



Clustering

Clustering is a method for the writing person to get a quick overview of a certain topic or question. An image of words is the result that can activate your creativity and lead to new ideas.

Why do you use a cluster?

Clustering is a non-linear, graphic brainstorming technique (cf. Grieshammer et al. p. 174). All thoughts are allowed and none will be censored. This elicits associations and sets of associations with plenty of different connections. Usually, it gets obvious which subject areas the person writing has the most knowledge about or is most interested in because there will be the most associations (cf. *ibid.*). A cluster looks a lot like a mind map, but it is not used for structuring your work. It is used for a free and creative collection of ideas (cf. Girgensohn and Sennewald p. 105).

What do you use a cluster for?

- collecting ideas on a topic
- exploring possible sub-topics
- identifying key topics that you want to pursue further
- narrowing down the topic of your work
- getting closer to a research question
- creating a list of keywords for literature research
- preparing a first structure

Instructions

- Set a time frame: 7 –10 minutes (set a timer!)
- Note one central term in the middle of your sheet (core of the cluster). This could also be the topic of your work or a research question.
- Leading away from this core, you write down other terms or phrases spontaneously.
- Encircle them, then connect them to the core via lines.

- You can add new associations to the terms or phrases you wrote down before. If you have other ideas concerning the core, you start a new line leading away from the core.
- It is important to work quickly (only then will the “inner censor” be silenced). All thoughts are allowed! The writing hand should always be moving. If you are lacking ideas at some point, you can just circle one term until you have new ideas
- If you have several topics to choose from, you can always create more than one cluster to see where you have the most ideas and inspiration.

(cf. Grieshammer et al. p. 174)

What else can you use a cluster for?

- Have a look at the cluster: Which aspects are connected to the topic? Which aspects are you interested in? On which aspects do you have the most prior knowledge?
- Which aspects would you like to follow up on?
- If necessary, create another cluster for a certain aspect (follow-up-cluster with this aspect as its core).
- If you chose your research question as the core of your cluster, you can develop a first outline of your work.
- Start your literature research on certain aspects.

Example: a cluster on the topic “writing center”

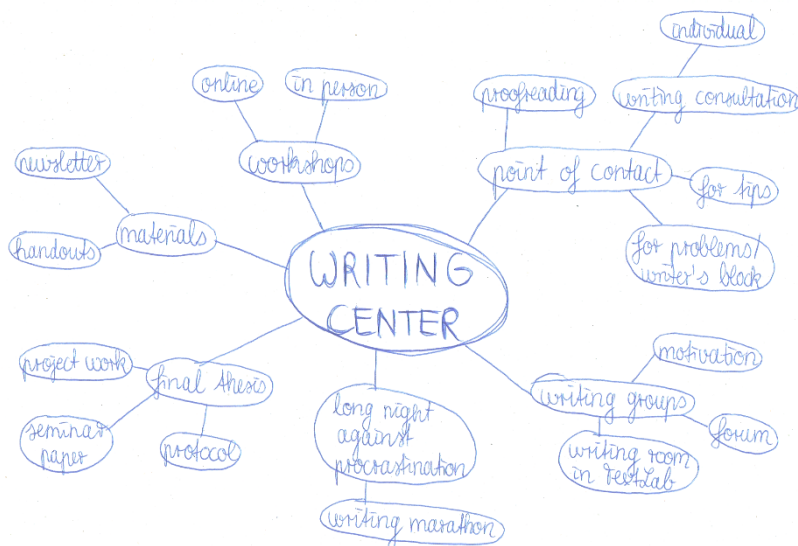


Figure 1: example of a cluster

Sources:

Girgensohn, Katrin, and Nadja Sennewald. *Schreiben lehren, Schreiben lernen: eine Einführung*. Darmstadt: WBG, 2012.

Grieshammer, Ella, et al. *Zukunftsmodell Schreibberatung: Eine Anleitung zur Begleitung von Schreibenden im Studium*.

Hohengehren: Schneider Verlag, 2016.

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