

What is a concept map? A concept map is a diagram that presents a picture of how ideas are related. Concept mapping is used to organize related information in a visual manner and acts as a thinking tool.

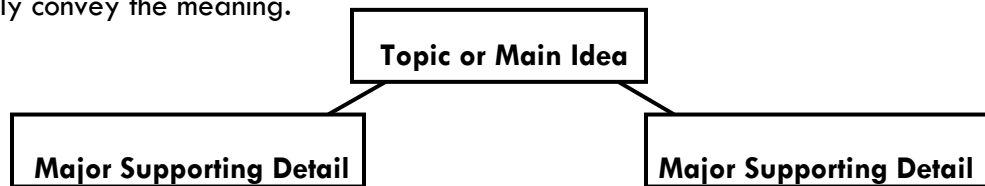
How is a concept map helpful? Mapping is useful for summarizing information and combining large chunks of information into a manageable size. They also help you to associate ideas, think creatively, and make connections that you might not otherwise make.

Creating a Context Map

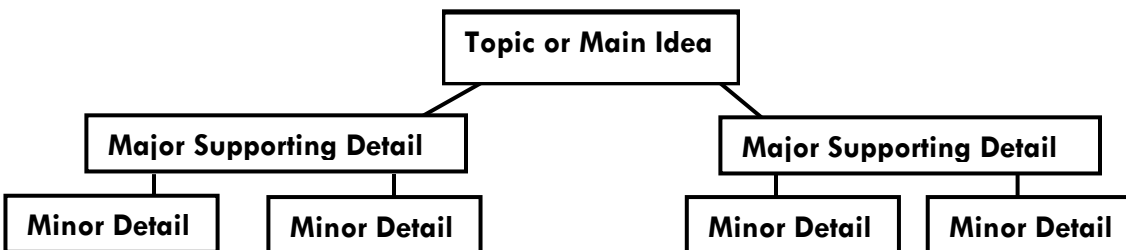
- 1. Skim the reading first.** Textbooks often include topic headings and subheadings that can provide an easy framework for creating your map's branches.
- 2. Read the text.**
- 3. Identify the main idea and write it in the center of the page. Draw a circle around it.** Turn your page on its side and map in "landscape" style. This gives you maximum space for other ideas to radiate out from the center.

Topic or Main Idea

- 4. Identify major supporting details.** Draw a line branching off the central topic and leading to the label for the supporting detail. Draw a circle or box around this major detail.
- 5. Use Single Words or Simple Phrases.** Single strong words and short, meaningful phrases can strongly convey the meaning.



- 6. Find ideas, aspects, parts, and definitions that are related to the supporting details.** Write these in their own circles and attach these to the Major Supporting Details.



- 7. Review your map.** The structure should be balanced, and the ideas should "jump off the page." At test time, you should be able to close your eyes and visualize the structure of the map. If the map is lopsided, too complex, or difficult to read, you consider creating a new map.
- 8. Use Cross Links.** Information in one part of a Map may relate to another part. Here you can draw lines to show the cross links. This helps you to see how one part affects another.
- 9. Personalize your mind map with colors, symbols, and simple sketches.** You may want to use different colored highlighters to make the major supporting details stand out visually. Sketches and symbols also help bring other sensory images into your mind. It isn't necessary that you be an artist to make these symbols useful. As long as the images mean something to you, they will serve their purpose.

Sample Concept Map

Three Branches of Government

In 1787 leaders of the states gathered to write the Constitution—a set of principles that told how the new nation would be governed. The leaders of the states wanted a strong and fair national government. But they also wanted to protect individual freedoms and prevent the government from abusing its power. They believed they could do this by having three separate branches of government: the executive, the legislative and the judicial.

Legislative Branch

The legislative branch is made up of the two houses of Congress—the Senate and the House of Representatives. The most important duty of the legislative branch is to make laws. Laws are written, discussed and voted on in Congress.

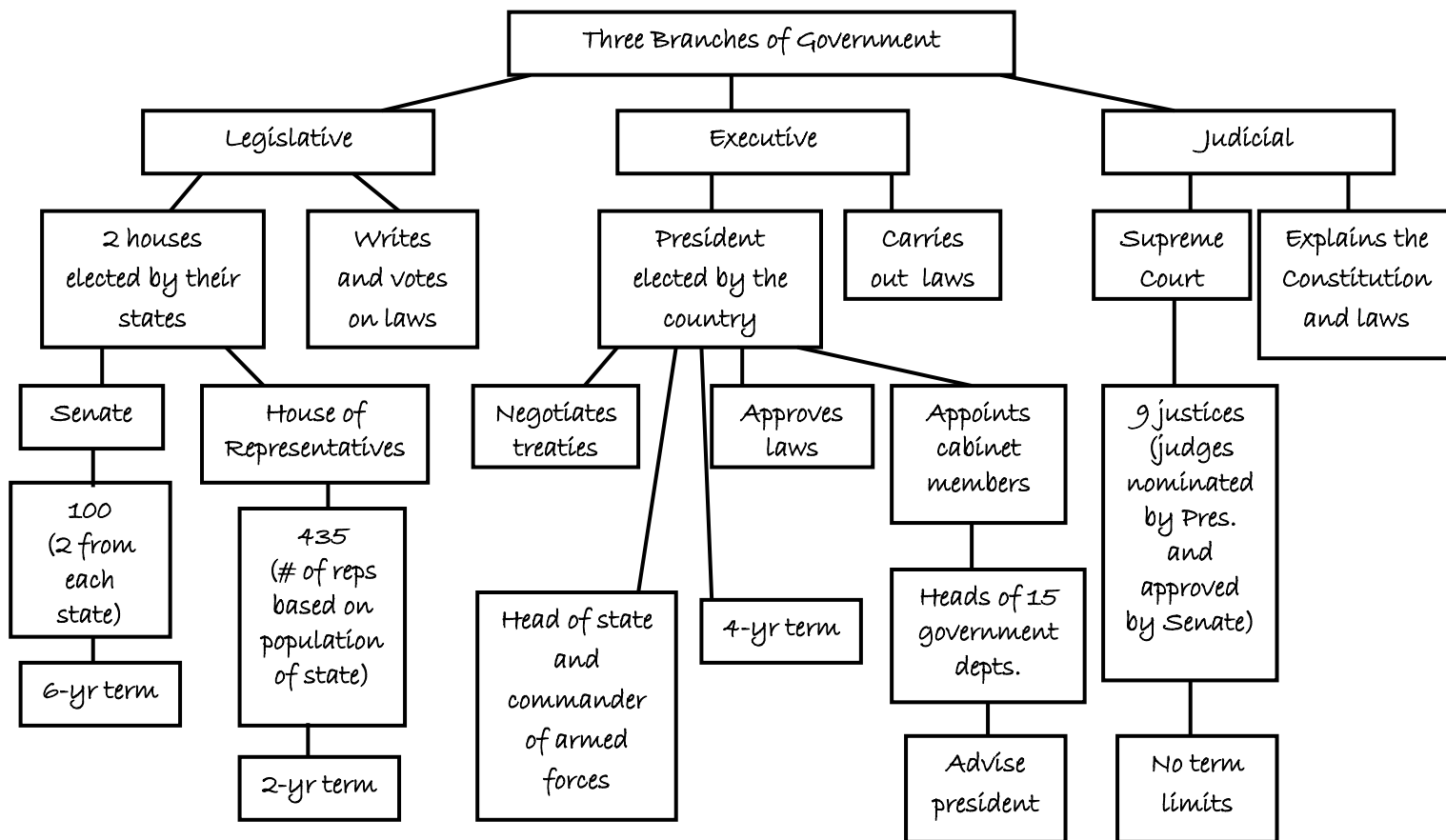
There are 100 senators in the Senate, two from each state. Senators are elected by their states and serve six-year terms. There are 435 representatives in the House of Representatives. The number of representatives each state gets is based on its population. Representatives are elected by their states and serve two-year terms.

Executive Branch

The President is the head of the executive branch, which makes laws official. The President is elected by the entire country and serves a four-year term. The President approves and carries out laws passed by the legislative branch. He appoints or removes cabinet members and officials. He negotiates treaties, and acts as head of state and commander in chief of the armed forces. The executive branch also includes the Vice President and other officials, such as members of the cabinet. The cabinet is made up of the heads of the 15 major departments of the government. The cabinet gives advice to the President about important matters.

Judicial Branch

The judicial branch oversees the court system of the U.S. Through court cases, the judicial branch explains the meaning of the Constitution and laws passed by Congress. The Supreme Court is the head of the judicial branch. Unlike a criminal court, the Supreme Court rules whether something is constitutional or unconstitutional—whether or not it is permitted under the Constitution. On the Supreme Court there are nine justices, or judges. The judges are nominated by the President and approved by the Senate. They have no term limits.



Further explanation and activities for Mapping can be found in the following texts:

Fleming, Loraine. *Reading Keys*, 4th ed. Boston: Wadsworth, 2014. (See pages 348-349, 355)

Fleming, Loraine. *Reading for Results*, 12th ed. Boston: Wadsworth, 2014. (See pages 26-27)

McWhorter, Kathleen T. *Reading Across the Disciplines: College Reading and Beyond*, 5th ed. San Francisco: Pearson Education, 2012. (See pages 205-213)