Stages in the Construction of a Concept Map

Brainstorming Stage
Organizing Stage
Layout Stage
Linking Stage
Revising and Finalizing Stage

Brainstorming Stage

- List any and all terms and concepts associated with the topic of interest.

- Write them on Post It Notes or scraps of paper, one word or phrase per note.

- Don't worry about redundancy, relative importance, or relationships at this point.

- The objective is to generate the largest possible list.

Organizing Stage

- Spread concepts on a table or on the floor.

- Create groups and sub-groups of related items. Try to group items to emphasize hierarchies.

- Identify terms that represent higher categories and add them.

- Feel free to rearrange items and introduce new items omitted initially.

- Some concepts will fall into multiple groupings. This will become important in the linking stage.

Layout Stage

- **Arrange terms so that they represent your understanding of the interrelationships and connections among groupings.**

- **Use a consistent hierarchy in which the most important concepts are in the center or at the top.**

- **Within sub-grouping, place closely related items near to each other.**

- **Think in terms of connecting the items in a simple sentence that shows the relationship between them.**

- **Feel free to rearrange things at any time during this phase.**

Linking Phase

- **Use lines with arrows to connect and show the relationship between connected items.**

- **Write a word or short phrase by each line or arrow to specify the relationship.**

- **Many arrows can originate or terminate on particularly important concepts.**

Revising and Finalizing Stage

- Carefully examine the draft concept map.
- Rearrange sections to emphasize organization and appearance.
- Remove or combine items to simplify.
- Consider adding color or different fonts.
- Clean up and finalize your presentation so that others can readily understand your map.