The Quickstart Guide to Xmind

Create your first useful mindmap in Xmind, in 30 minutes or less

by Paul Myers

On Your Mark...

If you have Xmind already installed, go to the next step. If not, download the latest version of the software for your operating system at
http://www.xmind.net/download/

Make sure you remember where you saved the file. To install the software, just double-click on the icon for the file you downloaded and follow the prompts.

I recommend sticking with the default installation options.

Get Set...

Note:If you only want to learn the mechanics and don't care if the first one is useful, you can skip to the next section. If you want it to be useful, keep reading this part.

The first thing you need to do is grab a piece of paper and a pen, or open a document to take a few quick notes.

First, decide on the topic you want to create a mindmap about. It can be pretty much anything. Something you'd like to learn or teach, a goal you have or a project you want to start. Write down a topic name that is short and clear and can function as a title for the map.

Under that, write down a short list of major categories of the things you need to have or do or learn to make it happen. For this list, just brainstorm quickly. Don't spend more than 5 or 10 minutes on this part. You can expand on it later. Remember: The goal at this point is to create something, so you can see how easy the process can be.

Go!

Start Xmind, and write down the time.

Go to the File Menu and select "New Blank Map," or hold down the Control and Shift keys and tap the letter N. That will create your central node. Click on that and tap the F2 key. That will allow you to edit the text label for the node. Type in the title you wrote downfor this map.

Hit the Tab key, and then press F2. Enter a general label for the group of things you will need to do or get to make the goal of the map a success.

Hit Enter, and then F2. Type in the label for the next category. You want these to be

in chronological order. What has to happen first, then next, and then after that, in order to move from where you are to where you want to be.

Repeat those steps (Enter, F2, add label) until you have created a node for each major category. In the default mode, Xmind will create these in clockwise order.

Now, either use the arrow keys to navigate back to the first main category, or just click on it with the mouse. Hit the Tab key, and then F2. Type in either the name of a sub-category or an action, resource, or other relevant label. Hit Enter again, then F2, and add another label that's covered under the same topic.

For example, if the main category was goals, you might list sub-categories like Relationship(s), Financial, Education, etc. Each of these would have sub-topics or specific goals, any of which could be broken down further, as needed. Or you could just go straight to the specific goals, and then add "child nodes" that walk through the steps needed to reach them.

Now, choose the File | Save menu option, click the Save to Disk icon, or tap CTRL-S. Choose a directory to save the map in, and edit the name of the file if needed. By default, it will save the map with the file name the same as the title you entered into the first node you created, and the extension .xmind.

Next, go back to any of the nodes you've created and click on it. Tap the Tab key, then F2, and type in "Go to website." Hit return. Then hold down the CTRL key and tap the letter H, or right-click your mouse while the pointer is over that node and select the Hyperlink option. A screen will pop up allowing you to choose the type of link you want to set. For this example, use the default, which is a URL to a website.

Type in the URL to any website you want, making sure it's complete. http://etc... and then click the Okay button. You will now see a globe icon after the text you entered. Clicking on that icon will open your browser and call up the website you linked to.

Click on the text of that node and hit Return and F2. Enter the text "Open a file." Hit return and then CTRL-H or right-click and choose the hyperlink option again. In the screen that comes up, click on the File icon on the left side of the screen. Use the requester that now shows in the right side to choose which file you want opened when someone clicks on that node.

If the map is for your personal use, you can leave the "Hyperlink type" set to absolute. If you're creating a map for distribution, and will be including files you want people to be able to access from within the map, click the radio button marked "Relative," after making sure the file is inside the directory you'll be distributing.

Then click the Okay button.

At the end of that node, you will now see an icon showing the type of file you selected. Clicking on that will open the file.

Next, pick any node in the map and click on it. Tap the F4 key, and a text editor will open. Type in any note you like. When you're done, click on any other node, or in the blank area outside the map. You will now see a note icon after the label for that node. If you hover the mouse over that icon, you can read the note. Clicking on it will open the note for editing.

These are extremely handy for doing research, adding in-context explanations of the purpose of a node, or pretty much anything else you want to be able to track or include in a map created for distribution.

Click the Save icon, hit CTRL-S, or go to the File menu and choose the Save option.

Write down the time.

Congratulations! You're done. You've just created a useful mindmap, complete with links to a website and a data file, and a note.

Do me a favor? Take a second and drop me a quick email. Let me know how long it took you to do the whole set of steps, start to finish. The address is:

paul@talkbiz.com

There are a lot of things you can do that we haven't covered in this quickie tutorial. They're much easier to work through when you know the basics. For the most part, you've just learned everything you need to know to create useful mindmaps for yourself or for others

Hopefully this quickie tutorial has given you some idea of the potential in using mindmaps for clarifying your own ideas, researching and storing information on various subjects, creating and distributing mindmaps as products or bonuses, and more. Maybe even some things I've never considered.

Enjoy!

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