



Chapter Four: Finding the Main Idea

- Break into groups of two by finding two people who used the same brand of toothpaste you used this morning.
- Work together to list all six categories of Bloom's Taxonomy.
- If your group can't remember them all, work with other groups.
- Write one question for each category on the topic of **political parties**.



Ideas in a Reading

- Every text you read has an underlying structure of ideas.
 - Some ideas are more general, others are more specific.
 - Some ideas are important, others are less important.
- To best understand the point an author is trying to make, keep your eye on the **main idea**.



Three Levels of Ideas

- In this chapter we'll study three levels of ideas:
 - The topic
 - The main idea
 - Supporting details



Comprehension and Structure

These comprehension questions will help you understand the structure of a reading.

What is the reading about?

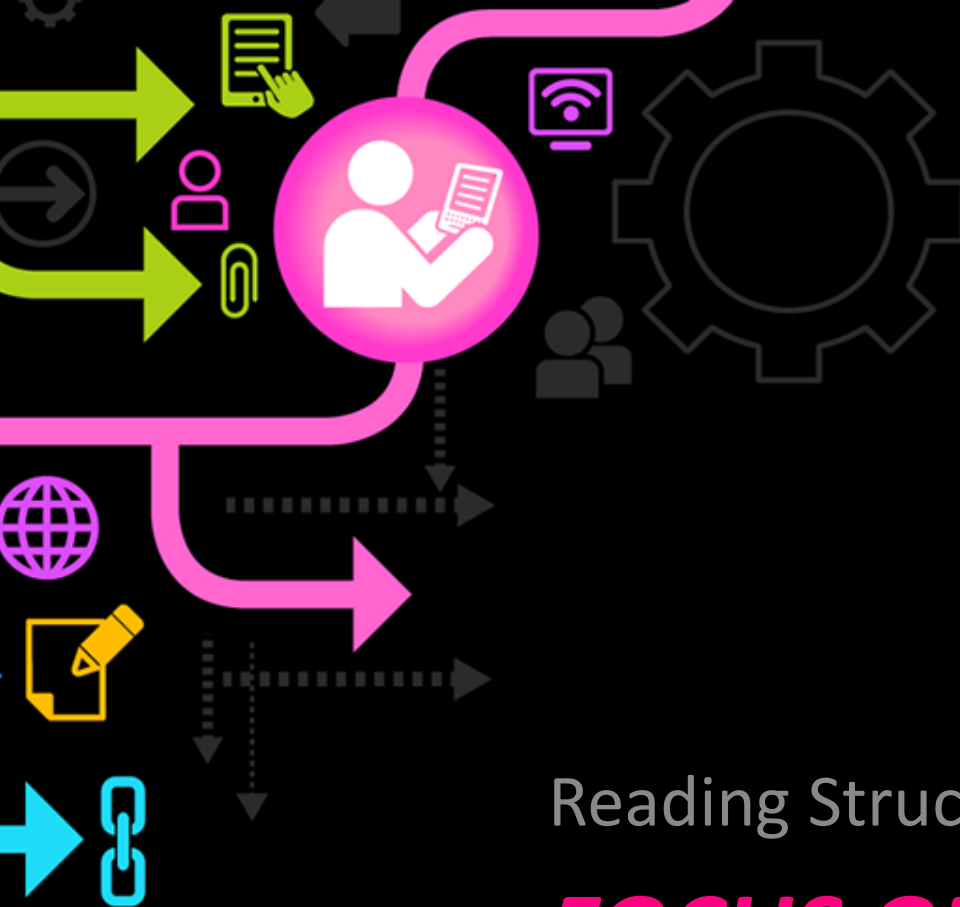
The topic.

What is the author's point about the topic?

The main idea.

What is the proof for the main idea?

The supporting details.



Reading Structure

FOCUS ON THE TOPIC

The Topic

- What the reading is about
- Usually expressed in a few words
- Examples
 - President Obama
 - Music Piracy
 - Pizza
 - The Economy



Tips to Find Topics

- If there is a title, consider it first.
- Look for **bold** or *italicized* terms to see what they have in common.
- Look for repeated words, phrases, or concepts.

Identify the Topic

- Choose a partner you have not worked with today.
- The next slides contain paragraphs from Wikipedia.
- Work together to create a title for each paragraph.

Identify the Topic

Margaret Higgins Sanger (September 14, 1879 – September 6, 1966) was an American birth control activist, sex educator, and nurse. Sanger coined the term birth control, opened the first birth control clinic in the United States, and established Planned Parenthood. Sanger's efforts contributed to the landmark U.S. Supreme Court case which legalized contraception in the United States. Sanger is a frequent target of criticism by opponents of birth control and has also been criticized for supporting eugenics, but remains an iconic figure in the American reproductive rights movement.

The Seneca River in central New York flows 61.6 miles (99.1 km) from west to east, from Seneca Lake, through the Montezuma Marsh at the north end of Cayuga Lake to the Seneca's confluence with the Oneida and Oswego rivers at the Three Rivers area north of Syracuse. Much of the river has been channelized to form part of the Erie Canal.

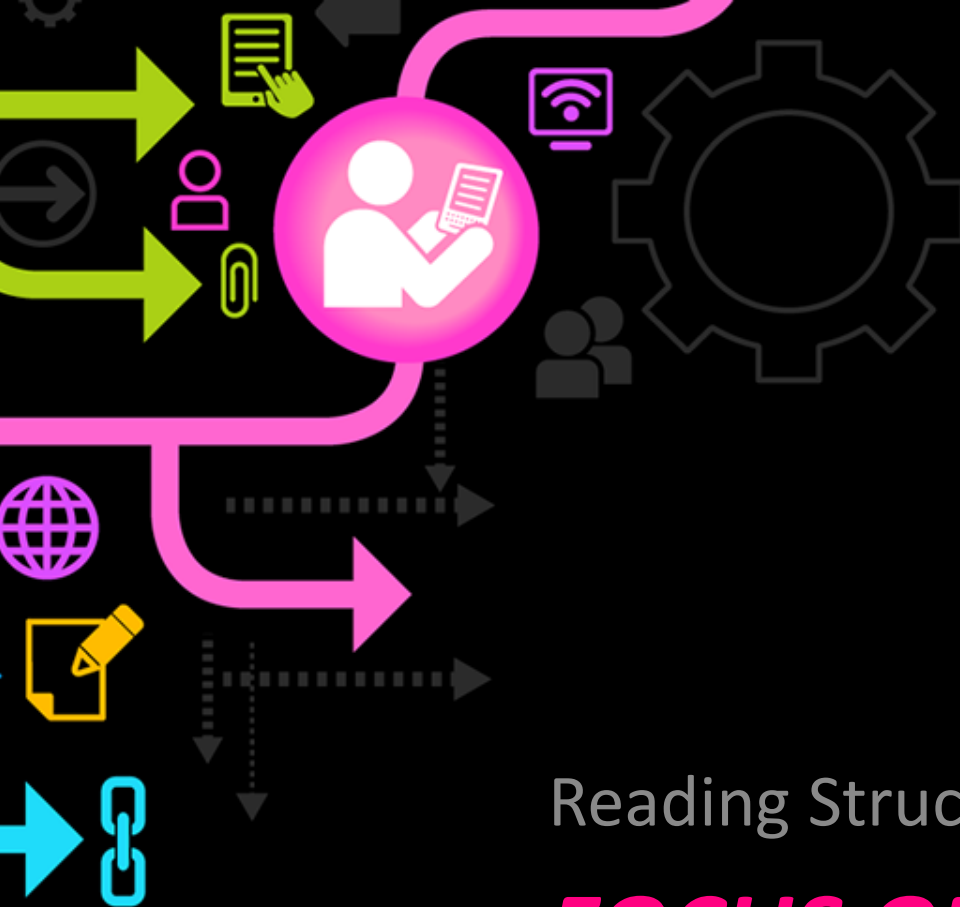
Identify the Topic

There has been some controversy over the years regarding the overall ranking of Cuquenán Falls among the world's tallest waterfalls. It has been listed anywhere from 2nd to 20th in various publications and Internet sites. Such discrepancies probably arise because most official measurements of the falls take into consideration only the free-leaping portion, omitting the bottom part that cascades along the tepui. Some published listings incorporate the free-falling measurements only when arguing that its height is not enough for the top 10 tallest waterfalls.

New Mexico has the longest history of wine production in the United States. In 1629, Franciscan friar García de Zúñiga and a Capuchín monk named Antonio de Arteaga planted the first wine grapes in the Río Grande valley of southern New Mexico. Viticulture took hold in the valley, and by the year 1880, wineries produced over 1,000,000 US gallons (3,800,000 L) of wine. The wine industry in New Mexico declined in the latter decades of the nineteenth century in part due to flooding of the Río Grande. Prohibition in the United States forced many wineries to close, while others remained operational providing sacramental wine to primarily Catholic as well as other Christian churches.

Identify the Topic

Technology advances are opening up a huge new market for solar power: the approximately 1.3 billion people around the world who don't have access to grid electricity. Even though they are typically very poor, these people have to pay far more for lighting than people in rich countries because they use inefficient kerosene lamps. Solar power costs half as much as lighting with kerosene. An estimated 3 million households get power from small solar energy systems. Kenya is the world leader in the number of solar power systems installed per capita. More than 30,000 very small solar panels, each producing 12 to 30 watts, are sold in Kenya annually.



Reading Structure

FOCUS ON THE MAIN IDEA



The Main Idea

- The point the author wants to make about the topic
- Is longer than a **topic**
- Examples
 - President Obama is not as popular overseas as in the U.S.
 - While pizza is good to eat, it is not good for your waistline.
 - Music piracy helps small bands gain recognition.

Topic Sentence Formula

Topic + Main Idea = Topic Sentence

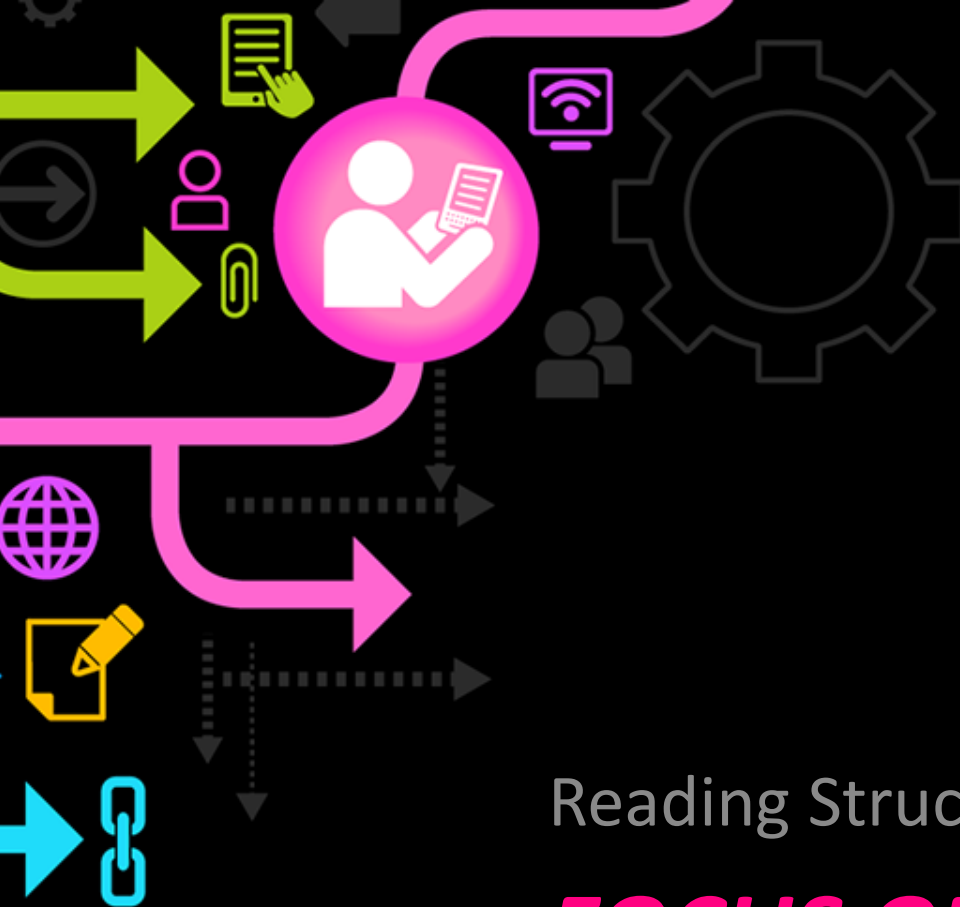
T + MI = TS



Finding the Main Idea

To find the main idea for each paragraph:

- Look for repeated ideas
- Think about how the author is limiting the topic to just the point he or she wants to discuss
- Look for the sentence in which **T + MI = TS**
- In the topic sentence, put brackets around the topic and underline the main idea



Reading Structure

***FOCUS ON THE
SUPPORTING DETAILS***



Supporting Details

- Give evidence or proof for the author's main idea.

Might consist of

- Examples
- Statistics
- Facts
- Anecdotes
- Expert opinions



Finding Supporting Details

- Turn the main idea into a question
- Look for answers in the reading
- Each answer you find should be a supporting detail.



Good Point!!

Thinking about supporting details will help you decide if you understand or agree with an author's point.



Major Versus Minor Details

- Major details capture and support the main idea.
- Minor details give extra information about the major details.

- Divide into groups of two by pairing with someone who shares your love for your favorite fast-food restaurant.
- If no one likes your favorite place, pair with the closest matching person.

- On the next slides you will see two statements. One is a major detail and one is a minor detail.
- Working with your partner, decide which is which.

Active Learning

Burger Buddies

- Home sales in Dallas are down by 8% over last year.
- The United States is facing another Great Depression.

- Texas is one of many states with DWI or “driving while intoxicated” laws.
- Drunk driving is irresponsible and potentially harmful.

- Finishing your “to do” list can be difficult.
- Personal productivity expert David Allen believes in simple systems to track tasks.

- Blu-Ray DVDs are better than the older DVD formats.
- A Blu-Ray disc can store ten times as much information as a traditional DVD.



Thesis Statements

- A thesis statement is the same as a topic sentence except that it controls a group of paragraphs, not just one paragraph.
- When a thesis statement exists, often the topic sentences of the individual paragraphs act as major supporting details for the thesis.



Outlines and Visual Maps

Outlines and visual maps show the relationship among the ideas in a reading.

Formal Outlines

- Hierarchical organizations from the broadest idea (topic) to the narrowest (minor detail).
- Use indentions to show how broad or narrow an idea is.
- Often use Roman numerals, letters, and numbers.

I. Topic + Main Idea

A. Major Detail

1. minor detail

2. minor detail

B. Major Detail

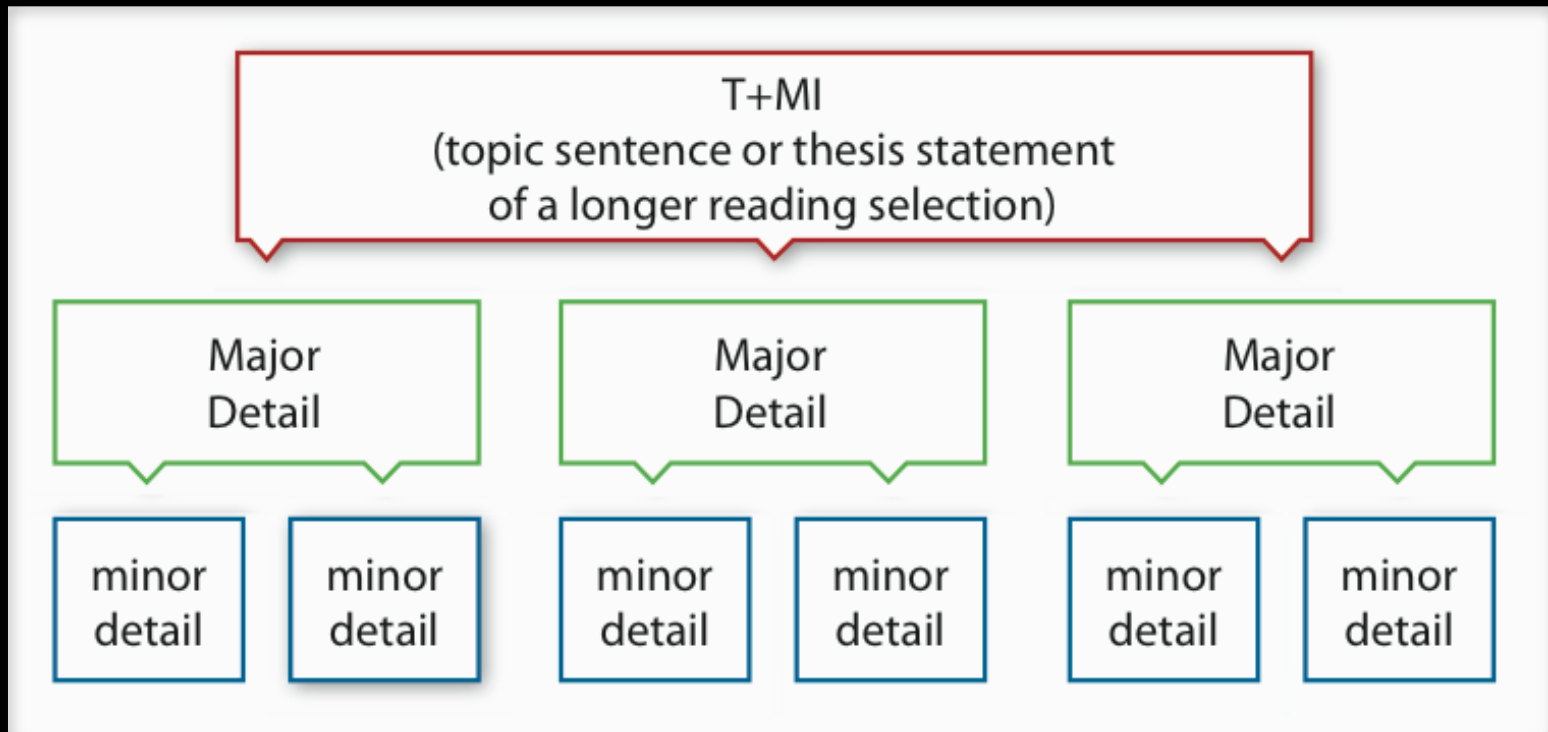
1. minor detail

2. minor detail

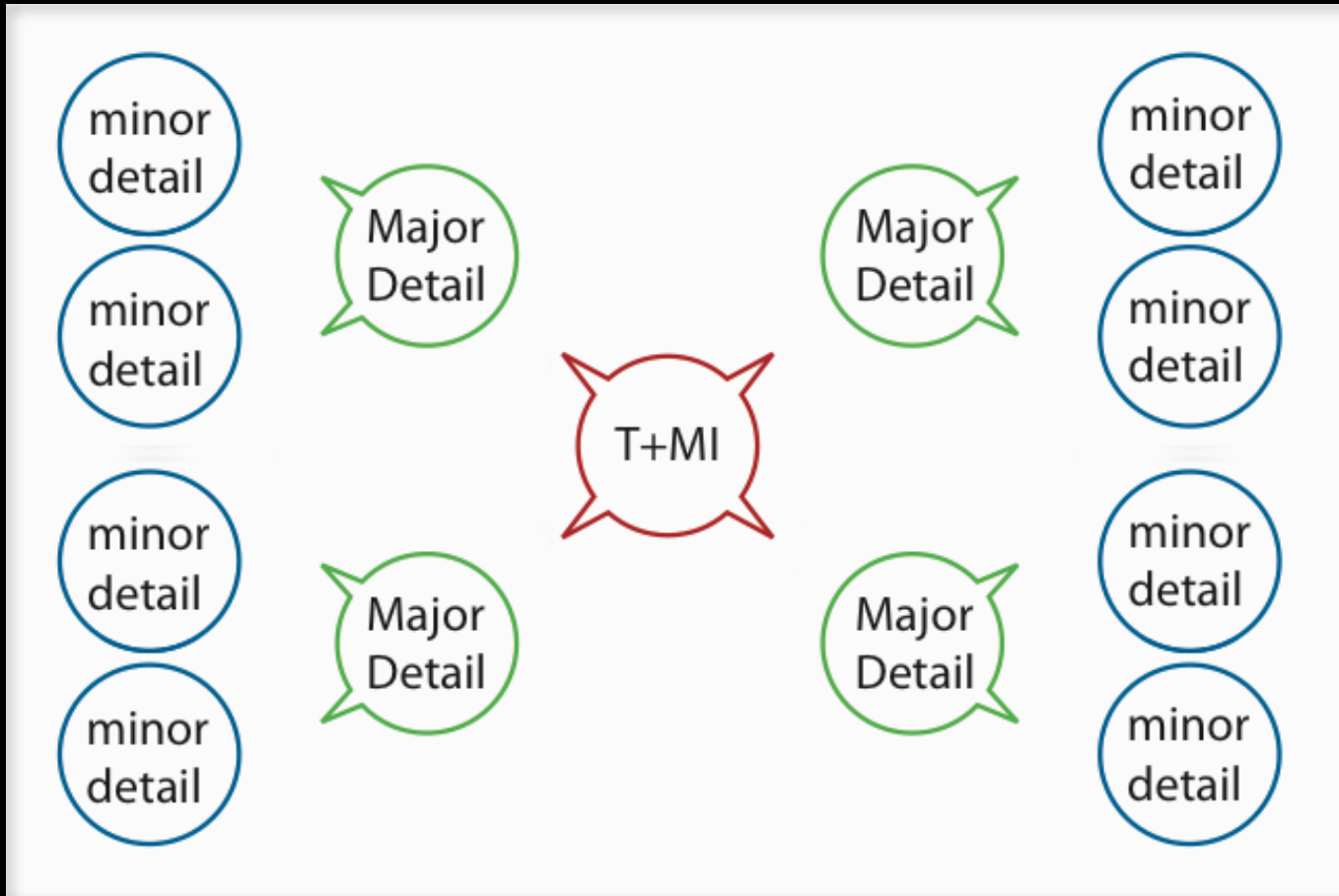
Concept Maps

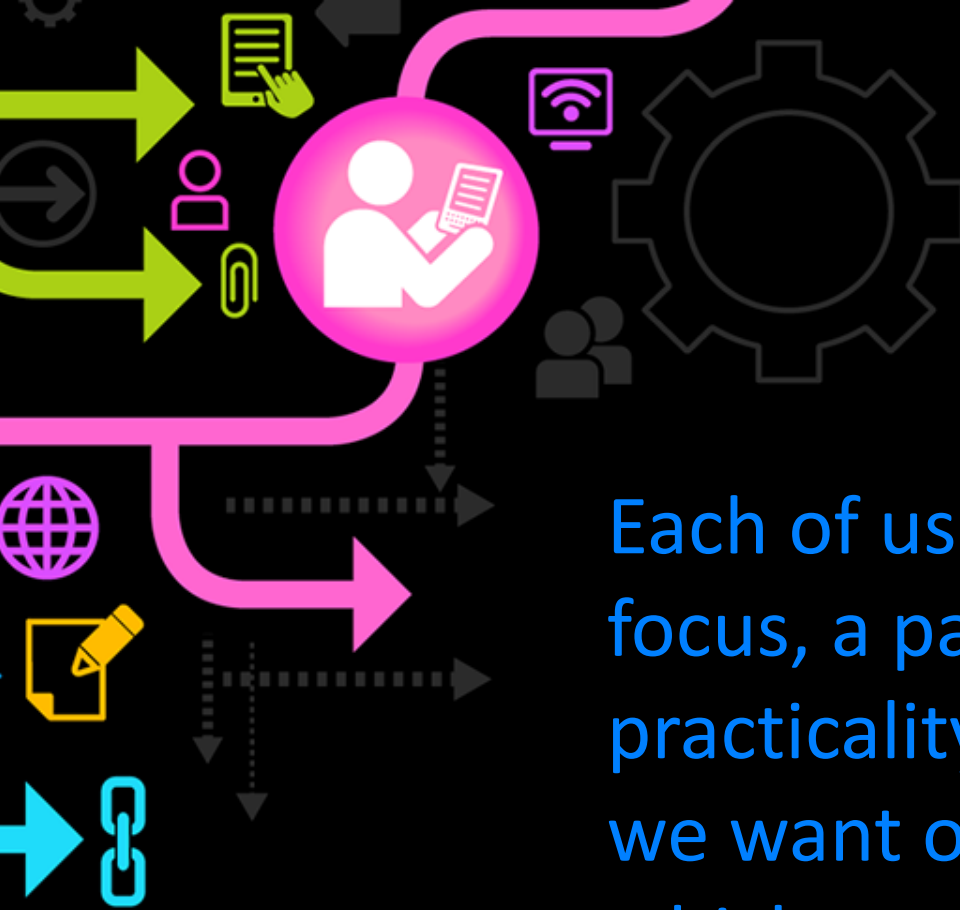
- Puts each idea into a bubble and links the bubbles with arrows to show connections between them.
- Also known as mind maps, visual, bubble, or cluster maps.
- Maps out concepts and their relationship to one another.

Concept Map Example



Sun-and-Rays Concept Map





Each of us seems to have a main focus, a particular idea of practicality - a concept of 'what we want out of life' against which we judge our experiences.

--Jane Roberts