

Structuring a Topic

Nora Hoffmann

The methods to structure your topic help you to arrange and prestructure your text logically. They also allow you to discover content which is not absolutely urgent for your thesis and may be excluded from your text. Also, these methods help you to discover missing links and contents, which you may need to add.

There are different possibilities to structure your topic. You may choose one of them to work with, or use them in a complementary way.

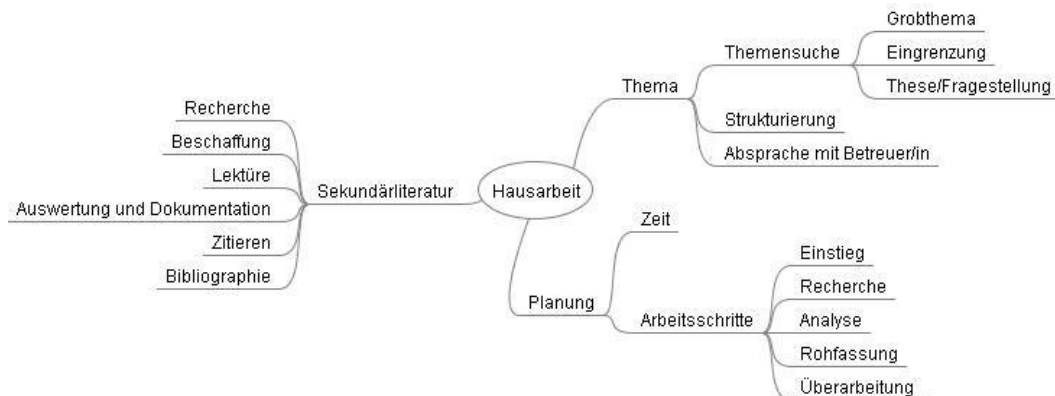
Mind-Mapping (top-down)

Aims:

- To generate and categorise different aspects of a topic
- To prepare a structure

Procedure:

1. Write down your general topic in the middle of a sheet and circle it.
2. Use this as a starting point to draw lines from on which you note down associations. Structure these into hyper- and sub-categories.
3. (If you like, you may draw additional lines between individual terms to connect them, and jot down the reasons for their connection.)
4. Choose one small field which you assume to be adequate for your term paper.



Card-Method (bottom-up)

Aims:

- To sort already existing ideas and to generate additional approaches
- To test and compare different possibilities for structuring
- To prepare a structure

Procedure:

1. Jot down (one-word or full-sentence) on a small piece of paper, index card or post-it note all essential ideas/terms/statements/questions relating to your topic. In case you have used the methods of Clustering or ABC-Darium, you may want to fall back upon your collection of ideas resulting from these. (The explanation of these methods can be found in the handout „Finding your topic“.)
2. Relocate the cards into different arrangement groups, until you have found a satisfying structure. During the relocation process, sort out unsuitable cards and add others, if you find additional associations.
3. Find hyper-categories, note them down on cards with a different colour and replenish your structure with those.
4. Choose one small field which you assume to be adequate for your term paper.