



Why (and how) to use mind maps for online teaching

Timely tips for K-12 classroom teachers pivoting to remote learning

Introduction

According to a recent study from UNESCO, the COVID-19 pandemic has directly affected about 90% of the world's students. These events have included protracted school closures and, in many instances, a complete shift to online classrooms, the latter of which has arguably been the most significant challenge for both teachers and students alike.

Teachers have had little time to plan for and adapt to new remote teaching environments, and to the tools they need to create a fulfilling learning experience. Identifying and onboarding new online teaching tools have taken place on condensed timelines, with very limited time for reflection and process refinement.

This eBook will explore some of the side effects of this shift to online teaching, highlight the resulting challenges and potential solutions to those side effects, and illustrate how mind mapping can help make this transition easier.

Let's get started!



1

Side Effects of Shifting to Online Teaching

UNESCO's study titled *"Education and COVID-19: Challenges and Opportunities"* identifies five key side effects of this rapid shift to online classrooms, and what the resulting challenges have been for teachers and students.

These include:

1. A reliance on poor teaching techniques
2. Educators feeling overwhelmed and under-supported
3. Equity gaps are exacerbated
4. Educators are pulled in numerous directions
5. Isolation and distractions are prevalent amongst students

This section of the eBook will explore each of these side effects in more detail, and explore what the impact has been on teachers and students around the globe.

1. A reliance on poor teaching techniques

Physical displacement between teachers and students is causing a regression in learning techniques, or a reliance on techniques that are known to be less effective. This is primarily out of necessity, as in-person, interactive learning experiences are simply not possible in many places around the world.

Some of these ineffective teaching techniques include:

- Distribution of virtual or physical learning materials with little to no hands-on follow-up
- One-to-many dictation of course material that results in passive listening
- Minimal engagement between peers over the course material
- A regression to verbal or text-based learning over visual or hands-on learning

As mentioned, this regression is largely out of necessity. Many teachers simply don't have the ability, or time, to find new ways to engage effectively with students in a new remote environment. The result is a reliance on older, less effective teaching methods.

2. Educators are overwhelmed and under-supported

Educators around the world have been struggling to keep up with the various pressures and requirements that have arisen from this shift to online teaching. As is the nature of this global pandemic, teachers were given little to no notice when shifting to online learning.

As a result, teachers have had to sift through and adapt large amounts of course material to an online learning environment. Add to this the personal challenges of juggling families, lockdowns, and professional responsibilities, and you have a workforce that is being pulled in many different directions at once.

3. Equity gaps are exacerbated

Online learning requires students to have the appropriate devices and applications needed to participate. Of course, not every student will have access to the same internet connection, applications, devices, or learning material as their peers.

This has exacerbated the equity gap between different socio-economic groups, and makes it difficult for teachers to ensure that all students are given equal opportunity to learn.

4. Educators are pulled in numerous directions

School safety procedures during the pandemic are different from country to country, and even schoolboard to schoolboard. In those locations where schools have re-opened, many teachers are being asked to juggle multiple styles of teaching. This might include in-classroom teaching, virtual classrooms, and traditional distance learning.

In addition to this, teachers must develop lesson plans and curricula, and adapt those plans to each specific medium they're using. That's on top of staying up to date on, and enforcing, safety procedures needed to keep staff and students safe.

5. Isolation and distractions are prevalent

Keeping young students engaged and attentive is hard enough in a traditional classroom setting. Add to this the isolation and distractions of online learning at home, and you've got a real challenge on your hands.

Remote teachers must now tackle all of the aforementioned challenges, while also finding ways to keep socially isolated students engaged with their learning material.

Luckily, we're living in a world that has no shortage of new technology to help with each of these challenges. In the next section, we'll dig into some potential solutions. Then, we'll discuss how mind mapping and MindManager is one such online teaching tool that can help.

In the next section, we'll look at the key challenges that are resulting from these five side effects and offer potential solutions.



2

Online Teaching Challenges (and Solutions)

As can be expected, the side effects of shifting to online teaching listed in Section 1 have caused a number of serious challenges for educators.

These include:

1. Lack of motivation from students
2. Feelings of isolation
3. Technical issues
4. Cumbersome learning material
5. Difficulty assigning and tracking tasks

This section will look at each of these challenges and provide suggestions for potential solutions.

1. Lack of motivation from students

Depending on the age of your students, it can be extremely difficult to keep them engaged in course material and motivated to learn. This has been made all the more difficult thanks to the abundance of distractions that students face when learning from home, and the disruptions to their daily routines.

To keep students motivated when teaching online, set clear and measurable goals for each of your students so that they have an end point to focus on in their work. Clearly outline what the goal is for each learning activity and assignment, and set clear parameters.

This should include:

- A set timeframe and due date
- A measurable, quantifiable outcome
- A means of accountability
- The ability to track task and project completion
- Open lines of communication and collaboration

It's important to clearly communicate expectations from online students. This will help keep them motivated to complete the task at hand and, hopefully, to achieve the outcome that you laid out for them.

2. Isolation

People are inherently social creatures. As such, we often feel isolated or lonely when we're not interacting in person with our friends, classmates, and colleagues. This feeling of isolation has become a prominent issue for teachers and students during this pandemic.

The best way to tackle student isolation is to leverage the video-conferencing and collaboration tools available to you as an online teacher. Coordinate as many virtual group activities as possible. Turn your camera on when chatting with your students, and encourage them to do the same.

Using platforms that enable collaborative engagement with learning materials is another great way to create a sense of connection between students. Make sharing, commenting, and working collaboratively with learning materials as easy as possible.

3. Technical issues

As advanced as telecommunications and online teaching technology is, technical issues will always be a factor. Disruptions caused by outages, limited technical skills, or insufficient equipment has become a common issue that teachers must juggle.

Virtual teaching is only as effective as the tools and internet connection you and your students have at your disposal. To ensure that all students are given equal opportunity to learn, reach out to your class early to gauge how many students have access to the necessary devices and connections to participate effectively.

Next, you should choose software that is easy-to-use, intuitive, and not too resource intensive. Select online teaching tools that are easily disseminated to your students, and that can be easily installed on a wide range of devices.

Lastly, you should schedule an onboarding session with students to make sure that everyone is confident in using the new learning software. Arrange for extra help for students who are struggling to adapt to the new tools.

4. Cumbersome learning material

As mentioned in the first section, a rapid shift to online teaching has meant that educators must quickly adapt their curricula and learning materials to this new framework. Unfortunately, that often means sending out folders of lengthy documents that the students must sift through independently.

To make learning material easier to consume, teachers should aim to transform longer instructional or learning documents into shorter, easy-to-consume resources. Leverage visualization tools like mind maps and video recordings to create more engaging, bite-sized pieces of information for your students.

The more you can move away from linear, text-based documentation, the more engagement and comprehension you will get from your students. We'll talk more about that in the next section.



5. Task and progress tracking

Keeping track of your students' progress and homework completion is also much harder to do in a dispersed online environment. Rather than students handing in documents physically, they must send them digitally. Once received, teachers must then update their own task tracking tool to ensure that all completed work has been recorded. If you don't have a digital process in place, it can be time consuming to create one, especially in a rush.

To help with task and progress tracking, use online teaching tools that allow you to create unique task tracking dashboards for each of your students. These should be accessible by you and the student, and should contain key goals, projects, and units of study that your class is working on.

Visualization tools like dashboards, Kanban boards, and task tracking mind maps are all great options here. Just be sure that you can share and collaborate on those documents so that you can regularly check in on progress and provide feedback.

3

Mind Mapping in Online Teaching

Mind mapping and information visualization software like MindManager has many benefits that can help to solve the online teaching challenges raised in this eBook.

This platform is particularly helpful for:

- Sharing learning material
- Understanding of course material
- Improving information retention
- Boosting student motivation and engagement
- Improving research, analysis, and task tracking

Let's dive into each of these benefits now.

1. Sharing learning materials

The mind mapping method helps students overcome information overload by allowing them to quickly categorize and organize learning materials in a way that's easy to access and consume. This is an excellent way to overcome challenges associated with sharing longer or more complex learning material.

Online teachers, and students, can also add links, attachments, and images to their maps to add depth to the information. This turns a simple mind map into a complete database of information that the student can digest and adapt to their needs.

Information easily evolves from a stagnant document to a dynamic one thanks to features like filters, relationships, conditional formatting, and task assignment. Online teachers and students can build on original learning materials to create a dynamic and engaging resource that's customized to each individual.

Lastly, MindManager gives teachers and students a variety of ways to export and share their maps. This includes HTML5 exports, publishing to the web or converting documents to PDFs, Word or PowerPoint documents.

2. Understanding of course material

According to [Chuck Frey's annual survey](#) from the Mind Mapping Software Blog, most users say that "improved understanding of complex issues" is the top benefit they receive from platforms like MindManager.

This is largely due to the non-linear, multi-dimensional, and multi-sensory learning that takes place when using a mind map to analyze new information. Building a map allows students to segment information and manipulate it in a way that helps them understand complex topics, structures, and the big picture.

It's been proven that mind mapping enables "meaningful learning". This occurs when students have acquired new knowledge and have connected that new knowledge to knowledge they already have. Mind mapping helps to streamline this process by visually forming connection between what a student already knows, and what they've just learned.

This ability is critical to success in a remote teaching environment that does not allow for significant one-on-one time with students.



3. Improving information retention

Mind mapping is a visual information processing tool, affording it a wide range of advantages over audio or text-based learning. That's because humans learn in a predominantly visual manner. In fact, 90% of the information processed by our brain is visual, and 80% of people tend to remember things they see much better than what they read or hear.

Visualizing information, therefore, makes it easier for students to retain it long term. According to W. Martin Davis, "diagrams are more easily stored in memory than other kinds of representational formats. Maps allow the separate encoding of information in memory in visual as well as written form."

So, what does this all mean for online teachers? It means that allowing your students to study and work with course material visually will lead to better understanding and retention in the long term. In fact, researchers have quantified that number, and found that studying using mind maps helps to boost retention by 10-15%.

4. Boosting student motivation and engagement

Mind mapping is a great tool for online teachers to use when holding collaborative brainstorming or information sharing sessions. Acting as a virtual whiteboard, MindManager maps can be easily shared on screen and populated in real time as new ideas, comments, and questions arise from students.

This active participation from students creates heightened engagement that is not easy to accomplish using one-to-many presentation methods like PowerPoint or Word documents.

If your students are feeling isolated, try holding on-camera video calls, and share your mind map on the screen. Encourage students to share their ideas and collaborate in real time with their classmates. This will help to simulate a fun, in-classroom activity, and help make students feel more connected to one another.

5. Improving research and analysis

Lastly, mind maps are a powerful tool that students can use for researching new subjects and planning for assignments. In-depth research and analysis of information is made much easier thanks to the centralization of information, the ability to include links and attachments, and the visual connections that can be drawn between topics.

This tool is beneficial to both virtual teachers and students, helping them to streamline information-gathering and analysis. All information can be centralized to a single map, making it much more accessible and easier to work with than folders or multiple documents.



4

Templates for Online Teaching

Each of these templates is available for download using the links provided.

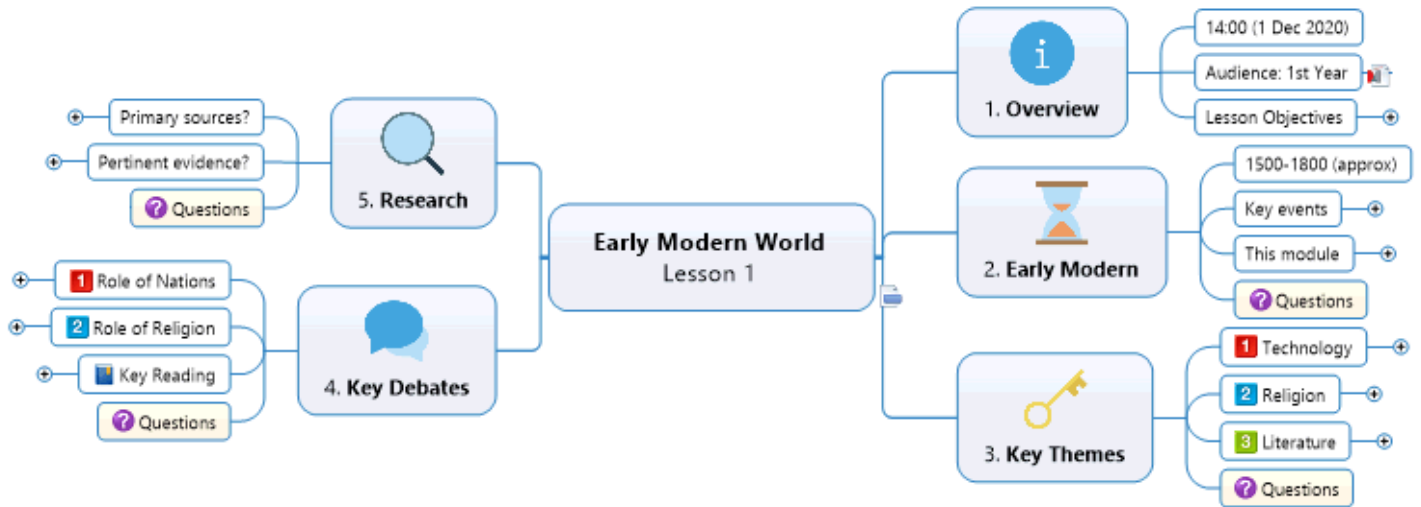
- **Step 1:** Click the link to open the desired template.
- **Step 2:** To save a copy locally, click Menu in the bottom left corner, and Download.
- **Step 3:** Open the template in MindManager and start working.

Don't have MindManager? No problem. You can [try it free for 30 days](#).

1. Lesson planning

When creating a lesson plan or lecture notes, teachers can create a main topic and connect it to other important points, where links and files can then be embedded. This structure can be expanded to include key units of study, and the specific topics, resources, and assignments that will be needed for each.

Once completed, this map can be easily shared with your colleagues and students as both a briefing document and an instructional resource for the upcoming semester.



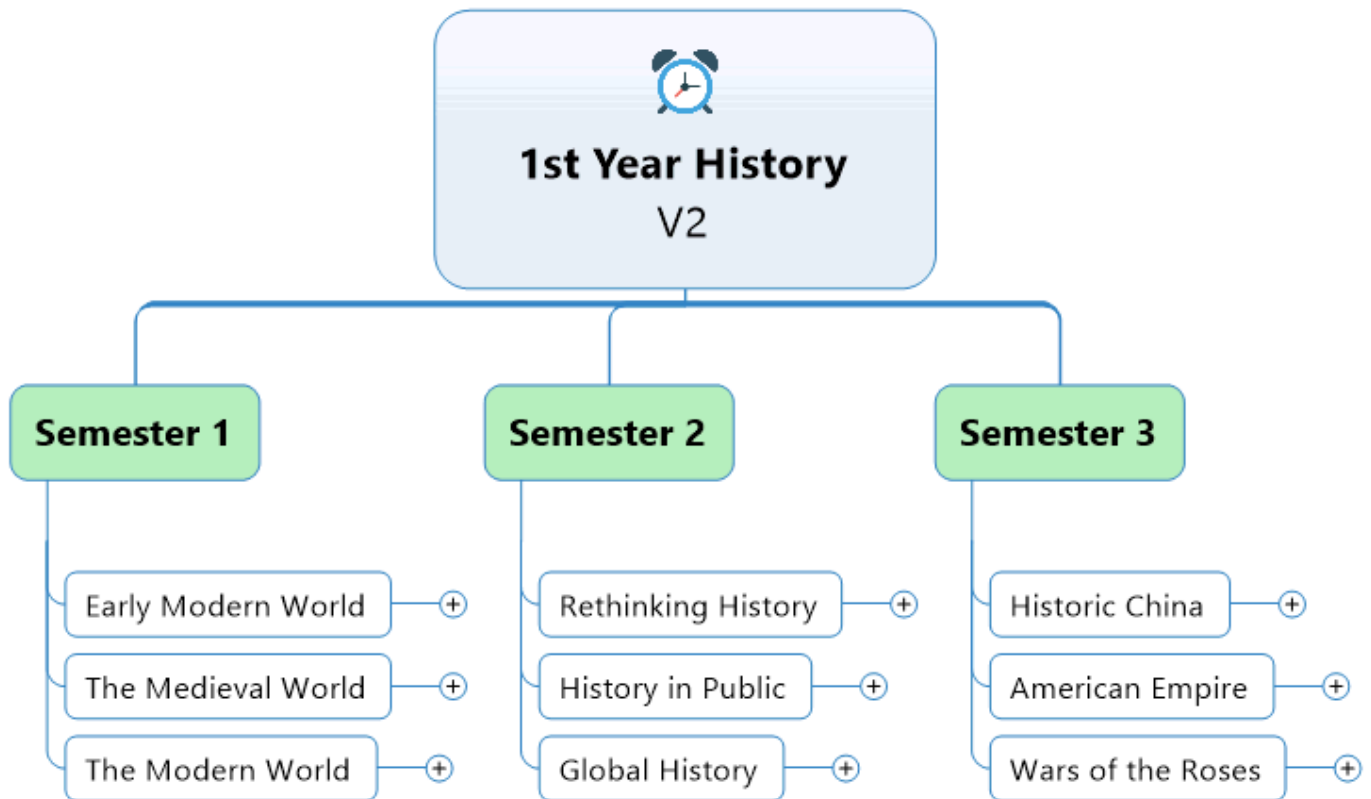
[Download the Lesson Planning Template](#)

2. Curriculum Planning

Digital mind mapping is the perfect tool creating a high-level plan for your entire year's curriculum. Much like lesson planning, the map will start with a central topic. This can be either for the class, or for a specific unit of study.

From there, you can break out sub-topics by semester, unit of study, and specific lessons. As you build out your curriculum, MindManager allows you to add notes, links, attachments, and relationship lines to create a highly detailed and actionable plan.

Use this curriculum map as your master plan for the semester or full school year.

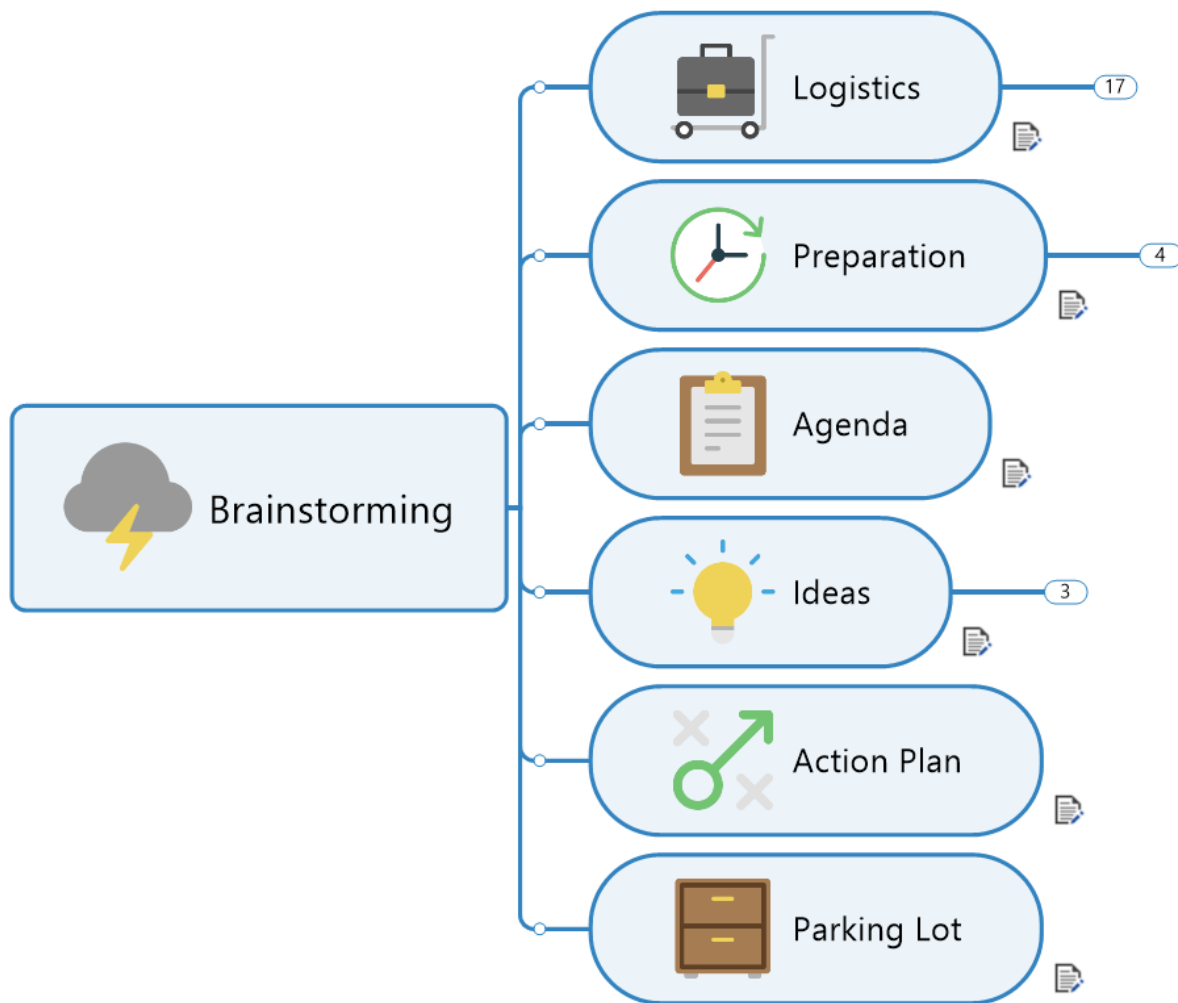


[Download the Curriculum Planning Template](#)

3. Class collaboration

Mind maps are invaluable for group brainstorming, presentations, and for generating and capturing in-depth discussions between students. Coupled with a video conferencing platform, and the new ability to co-edit on MindManager maps, this is a perfect solution for any online teacher struggling to keep their class engaged and working collaboratively.

Below is a sample brainstorming template that you can use to collaborate and engage with your students in an online environment.

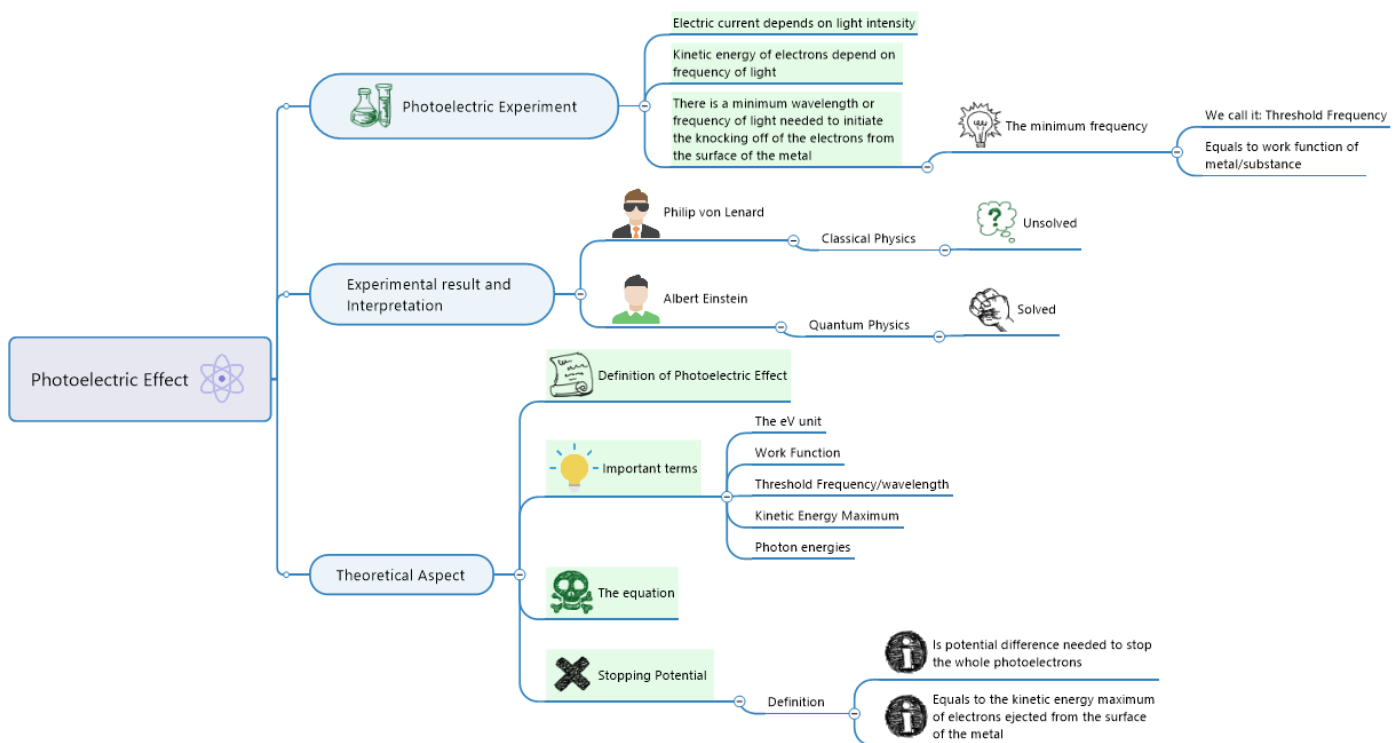


[Download the Brainstorming Template](#)

4. Distributing learning materials

As mentioned, mind maps are an ideal way to visually show complex concepts and learning materials to your students. The non-linear way mind maps are created helps to segment information and draw connections between key points.

Below is a sample template created by Sutarto Sutarto, a Physics teacher at the Bunda Mulia School in Indonesia. This is a map that he personally uses to teach his students about the photoelectric effect.



[Download the Learning Materials Template](#)

Try MindManager for Online Teaching

If you're ready to try mind mapping for online teaching, then take a free trial of MindManager today!

Your free trial:

- Is fully featured
- Lasts for 30 days
- Includes a set of guided email to help you get started
- And requires no credit card swipe!

Download your free trial now:

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