

How to Summarise a Book or Report Using MindGenius

At some point we all have to read through a book or report for purposes other than pleasure. We need to extract information and remember it. This information might be used for a book review, an exam or presentation.

Often books seem to contain so many characters or themes that we find it hard to recollect them all. Here we are about to introduce a new approach to note taking that mirrors the way your mind naturally understands and remembers information.

Traditional Approach

Traditionally a book report involves taking linear notes on lined paper in sequence with the progression of the book. This often makes going back over those notes laborious and actually remembering the notes can seem like an impossible task.

The usual aid to paper based notes are coloured highlighter pens and techniques such as underlining words. Although these are useful tactics for making things stand out, sometimes we spend more time perfecting this than actually taking in what we are trying to study.

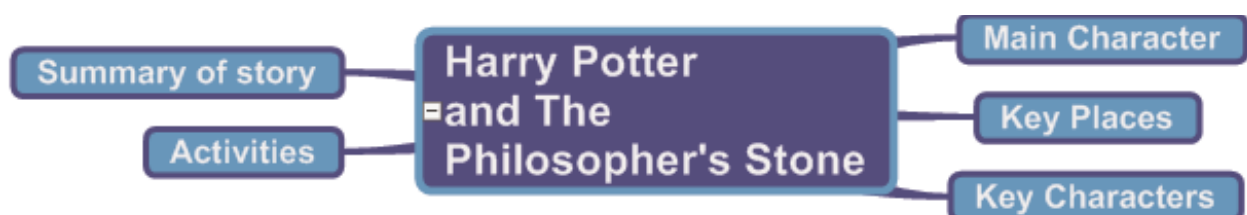
MindGenius allows you to not only add these visual aids at the click of a button but also automatically organises your notes in a way that promotes maximum recall. That is not all: you can also add all manner of images, icons and clip art as well as completely personalising the look of your maps.

Summarising a book with MindGenius

Create a new map using the MindGenius 'Summarise a book' template.

To do this:

1. Select 'New' from the file menu
2. Select the 'Techniques' tab
3. Double-click on the 'Summarise a book' template and a new map will be created based on this template
4. Enter the title of the book in the root branch.



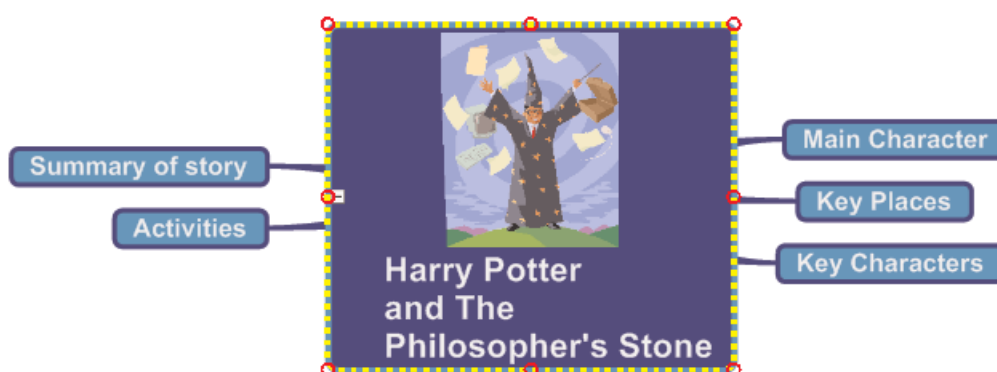
In this example, we will type in 'Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone' Press the return key or 'OK'.

Tip: To insert a carriage return in the title, use Ctrl + Return.

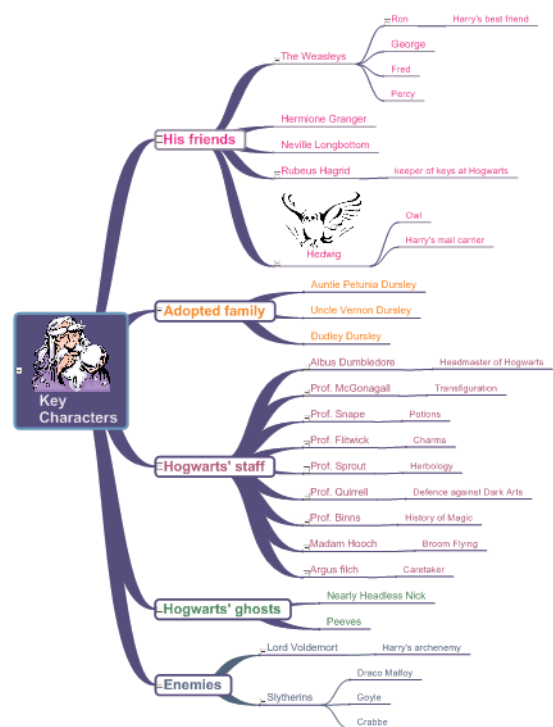
It is often advantageous to insert a picture or image on the core branch for people to relate to in their mind's eye. It also helps start the right cortex brain thinking activity, which is an aid to creativity.

To do this:

1. Select the root branch "Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone"
2. From the Insert menu select 'Picture...'
3. Browse for the picture file to insert and press 'OK'



Now we need to start reading. Read the first chapter or section and enter keywords as sub-branches of this branch. Keywords are those words that we would consider highlighting or underlining (if we didn't have to take the book back to the library!).

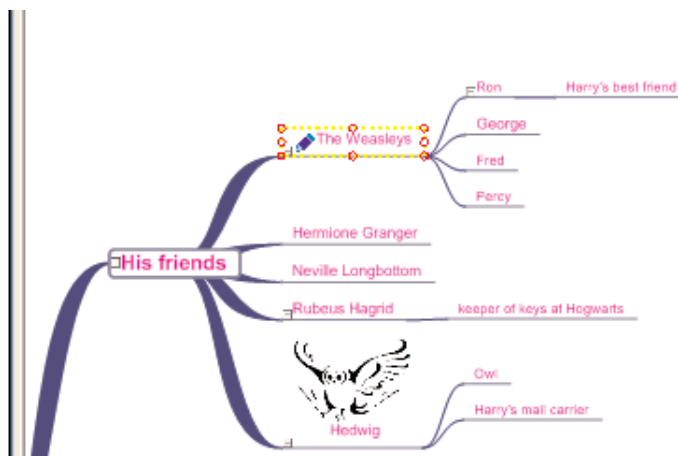


When a section is finished, re-scan it again and make sure all the keywords have been extracted, then take more detailed notes and add these as branch notes.


To do this:

1. Select the branch you wish to add notes to
2. Open the notes editor in the Task Pane
3. Enter your text

The Weasley family are very kind to Harry.



4. The note will be attached to the branch and a visual indicator will appear on the branch.

Tip: Hover the mouse cursor over the notes symbol to show the first line of the note. Double-clicking on this symbol will open the notes editor, also if you wish to dock the notes to the bottom of the screen click on the  symbol.

Continue this process, one section at a time until finished.

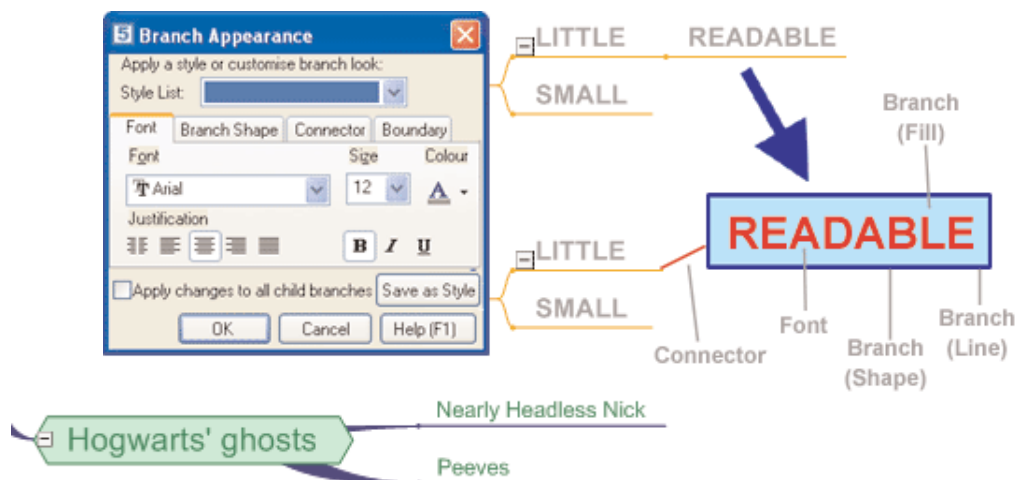
The Finishing Touches

At the end of the process (when all the sections have been read) use colour, categories and icons to highlight important areas.

To do this:

Colour

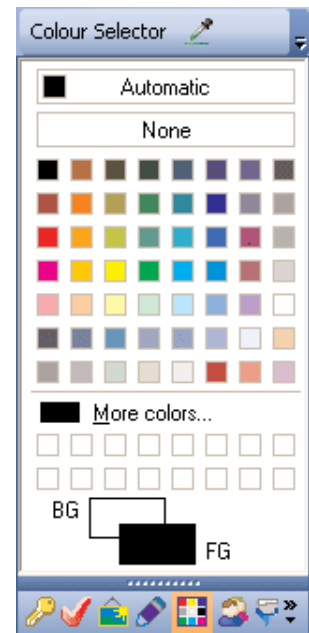
Change the branch colours by selecting 'Edit Branch Style...'



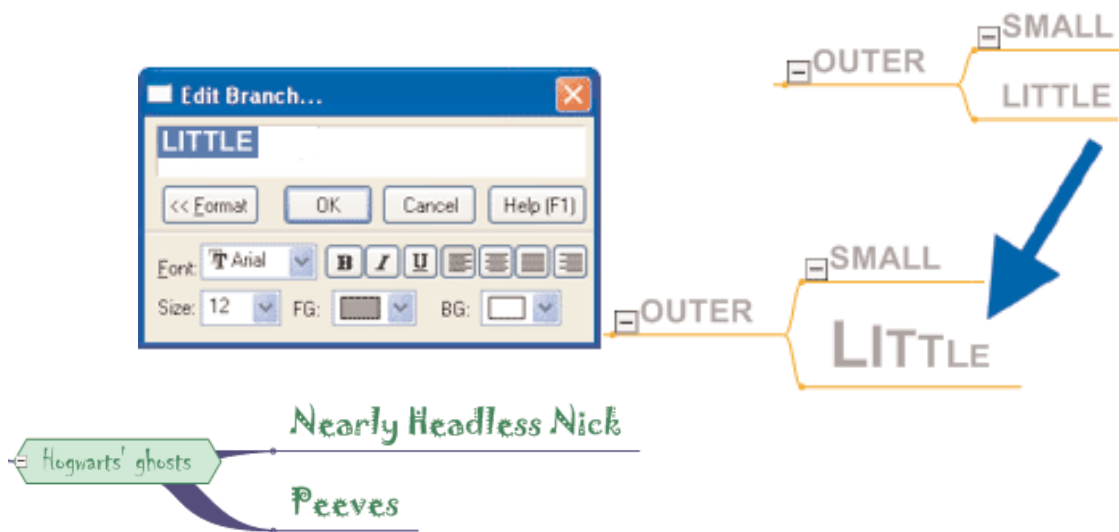
Here is a quick method of changing the branch text colour.

1. Make the Colour Selector Tile visible
2. Select a branch to colour
3. A left mouse click on a colour will apply that colour to the text. A right mouse click will apply the colour to the branch shape background.

Tip: If you wish to colour in multiple branches with similar colours, then use the Colour Dropper. Press the colour dropper toolbar button to change the cursor mode to 'Colour Dropper'. Use left mouse clicks to apply foreground colour and right mouse clicks to apply background colour. When finished, de-select the dropper by clicking once more on the dropper icon in the Colour Selector Pane.



You can also vary the text font within the branch text as an aid to memorisation. Double click on the branch and the Edit Branch dialog will appear. Simply select the part of the text you wish to change and then edit.

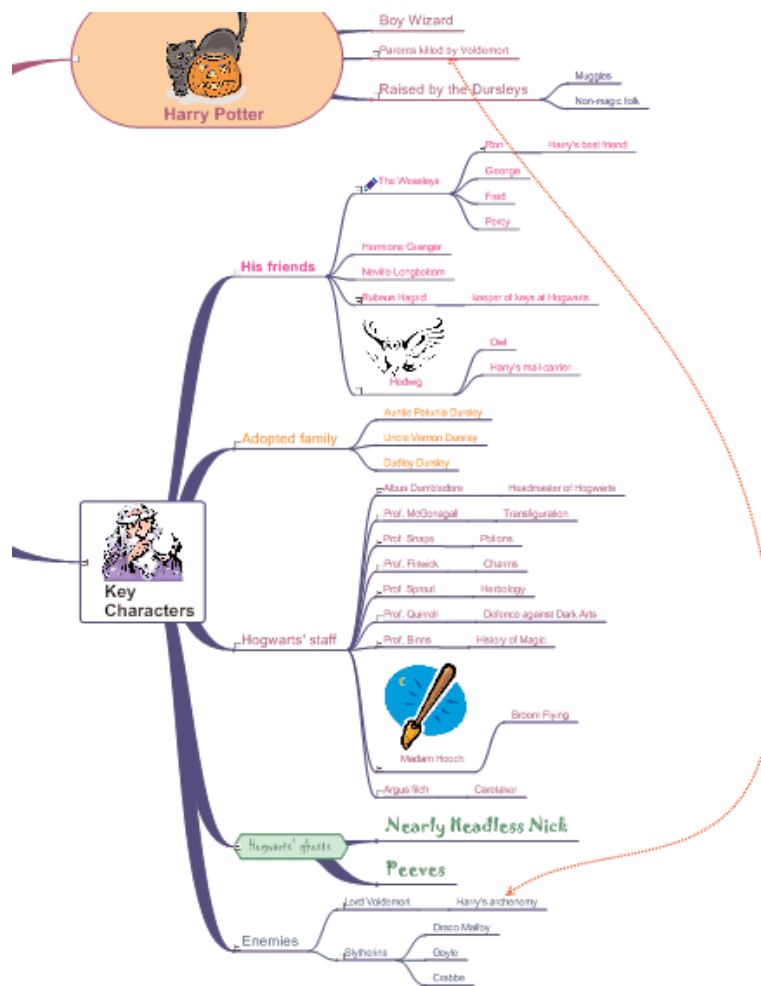


Arrows

If you want to connect thoughts use the MindGenius Mental Connection feature. This can help you link bits of information you might otherwise forget.

To add a connection:

1. Click on the Mental Connection toolbar icon
2. Click on the first branch then drag the mouse cursor to the second branch and drop it.
3. Enter a title for the Mental Connection when prompted (if required)

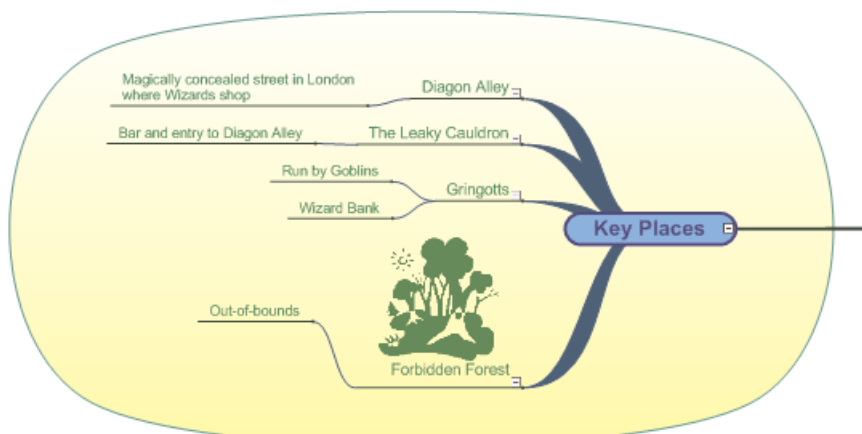


Outline or enclose Branches

To highlight specific areas of the map you can enclose the Branches with a Boundary. This will help you associate ideas in your mind.

To do this:

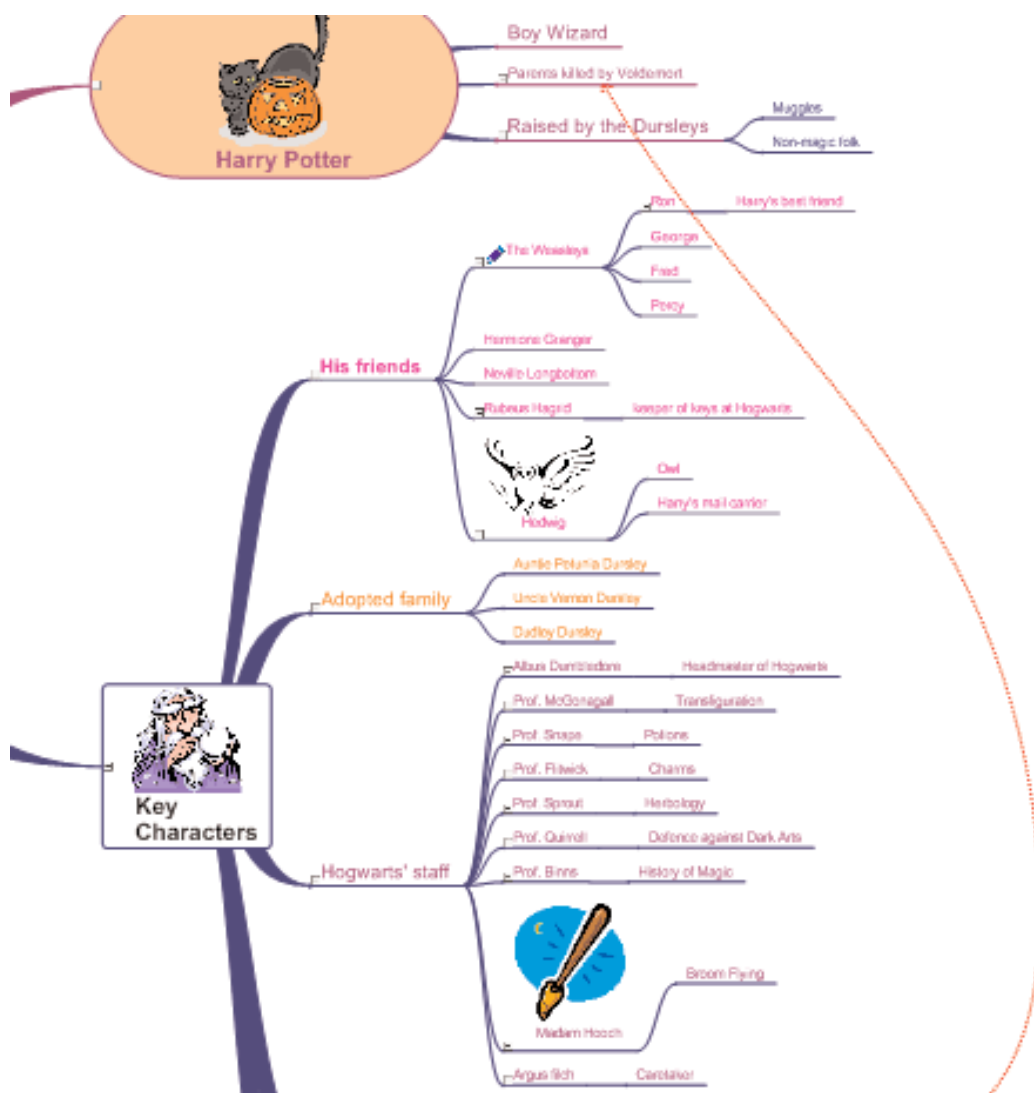
1. Select a Parent Branch
2. From the Boundary toolbar choose a Boundary Style to apply from the drop-down list
3. Set line and fill colours if required



Have fun making your maps look good!

You can enter images and text throughout the map using MindGenius's Floating Text and Floating Pictures features. To enter floating text:

1. From the Insert menu, select 'Floating Text'
2. Click on the point in the map at which it should be inserted
3. Enter a title for the Floating Text
4. You can edit the text as if it was a normal Branch
5. It can be freely re-positioned using drag-and-drop



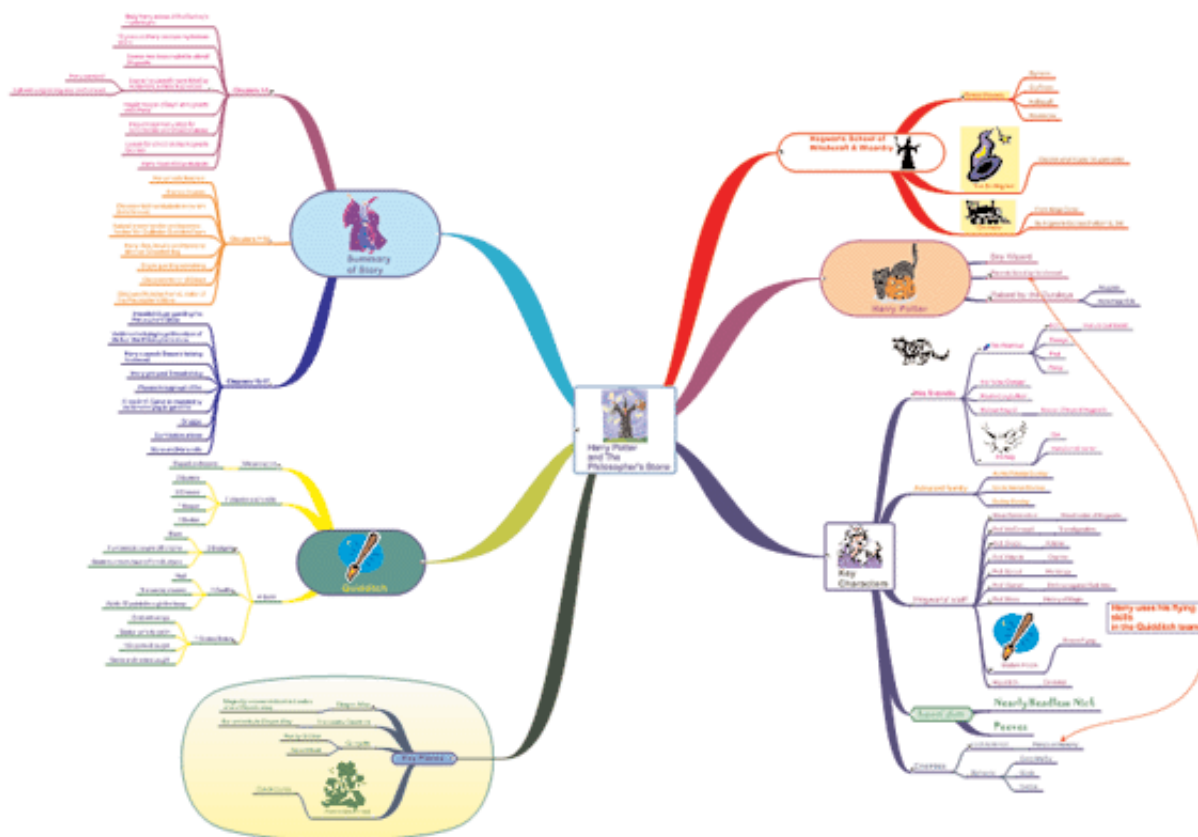
Enter a Floating Picture, by selecting 'Floating Picture' from the Insert menu.

Additional Material

Add page references any put and additional material in branch notes. Remember, we can re-organise this information at any time, simply by moving the branches.

As a final exercise, print the map and have it in front of you whilst studying. Nothing can beat having the hard copy in our hands for those final hours of swotting.

In an open book exam, where we are allowed to take in both the text and some notes, use the MindGenius summary as a guide to the book to allow quick access to relevant text through the use of page references.



SUMMARY

MindGenius allows you to create notes that are not only designed for maximum recall of information but also that are easy to make and add to.

There is no longer any need to feel panic when looking at pages and pages of linear handwritten notes. Now you can have all your notes in one place in a clear and easy to follow layout.

Techniques such as adding colours, different fonts, and mental connections and so on are all tried and tested methods of remembering information.

For further reading on how to incorporate thinking skills into lessons see Georgie Beasley's excellent 'Thinking Skills' books published by Scholastic.

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