How to Concept Map in 5 Steps

Step 1: Read with a purpose!

Read the essential task for this reading assignment BEFORE you pick up the book. Make sure that you are actively trying to accomplish this task. For example, ET 1-1 asks you to " Describe, compare and contrast how different approaches to psychology explain behavior." Make sure that you are reading, not only to describe the approaches, but to also compare and contrast them.

Step 2: Pre-read the assignment.

Strategic readers of textbooks don't just start at the beginning of the assignment, instead they use the section headings to get an overview of the reading. Use the organization of the textbook to help you pre-read first. For our textbook, the large blue titles give the section headings while the green titles give the subsections. The bold words are usually the most important but . . . they won't get you a 5 on the exam. Look at the italicized words in our syllabus for each task. They are the terms you must know from the reading. In our class we call these Varsity Terms.

Step 3: Read the assignment.

Yep, you actually have to read it. There is no way around this. Don't forget to keep your purpose in mind. You area a laser. Stay focused.

Step 4: Make you map.

Start off by writing down the Essential Task. Then make a graphical answer to this task using what you just read. Start with the big sections first and then work your way down to specifics. Keep it organized. If you don't know how to organize it. . . you didn't really understand what you read. Be sure to define in your own words any terms you use. Make sure that for each Varsity Term you can come up with your own real life example. If a Varsity Psychologist is mentioned in the reading, put him or her down on the map with the term they are responsible for researching.

Step 5: Color your map.

Color aids memory and makes it easier to find things when you use these maps to study for the exam in May. You will need a few colors and at least 3 different highlighters. Some people make all sections of a topic in the same color while others make their section headings in one color, sub-topics in another and terms in another. Whatever works for you great, just get a system down that you use consistently. As for the highlighters, highlight your Varsity Terms in one color, your Varsity Psychologists in another, and your examples in a third.