

LEARNING TO LEARN Pocketbook

2nd edition

By Tom Barwood



Cartoons:
Phil Hailstone

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Become more absorbent!



The next problem is trying to absorb large amounts of information all at once. Parents will tell you that if you try and feed a baby too much food too quickly, you may get it back sooner than you realise! Your brain is just the same.

The next few pages contain ideas about ways in which you can restructure information so that your brain absorbs it more easily and effectively. Try the ideas out in different contexts; some may work better for you than others. Most people find a combination of strategies works best.

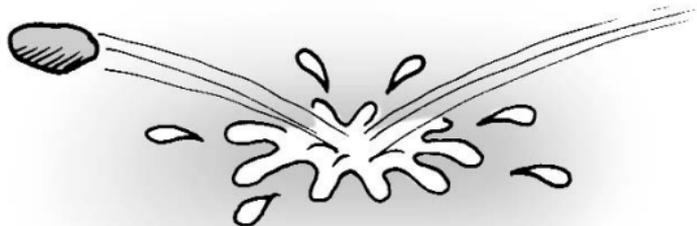
However, different brains do work differently, so to get the best out of what follows you might first want to find out more about brain dominance by looking at page 120. I will be referring to brain dominance in this section from time to time.

Skimming



Before you start trying to absorb material in depth take time to skim through the information you are trying to learn. So, with a book, for instance:

- Start by **reading** through the chapter headings
- **Flick** through the pages allowing your eye to wander over the text (from left to right and top to bottom of the pages), from front to back
- **Repeat** this process from the back to the front of the book
- Stick five or six **markers** in the sections that seem relevant to you (remember, at this stage only a handful of things will be vital – imagine you are faced with a large buffet of food and you are trying to pick out a tasty plateful)



Slicing



The easiest way to eat a big meal is by slicing it up into bite-size pieces. In the same way, chop up the information you are trying to digest by:

- Taking a big paragraph and **ruling** off and **numbering** it into smaller sections
- **Grouping** similar sections of information together (you could do this by way of 'cut and paste')



Simplifying



A lot of the language we use in learning can be very confusing in its own right. Sometimes there are just too many words for the message to get through. Simplifying allows you to deal with the problem of 'spare' words. You can:

- **Scribble them out** with a pencil
- **Re-write** the text in your own words (use **abbreviations**, for longer words, eg 'devpt' for 'development', 'govt' for 'government')
- Go through and **highlight** just the important words
- Create **bullet point lists** of key ideas

Alternatively, why not turn the information into a **picture or diagram**?

Creating a diagram or picture with no words at all really gets you to think about the concepts. It might help to imagine that your visual representation is to explain the idea to young children.



The problem with absorbing



It can sometimes be difficult to absorb information because when faced with piles of notes, old coursework and textbooks, it is hard to see the 'bigger picture' of how all the parts fit together.

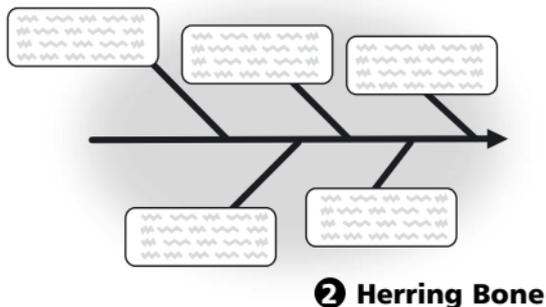
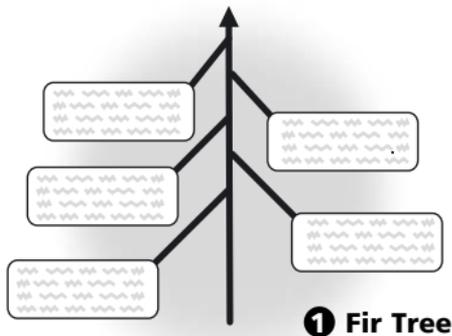
One of the best ways to help you see the connections between all the different pieces of information is to use networked notes, examples of which are shown in the next few pages.



Networked notes



Networked notes are a very powerful way of absorbing information. They are also an extremely useful method for organising and reviewing information and for generating new ideas. The aim is to move away from making notes in a conventional way and to look at ideas from different angles to make them more accessible to your brain. The information is arranged on the page in different ways: not just starting at the top and working down to the bottom as you do with conventional notes.

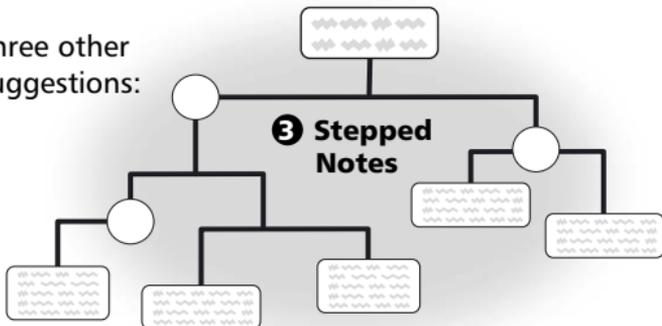


Fir Tree and Herring Bone are both good for timelines and processes.

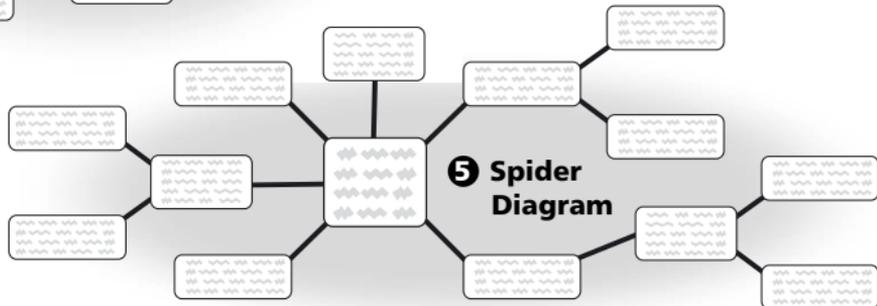
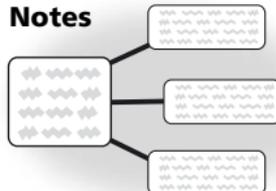
Networked notes



Three other suggestions:



4 Filter Notes



Vary your networked notes to suit the task or your way of thinking.
Use different colours for the boxes, links or junctions.

About the author



Tom Barwood



Tom has always had one simple goal in life – to be an inspiration. As a classroom teacher he developed a rapport and teaching style that brought that goal to life. Excited by developments in brain-based learning, he became a freelance trainer and is now director and main course-provider of Likeminds Consulting.

Since 2001 Tom has visited hundreds of schools in Britain, mainland Europe and the Middle East, ranging from prestigious independent schools to state schools and academies in the most challenging areas. He has worked with pupils across the age and ability range and with Secondary and Primary teachers from NQTs to headteachers, and in groups from 5 to 500.

Regardless of the audience, it's Tom's enthusiasm, passion for learning, inspiring presentational style and desire to see everyone fulfil their potential that mark him out as different. Tom also specialises in teaching and learning; lesson observation and performance management; able, gifted and talented; and boys' underachievement. He writes on education, is training as an Ofsted inspector, teaches part time and runs holiday clubs and summer schools. Tom can be contacted at www.likemindslearning.co.uk