

What is a Concept Map? Transcript

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Concept maps visually represent how ideas are connected. By making a concept map for your research question, you can break down a complex topic into multiple parts.

Let's look at an example. Let's say that we have the research question: Should students be allowed to own pets in on-campus residence halls? We can start our concept map by listing what we might need to address in answering this question.

First, we might think about the context or background information that would be helpful to know about the topic. For example, we probably want to know about the impact that pets have on students along with the different types of pets and their corresponding needs.

We will probably also want to include evidence from examples, such as campus policies and outcomes, and any challenges associated with our research question, such as concerns related to health, safety, or facilities. Including these in our research will provide evidence to support our claim for, or against, students owning pets on campus, and will show we have fully researched our question.

Finally, we might want to include opportunities for additional research, to feature suggestions for research that could build on our work and to show our understanding of how our research fits within a larger context.

As we brainstorm, we can organize the ideas on our concept map in multiple ways. We could draw lines between ideas, add subparts to some of the ideas to get more specific, or organize them by color, shape, or location to show relationships.

Depending on the nature of our research and our priorities, two maps made for the same research question might look totally different. One could be very complex and include a wide variety of additional ideas, and another equally valid map might have even fewer branches than this example does.

And, like my research question itself, my concept map may evolve throughout the research process, and that's okay.

If you still have questions about concept maps and how to use them, contact UH Libraries for help.