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Brainstorm

We all face life challenges everyday, and, using common sense, devise and try out solutions. Most of the time, happily these work, and our problems diminish and resolve. Sometimes we invite the input of trusted others, family and friends, to expand our options. Most of the time, solutions are thought exercises and verbal exchanges.

A powerful way to enhance solution building is through a visual dimension. We can diagram the central challenge (s), add as many options as we can think up, and share the diagram so that others can add more options.

This process is brainstorming and the visual diagram mapping the process has been called mind mapping, a term coined by Tony Buzan a couple of decades ago. His recent mind mapping guide, *Mind Map Mastery* (Buzan, 2018), details how this process can be applied to problem solving and solution building.

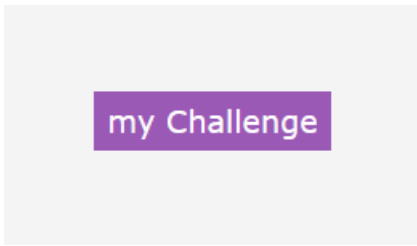
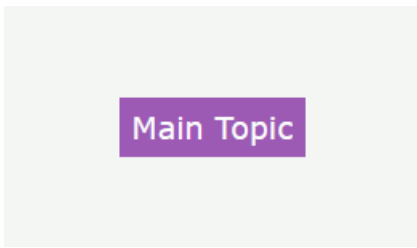
The brainstorming web application to which this guide applies is a basic mapping tool built from open source code libraries to which I have added features to smoothe the diagramming process. A user can identify a central challenge, add sub-challenges, possible solutions, and illustrate with images from an online image gallery or uploaded from their own image library. Each brainstorming map can be saved in the app's file format or a universal format that can be opened in a free program, FreeMind. The app also has the ability to create map screenshots and print them.

On the pages that follow, I have detailed instructions to help navigate the app's interface.

Best viewing for mobile devices: Chrome browser.

Getting Started

When you first land on the app's web page (index.html), you will see a new map with a single node labelled "Main Topic" in the center. This is your central challenge. You can double click on this (or any node) to label it.



Then, you can add new subtopics and images using the menu (display by clicking the menu button lower right).



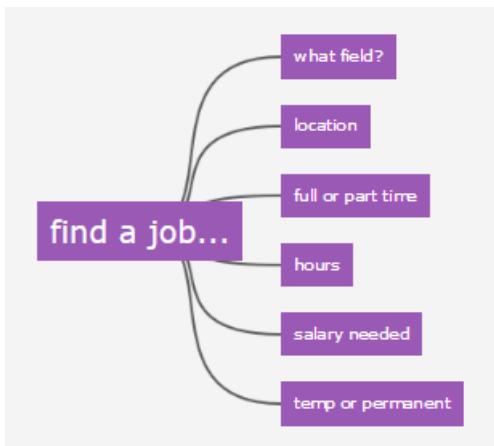
Add Nodes

Having identified a main challenge, you can now break it down to sub challenges. These can be used to identify "bite-sized" chunks to be tackled one at a time.

In the example, "Get a job," the first set of sub challenges are decisions describing what work you want.



You can change the labels at any time by double clicking on them, and you can add new ones.



You can click (mouse down) on any node (except the main one) and drag it to a new location.

You can also use keyboard shortcuts.

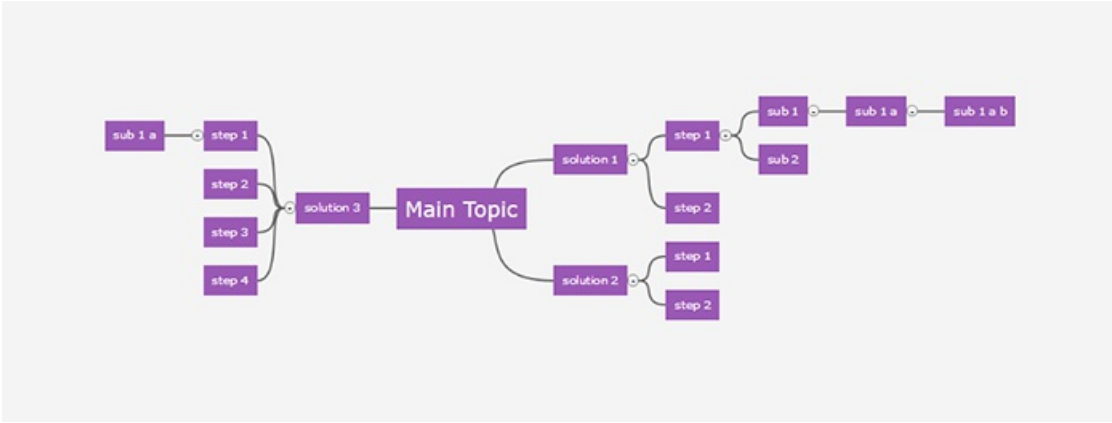
enter: add a "brother" node

insert: add a "child" node

delete: delete the selected node

F2: edit the node's topic

You can create large maps.



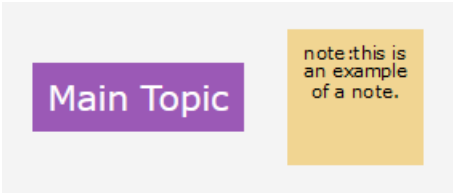
You can add a node with a link to a web page. When you edit the newly created node, enter the web page's address (URL) using the format <http://> (regular prefix) or <https://> (secure prefix).



When this node is subsequently selected (by clicking on it), and you use the action "go to link" the linked page will open in a separate window.

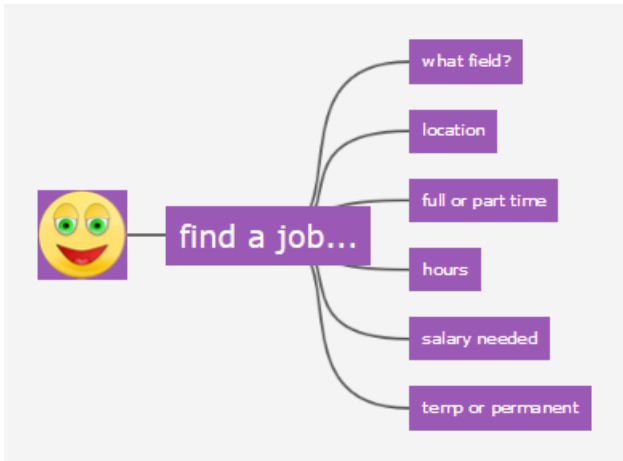
- actions ▾
- ✖ remove item ▲
- 🔗 go to link
- 🔍 zoom in
- 🔍 zoom out ▾

You can add a note.

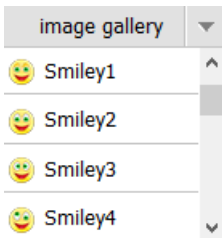


Add Images

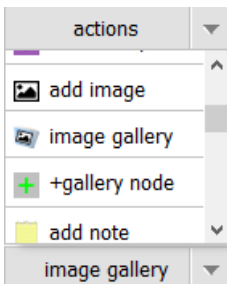
At any map location you can add an image.



The image gallery is part of the app and contains a selection of images from which to choose (see Getting Started). You can also add your own image ("add image node") in the Actions drop-down list. It will be uploaded and placed in the map.



A second image gallery with a large number of images is also available under actions. Once you select an image from this image gallery, choose the "+gallery node" to add it to your map.



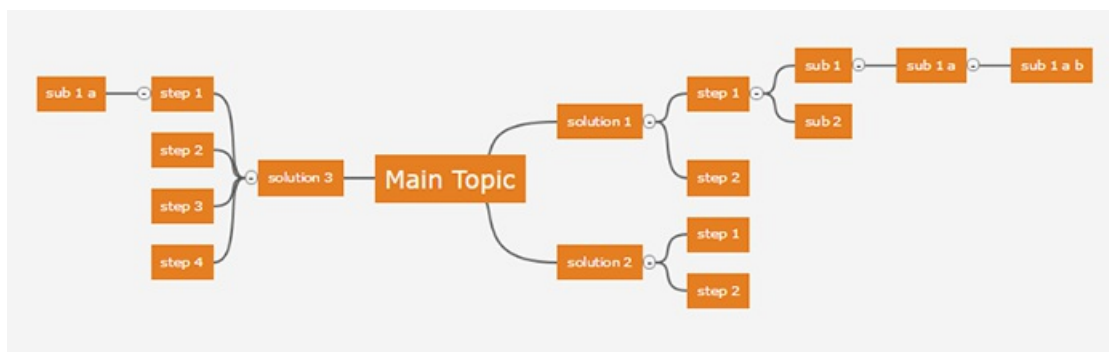
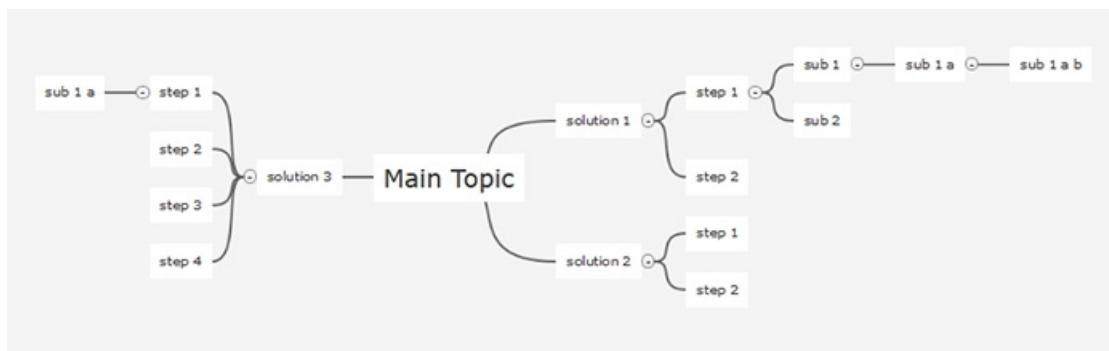
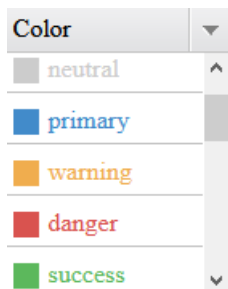
Background Color

When starting a map, you can choose a background color for topic and image nodes. The default color is "neutral."

Once chosen, additional nodes will retain the color unless you change this.

Your color choice is saved when you save a map and will re-display when the map file is re-opened.

Use the drop-down list at the lower left to choose a background color.



Remove Items

If you want to remove a subtopic or image, there is a "remove item" option in the menu.

Navigation

The Actions drop-down list contains several other actions including screenshot, print, zoom in and out, browse, open and save files and a window resize tool.

A word of caution: the resize tool cannot be undone, so before using it, you may want to save your map as either a jm (this app's file format) or mm (FreeMind format). Then when you re-open the map file, the window will be at the normal default size.

The best way to learn the interface is to try out the options, practice before creating a map that you want to use and keep.

When exiting, save your map file. A warning to save it will display.



Warning: did you save your map file?

OK, got it.

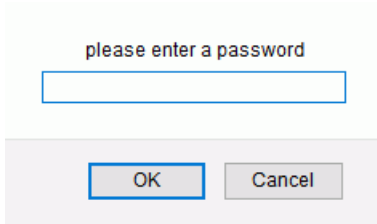
close

(Leave the "OK, got it" box checked and use the close button to prevent display of this pop-up again in your current session. It will reset for the next session. If the check is removed it will continue to remind you to save your map file when you begin to use the upper right, browser close "X" button.)

Security

The app is on a website that is secured by SSL, when accessed using its https URL (for example: "<https://eLearningprojects.com/brainstorm/example/index.html>").

We also apply data encryption to files that are saved in mm and jm formats. When you save these map files, you will be asked to enter a password. It is important that you enter your password and keep a record of it. You will need this password to re-open and display your saved map file.



A screenshot of a password prompt dialog box. The dialog has a light gray background. At the top, the text "please enter a password" is displayed in a small, dark font. Below the text is a rectangular text input field with a thin blue border. At the bottom of the dialog, there are two buttons: "OK" on the left and "Cancel" on the right, both with a light gray background and a thin blue border.

Even with these security measures used, we recommend that you do not include readily identifiable data, like names, addresses or other identifiable information.

Sources

The brainstorm app is adapted from and uses several open source codes including:

jsMind
html2canvas.js
jquery.min.js
jquery-ui.min.js
jquery.selectBoxIt.min.js
jquery.selectBoxIt.css
forge-sha256.min.js
MSDDropDown
js-cookie

Images from Clker
<https://www.clker.com/>

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jQuery v3.4.1 | (c) JS Foundation and other contributors | jquery.org/license

jQuery UI - v1.12.0 - 2016-07-08
<http://jqueryui.com>
Includes: widget.js, position.js, data.js, disable-selection.js, effect.js, effects/effect-blind.js, effects/effect-bounce.js, effects/effect-clip.js, effects/effect-drop.js, effects/effect-explode.js, effects/effect-fade.js, effects/effect-fold.js, effects/effect-highlight.js, effects/effect-puff.js, effects/effect-pulsate.js, effects/effect-scale.js, effects/effect-shake.js, effects/effect-size.js, effects/effect-slide.js, effects/effect-transfer.js, focusable.js, form-reset-mixin.js, jquery-1-7.js, keycode.js, labels.js, scroll-parent.js, tabbable.js, unique-id.js, widgets/accordion.js, widgets/autocomplete.js, widgets/button.js, widgets/checkboxradio.js, widgets/controlgroup.js, widgets/daterangepicker.js, widgets/dialog.js, widgets/draggable.js, widgets/droppable.js, widgets/menu.js, widgets/mouse.js, widgets/progressbar.js, widgets/resizable.js, widgets/selectable.js, widgets/selectmenu.js, widgets/slider.js, widgets/sortable.js, widgets/spinner.js, widgets/tabs.js, widgets/tooltip.js Copyright jQuery Foundation and other contributors; Licensed MIT

jquery.selectBoxIt - v3.8.0 - 2013-10-04
<http://www.selectboxit.com>
Copyright (c) 2013 Greg Franko; Licensed MIT

jquery.selectBoxIt.css 3.8.0
Author: @gregfranko

forge-sha256.min.js
Copyright (c) 2015-2017 Romuald Brillout and contributors

MSDDropDown
jquery.dd.js and dd.css
MSDDropDown - jquery.dd.js and dd.css
author: Marghoob Suleman - <http://www.marghoobsuleman.com/>
Date: 10 Nov, 2012
Version: 3.5.2
Revision: 27
web: www.marghoobsuleman.com
msDDropDown is free jQuery Plugin: you can redistribute it and/or modify it under the terms of the either the MIT License or the Gnu General Public License (GPL) Version 2

js-cookie
<https://github.com/js-cookie/js-cookie>

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sweetalert2

<https://sweetalert2.github.io/>

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References

Buzan, T. (2018). *Mind Map Mastery: The complete guide to learning and using the most powerful thinking tool in the universe*. London: Watkins.

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map

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Glossary