as personal memories, slang, symbolism, film or literature, and their specific associations are all valid: don't edit, and treat all as valuable.



Note Recurring Ideas

As you follow individual branching pathways of ideas, you will find that some ideas, sub-topics or concepts repeatedly appear in different places—but because of different meanings that you associate together. These are important ideas to recognize: the fact that they appear repeatedly may suggest that they have exceptional value or are intrinsically important ideas to ponder; more importantly, they may suggest conceptual relationships between ideas or aspects of the subject that you might assume are unrelated, or that you have never considered before... and in these relationships may be the seeds of a new and inventive narrative or story to be told about the subject. Mark these with different colored highlighters, or draw connective lines between them across the map so you can track them.