

Words/Vocabulary

There is increased recognition of the importance of word/vocabulary knowledge for long-term academic progress and the detriment faced by children and young people with vocabulary deficits. Pupils with Developmental Language Disorder are vulnerable to weaknesses in word or vocabulary development. Pupils need to know what words mean and need to be able to learn new words quickly and efficiently, understanding words before they can use them.

Why is word learning challenging?

- The rate of vocabulary learning for pupils may be very demanding.
- Learning, retrieving and retaining new words is a specific challenge especially if expected via reading and writing.
- The pupil, when reading, also must decode as well as attempt to extract meaning.
- Accessing words stored in the memory is difficult.
- Lack of interest and motivation for the subject being taught.
- Confused by multiple meanings.

General Strategies

- Highlight key words across subject areas.
- Carefully decide on which words need to be taught and provide a list with visuals.
- Focus on only a selected number of new words at a time.
- Be aware of words that might not be understood. Motivate pupils to analyse their own knowledge of the words prior and after word learning.
- Analyse word components - e.g., what it sounds like (phonological), what it means (semantic), how it fits into sentences (grammatical) and how it is written (orthographic).
- Explicitly discuss what words mean.
- Explain the words using a simple definition, in words pupils will understand.
- Teach words in context – give multiple opportunities for pupils to use the words in various sentences.
- Use numerous multi-sensory (touch it, see it, hear it, read it, write it) strategies when teaching new words.
- Enable pupils to identify which strategy works best for them and which are more useful at different times/different subjects.
- Embed the learning of new words through experience, repetition and use of appropriate strategies.

Specific strategies/resources

- Rate my word knowledge
- Word Knowledge Profile
- Link a visual to the written word
- Word Maps
- Mind Maps

Useful Books/links

- [Enriching Vocabulary in Secondary Schools: A practical resource for Teachers and Speech and Language Therapists](#)
- [Closing the word gap: accelerating vocabulary at secondary school \(Oxford Language Report 2021\)](#)
- [Vocabulary Enrichment Programme: Enhancing the Learning of Vocabulary in Children](#)
- [Teaching Word Meanings - 1st Edition - Steven A. Stahl - William E. Na \(routledge.com\)](#)
- [An intervention programme \(word learning session plans\) to support teenagers' knowledge of academic, cross-curriculum words. \(e.g., 'summarise'\)](#)
- [Bringing Words to Life - Robust Vocabulary Instruction](#)
- [Mind Maps for Kids](#)
- [Visual Dictionary Online](#)

Rate my word knowledge

Learning words is a gradual process. Beck, McKeown and Kucan, 2002 recognised four stages, but it is a continuum. We all have words at different levels and words may move down levels if we no longer need them (some subject-specific words learnt at post-primary). Research suggests children need twelve 'instructional encounters' to learn a word (Stahl and Nagy 2005) i.e.: get to stage 4.

Use the following to ask pupils to analyse their own knowledge of words pre and post teaching.

Example

	Target Word	<i>solid</i>	<i>gaseous</i>
1	I do not know the word		
2	I have heard it before, but I do not know what it means		✓
3	I know something about it but only in certain situations. I cannot use the word easily		
4	I know the word well. I can explain it and use it.	✓	

Rate my word knowledge

	Target Word						
1	I do not know the word						
2	I have heard it before, but I do not know what it means						
3	I know something about it but only in certain situations. I cannot use the word easily						
4	I know the word well. I can explain it and use it.						

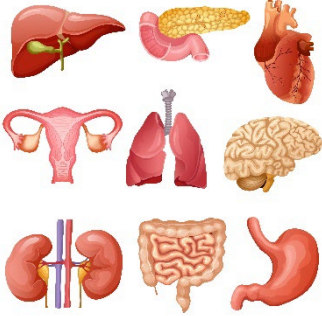
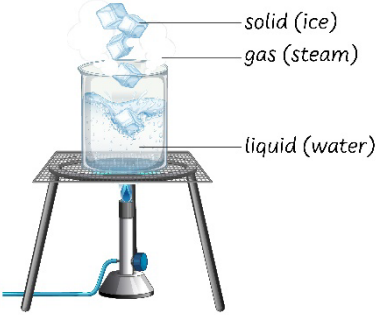
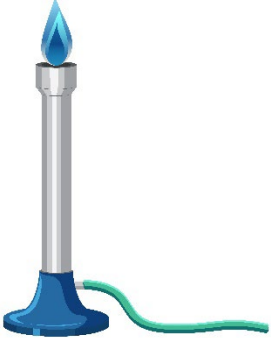
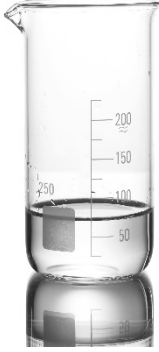
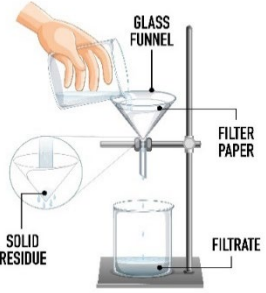

REVIEW

	Target Word						
1	I do not know the word						
2	I have heard it before, but I do not know what it means						
3	I know something about it but only in certain situations. I cannot use the word easily						
4	I know the word well. I can explain it and use it.						

Link a visual to the written word

Visualisation:

- Taps into the visual memory, not just the auditory, which may be stronger in some pupils.

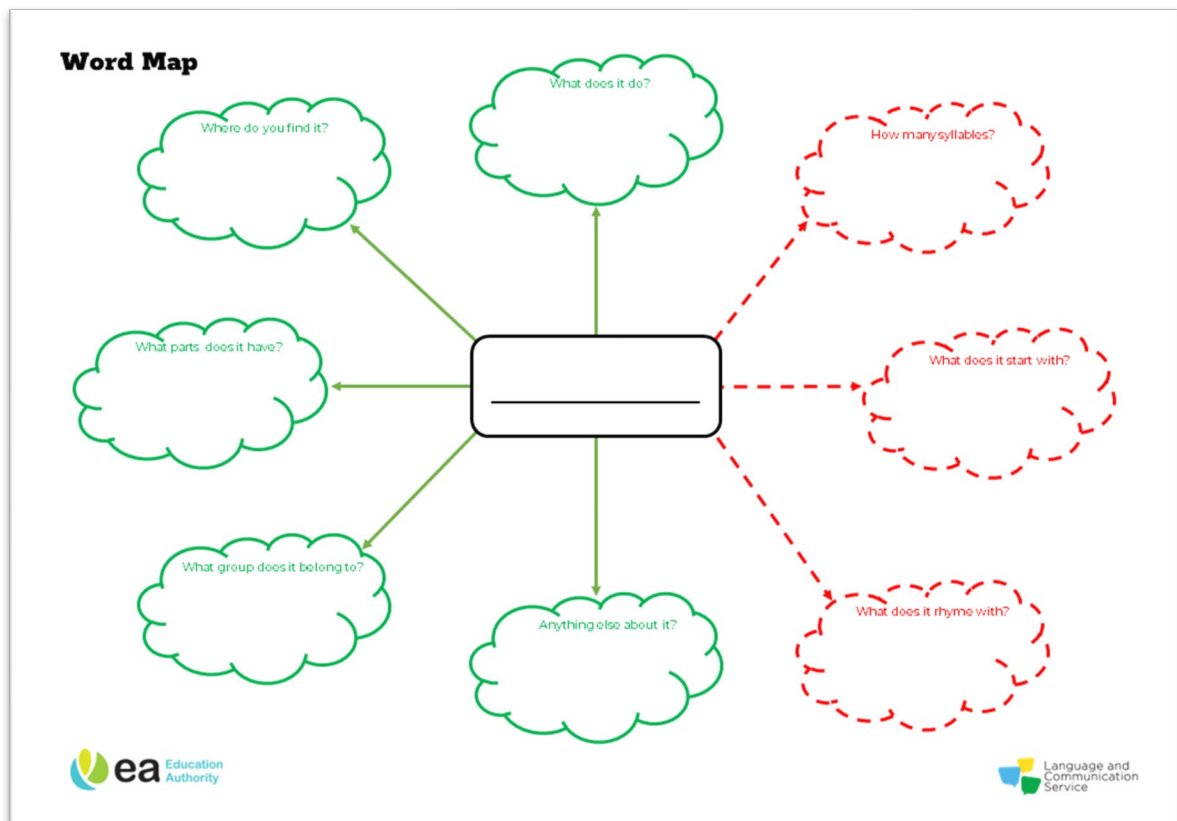
<p>Organ</p> 	<p>States of Matter</p> 
<p>Bunsen Burner</p> 	<p>Beaker</p> 
<p>Filtration</p> 	<p>Test Tube</p> 

Word Maps

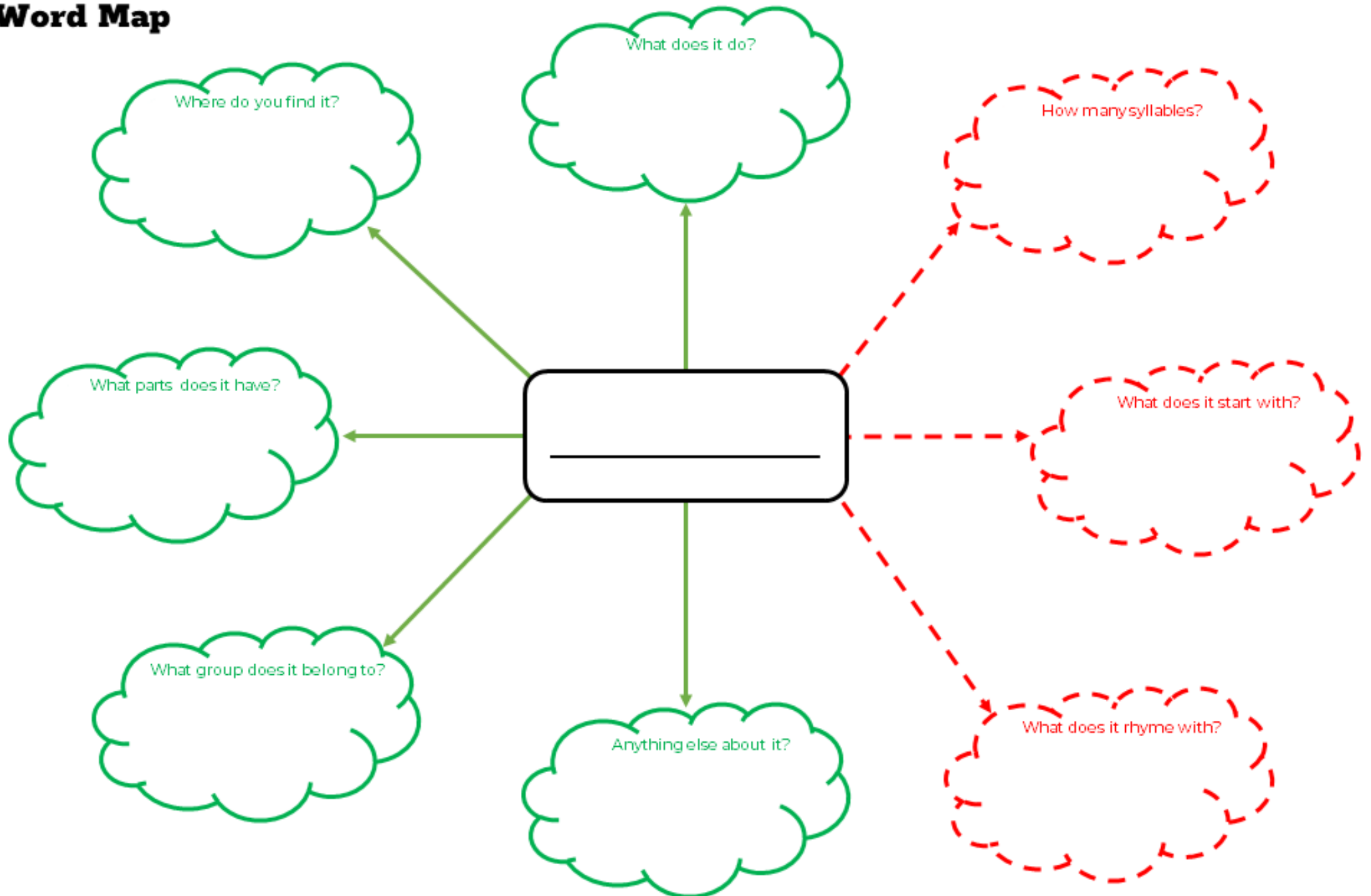
Word maps:

- Support vocabulary knowledge.
- Support word associations.
- Illustrate the semantic knowledge (what it means).
- Illustrate the phonological knowledge (what it sounds like).
- Can be used to compare words on completed word maps to discuss similarities and differences.
- Use colour and pictures/symbols to stimulate visual memory.

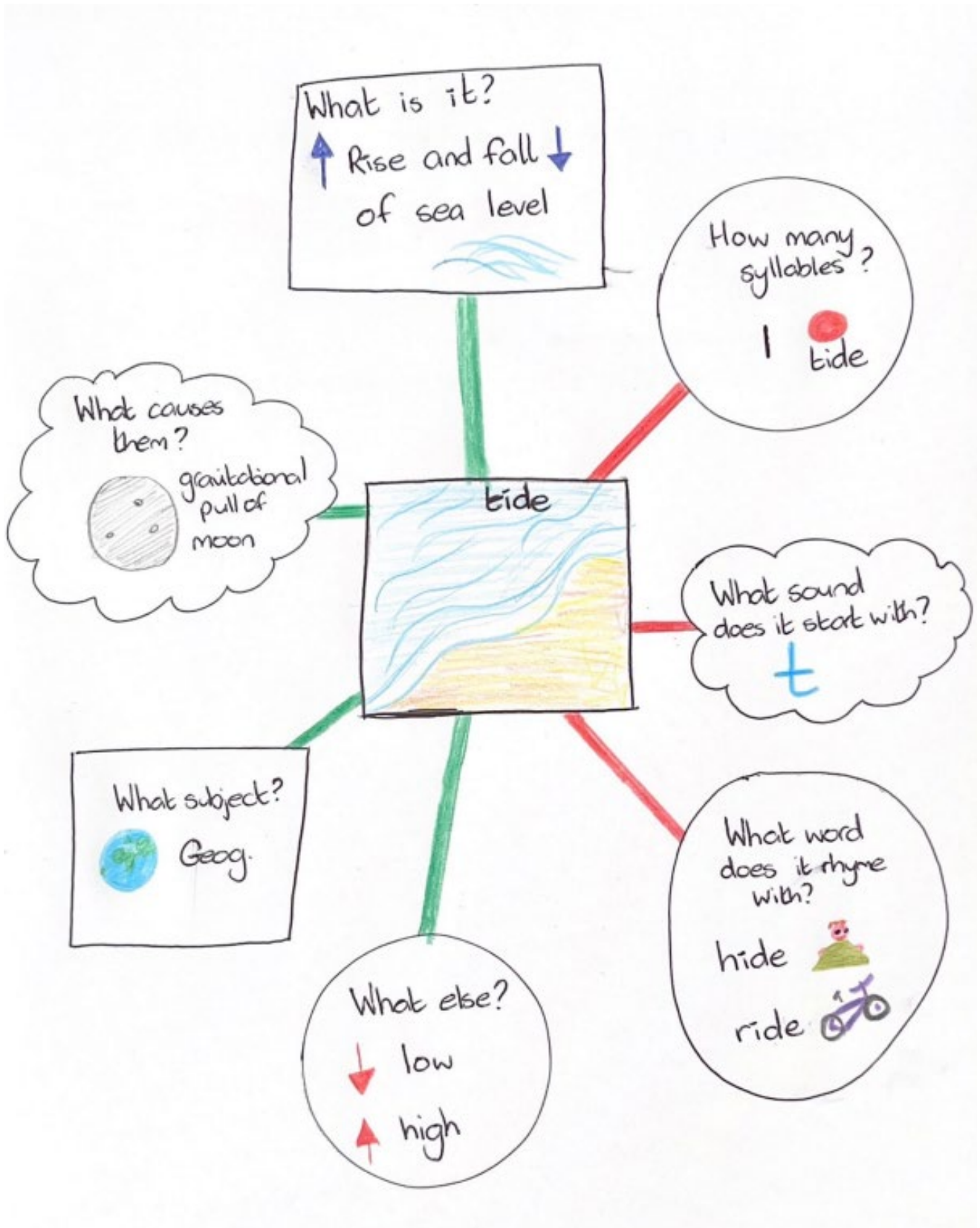
Pupils can draw their own word map but initially may prefer to use a template.



Word Map



Example Word Map



Mind Maps

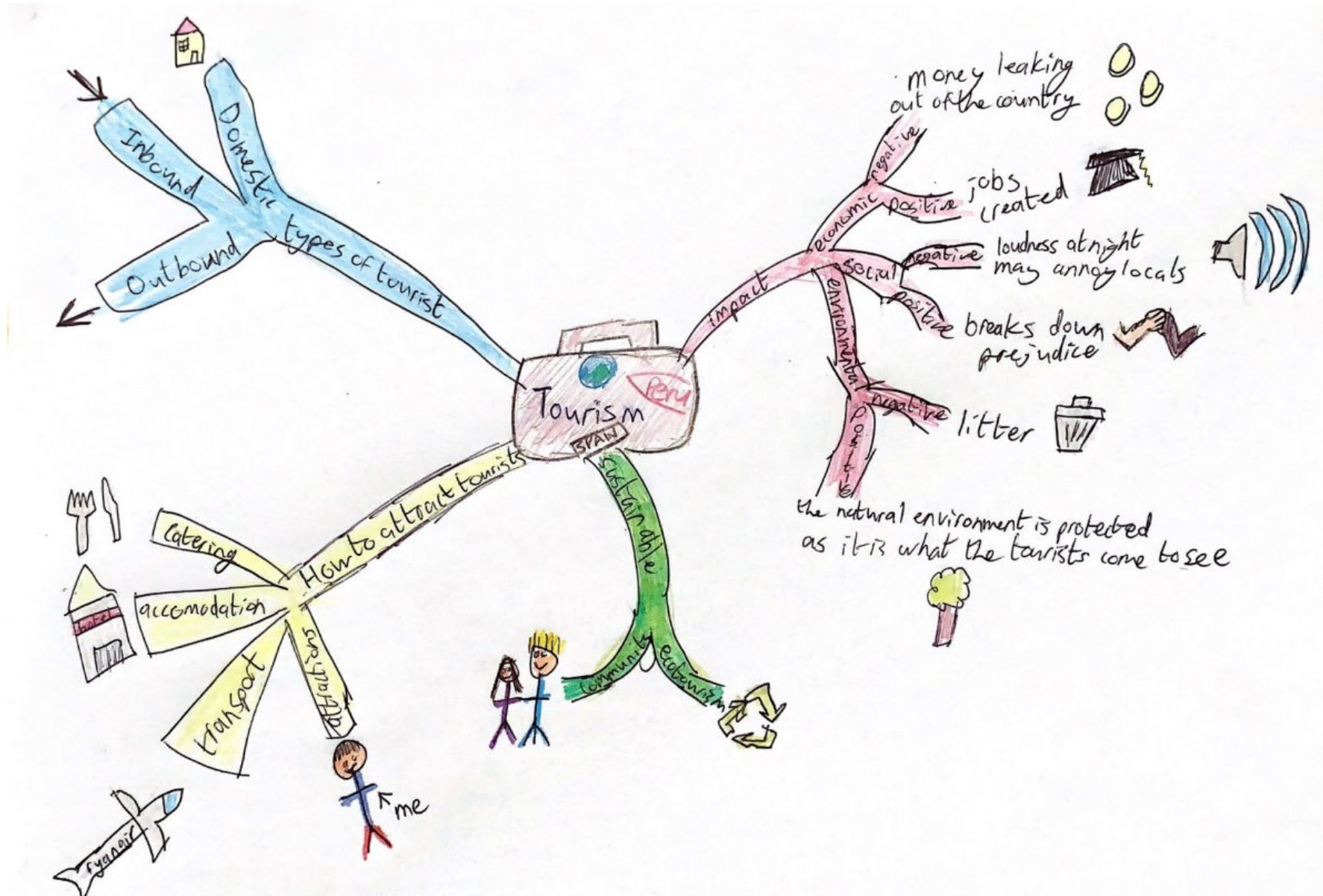
Mind maps:

- Were originally designed by author and consultant, Tony Buzan.
- Are a graphical thinking tool used to present ideas and information visually.
- Provide effective ways to enhance memory, creativity and productivity.
- Have a central-coloured image and words.
- Use colours to identify different ideas.
- Use pictures and symbols to encourage memorisation.
- Teach pupils how to sort words and information, how words are linked and how to identify categories.
- Use as few words as possible and lots of pictures/symbols.

How to:

1. Think of words associated with a topic/subject area.
2. Draw a picture and write word in centre.
3. Identify categories. Choose a colour and draw a branch out from the central picture. Write the category name on the branch.
4. Draw secondary branches from each main branch using the same colour.
5. Add images at each stage.

Example Mind Map



Word Shrewd

Word Shrewd:

- Provides a quick recap

How to:

1. Say the target word.
2. Prompt the pupil to state the meaning of the word.
3. Prompt the pupil to state a fact about the word structure (e.g. number of syllables, sound it starts with, word it rhymes with)
4. Prompt the pupil to use the word in a suitable sentence.

Word Shrewd



Think of

MEANING



SOUND



SENTENCE

