

THE BASICS OF MIND MAPPING FOR AUTHORS

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Published 2015 by Pure Spirit Creations

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Basic Mind Mapping for Authors/Nina Amir. —1st ed.

Mind Mapping: Your Multipurpose Creative-Process Tool

This short report provides you with an overview of mind mapping and how authors can use it in a variety of ways. It is comprised of a number of posts previously published on my blog, *Write Nonfiction NOW!*, including two guest posts by Roger C. Parker.

10 Ways Nonfiction Authors Can Use Mind Maps to Plan Their Book

By Roger C. Parker

I came late to mind mapping, after writing over 30 of my nonfiction books, two of which each sold over 300,000 copies around the world; *Looking Good in Print: A Guide to Basic Design for Desktop Publishing* and the original editions of *Microsoft Office for Windows for Dummies*.

However, if today's mind mapping software had been available, I could have written them *in a fraction of the time* it took me to write them! More important, I could have done a far better job of promoting them and profiting from their success.

My latest books, for example, were far easier to write because I began with a mind map and used it as the basis for writing and marketing. Indeed, whole sections of my [# Book Title Tweet Book01: 140 Bite-Sized Ideas for Compelling Article, Book, and Event Titles](#) were written right in my mind map!

What is Mind Mapping?

Mind mapping is a form of visual thinking that helps you tap into both sides of your brain. Mind mapping permits you to view your book, your writing, and your marketing from several perspectives.

Think of a mind map as a series of clouds. In the center is a large cloud, containing the title of your book. Arranged around it are smaller clouds representing the chapters of your book. Next to each chapter are the ideas and topics you want to describe in each chapter.

You can easily drag and drop chapters into a new order, as well as drag and drop the ideas from chapter to chapter, until you're satisfied with their sequence. While doing this, you can collapse the map to reveal just the "big picture" view of just the chapters, or you can zoom in to show the details associated with each chapter. For details, see [Winning Mind Maps for Authors and Marketers](#).

How You Can Use Mind Mapping to Plan Your Book

Here are just some of the ways nonfiction authors can use mind map to increase their writing and marketing productivity.

1. **Choosing a topic for your book.** Often, the hardest part of writing a book is prioritizing your goals and ideas. Mind maps make it easy to evaluate various

book topics in order to identify the book with the highest probability of success.

2. **Know your readers.** Writing success requires knowing your readers and their information needs. Mind maps make it easy to analyze your reader's characteristics, inventory their challenges and goals, and assess their priorities. This makes it easier to tailor your book's contents to providing the right information.
3. **Identify and analyze competing books.** Just as no one wants to buy a copy of yesterday's newspaper, no one wants to buy a book that repeats information already available. By knowing the strengths and weaknesses of competing books, it will be easier to position—or differentiate—apart from competing books.
4. **Plan your book's profits.** In today's changed book publishing market, savvy nonfiction authors know that the "real money" comes *after the book sale*, when you can profit from information products, services like coaching and consulting, and establish your reputation as a paid speaker. Mind maps make it easy to write a book that supports your long-term goals, and avoid making decisions that limit your options for future profits.
5. **Create a table of contents.** Mind mapping makes it easy to efficiently change the order of chapters, move ideas from one chapter to another, and reorganize the sequence of ideas in chapters *before* you start writing. Changes made before you start writing are much easier to make than reorganizing content after you've made significant progress.
6. **Track your writing progress.** Once you have used a mind map that you use to create your book's table of contents, you can use it to schedule and track your progress as you're writing. By tracking your writing progress in a mind map, you can see your progress, which creates an incentive and momentum to continue your progress.
7. **Evaluate your author platform.** Before you start to write a book, you need to evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of your current author platform—or online presence. This provides the perspective you need to effectively market and promote your book.
8. **Create a book marketing plan.** It's never too early to start planning your book's marketing. A single mind map can display your book's marketing plan, one that starts while writing your book, builds to a climax with the launch of your book, and continues the marketing momentum after your book appears. The earlier you start, the lower the stress and the more effective your marketing will be. This is especially true if you're planning to blog your book.
9. **Plan your networking activities.** One of the best ways to attract pre-publication quotes from experts in your field is to create a mind map of the influencers in your field. This makes it easy for you to follow the experts in your field on social media, meet them in person at events like workshops, and pave the way for approaching them for possible endorsement quotes or, possibly, a foreword or introduction to your book.
10. **Prepare upcoming live events.** Mind maps save time preparing speeches, presentations, teleseminars, webinars, and workshops. Often, you can use

your mind maps as the basis of your visuals and audience handouts. Mind maps also make it easy to prepare for upcoming interviews, whether you're being interviewed, or you're interviewing others.

About the Author

Roger C. Parker is a nonfiction author whose “how to” books have sold over a million copies around the world. His books, which have been translated into 37 languages, help individuals apply technology to everyday writing and marketing tasks.

As a nonfiction book coach, at [Published & Profitable](#), Roger has introduced thousands of nonfiction authors to mind mapping—a software based approach to writing and book marketing that has multiplied his writing productivity. He also guest posts for the [Content Marketing Institute](#) and [Mindjet's Conspire blog](#).

Using a Mind Map to Plan Your Nonfiction Book

By Roger C. Parker

The easiest and fastest way you can plan your nonfiction book is to use a mind map. Mind mapping is a technique you can use on paper, on whiteboards, or you can use a variety of computer software for Macintosh and Windows laptop, iPhones, and iPads.

What is a mind map?

Mind maps resemble the solar system, with the sun in the center and the planets revolving around it.

Since we're talking about nonfiction books, the center graphic will contain the title of your nonfiction book. Surrounding it are subtopics—each containing the title of one of the sections, or parts, of your book.

Each of the section graphics links to smaller subtopics—each one representing one of the chapters in your book.

Finally, the last step, is to add the main ideas—or subtopics—you intend to cover in each chapter. You can explore and download free PDF examples of mind maps of current nonfiction books [here](#), [here](#), and [here](#).

Mind mapping benefits

When you've finished a mind map, you'll have a graphic that displays the “big picture” of your book—the sections and chapters—as well as the main ideas and contents of each of the chapter.

If you're using software like **MindManager** on your computer, you can control your view of the map by collapsing and expanding the map:

- **Collapsing a mind map** means displaying only the “big picture” sections and chapters of your book. This permits you to analyze the sequence and flow of your ideas. When you collapse a topic, a small icon appears, reminding you that that the topic contains additional information.
- **Expanding a mind map** occurs when you press the “collapsed” icon. This reveals the previously-hidden subtopics.

One of the big advantages of working with mind mapping software is that you can share your work with others. Once you have created a mind map of your book's

table of contents, you can share copies with agents, co-authors, co-workers, editors, and publishers. Mind map files can be shared as e-mail attachments or placed online for others to add their comments.

Export is another major benefit offered by mind mapping software. Once you've completed the mind map of your book, you can export it to your word processing program, eliminating the need to retype what you've already written.

Planning your nonfiction book

Here's how I suggest you use a mind mapping software program to plan and write your nonfiction book this November:

1. **Organize your ideas.** Start by adding your book's proposed title in the center of the map, and—just as a starting point—add 3 subtopics for the main sections of your book (beginning, middle, and end). Then, add 4 chapter subtopics to each section. As you plan your book, insert the titles of each of the 12 chapters. Then, add subtopics to each chapter identifying the main ideas of each chapter. Put your map aside overnight. The next day, drag ideas from one chapter to another, or add new ideas or delete unwanted ideas. Change the order of the chapters if necessary. When you're finished, you'll have a detailed table of contents for your book.
2. **Schedule your work.** The next step is crucial. It's not enough to plan your book, you have to write your book—and this requires creating your own deadlines for each chapter. Without specific writing deadlines, all you have are intentions, not commitments. Most mind mapping software programs allow you to add **Start dates** and **Deadlines** to each topic. These provide a visual commitment and timetable for writing your book.
3. **Tracking your progress.** Finally, use your mind map as a motivational tool by showing your progress as you move forward. Each time you complete a topic, you can add a finished icon—or small visual symbol—to the topic, or you can indicate completion by changing the color of the topic or deleting the topic. You'll feel a definite sense of progress as you add completion dates or finished icons to each topic!

Getting started with mind mapping

There are over 100 mind mapping software programs available for computers, iPhones, and iPads. Pricing is all over the map, from free to several hundred dollars. Some programs are entirely web-based, and charge small monthly payments.

The best idea is to search online for mind mapping software, follow blogs like Chuck Frey's [Mind Mapping Software Blog](#), the [Mindjet blog](#), and my [Published & Profitable Writer's Tips Blog](#) which contains frequent mind mapping examples and tips, plus upcoming events for authors.

Closing Thought

Mind mapping can make a major contribution to the success of any nonfiction author. It boosts creativity, keeps you focused and on schedule, while saving you time. Best of all, you can't really go wrong, because most mind mapping software can import and export files to different formats. As a result, you're not locked into a specific program when you get started mind mapping on your computer or mobile device.

About the Author

Roger C. Parker is a nonfiction author whose "how to" books have sold over a million copies around the world. His books, which have been translated into 37 languages, help individuals apply technology to everyday writing and marketing tasks.

As a nonfiction book coach, at [Published & Profitable](#), Roger has introduced thousands of nonfiction authors to mind mapping—a software based approach to writing and book marketing that has multiplied his writing productivity. He also guest posts for the [Content Marketing Institute](#) and [Mindjet's Conspire blog](#).

Mind Map Your Project from Start to Finish

By Nina Amir

Before you start any writing project, you must know what you are writing about. You also must know what content you intend to include in that project.

For a book of any type, you need to develop a table of contents, or your chapters. You must decide what will be in those chapters—the actual content. For an essay or any type of article, you must know your subject and decide what aspects of that subject you plan to cover within the confines of its length—the actual content.

One of the best ways to make these decisions involves using a process called mind mapping. You can do this by hand using a large piece of white paper, like a poster board, and colored pens, markers or highlighters, or a computer program, such as Freemind.com. (This program is free; you can purchase better ones.) Some people also like to do this process using Post-It notes. No matter the technique you decide to use, I've often heard it described as “vomiting” your ideas onto a page and then cleaning it up.

Here's how mind mapping works.

1. Get a large, blank piece of paper—the bigger the better.
2. In the center of the paper, print your project's topic or subject. Draw a circle around the key word or phrase. (*For example, if you are writing a book or an article on the topic of how to train dogs, you might use the key-phrase “dog training.”*)
3. Now write down the first word or phrase that pops into your mind. (*For example, “stay.”*) This may become a sub-topic that constitutes a chapter in your book. Or it could be a sub-head in one of your chapters or in your article. Don't worry about that now, though.
4. Jot down the next word that comes to mind (*For example, “tips,” “down,” “on leash,” “off leash” “punishment, “reward, or “come.”*) These all represent possible sub topics (chapters) or sub-sub topic (subheads) in your book.
5. Repeat step four until you've run out of word associations.
6. Now go back and draw lines from your topic (key word or phrase) to the words or phrases that you think should be chapters in your book (or subheads in your article). Circle these phrases. Then somehow indicate which other words or phrases belong with this chapter or subhead. (This is where your colored pens, markers or highlighters come in. You can color code different items, draw colored lines, make colored circles or boxes, etc.)

For the more organized person, another way to do this involves grouping sub-topics and sub-sub topics together as you do the mind mapping exercise. Here's how this would work using the same example above.

1. In the center of the paper, print your project's topic or subject. Draw a circle around the key word or phrase. (*For example, "dog training."*)
2. Draw a line from your key word and write down the first word or phrase that pops into your mind. (*For example, "stay."*) Circle the word or phrase. This is a sub-topic that may become a chapter in your book or a sub-head in your article.
3. Now draw a line from that word and jot down the next word that comes to mind (*For example, "tips."*) This represents a sub-sub topic, or a subhead in your chapter or article. (For an article or essay, you may want to stop at step three.)
4. Repeat step four until you've run out of word associations.
5. Now, return to your key word or key phrase and repeat the exercise. Come up with another sub-topic, then as many word associations (sub-sub topics) with that sub-topic as possible, and then move on to another.
6. Continue until have created 10 to 15 sub-topics, each with several sub-sub-topics.

This produces a fairly well organized mind map. You can still color code it if you like.

For a book, take the related sub-topics and sub-sub-topics and arrange them into a table of contents. It will look like this:

Book Topic (your book's title and subtitle)

Chapter 1 Sub Topic (chapter title)

- Sub-sub topic (subhead)
- Sub-sub topic
- Sub-sub topic

Chapter 2 Sub-Topic (chapter title)

- Sub-sub topic (subhead)
- Sub-sub topic
- Sub-sub topic

For an article or essay, the structure is about the same only it doesn't involve chapters:

Article or Essay Topic

- Sub Topic (subhead)

- Sub topic
- Sub topic

One other way to mind map a project involves using Post-It notes. You write the words and phrases on the notes and stick them on the poster board or even on something larger. When you run out of word associations, you can rearrange them as necessary. Then you can type up your table of contents or article contents.

When you are finished with your mind map, you'll have the structure or outline for your book, and you'll know if you have enough content for a book or for an article. With this guide, you also are ready to begin writing.

How to Map Your Path From Idea to Successful Authorpreneurship

By Nina Amir

Ideation—the formation of ideas or concepts.

This activity represents a mainstay for most writers. Without ideas, you're lost...or, at least, you're not writing or making money.

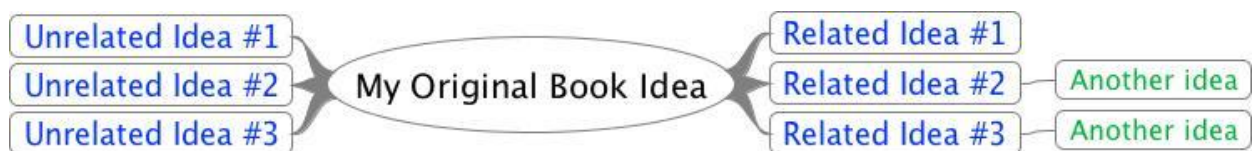
How do you work with your ideas so you can become an author? How do you work with them to become a multiple-book author? And how do you work with them to create a business around your books—to become an authorpreneur—so you can earn a living?

If you have one idea, you can turn it into a book—or give it the structure of a book—with the mind mapping process I discussed in my last post, [How to Start Your Nonfiction Book Easily and Effectively Every Time](#). Then you can write it.

How to Generate Multiple Book Ideas

But what about if you want to write more than one book? Cool! It's possible you have many ideas. You can use the same mind mapping process discussed in that earlier post to get all your book ideas out of your head and onto paper.

Place your book idea in the middle of your mind map and do your brain dump. Basically, brainstorm your ideas, and then organize them. What you might end up with is something that looks like this:



What this indicates is that you generated both **ideas related** to your original book idea and ideas **unrelated** to your initial book idea. That's what happens for a lot of writers.

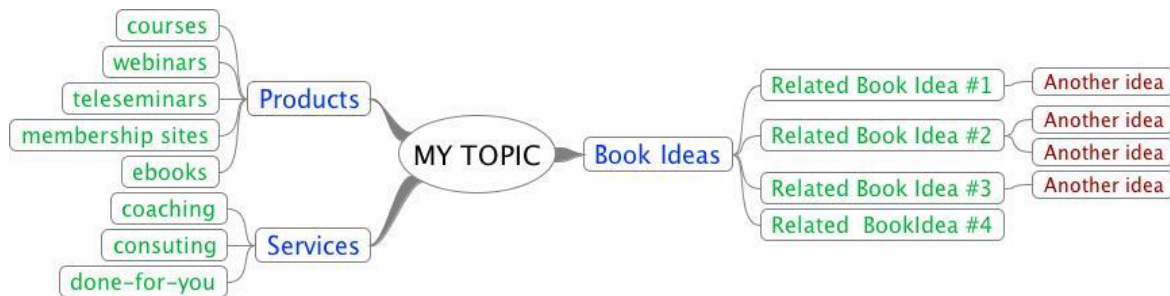
That's okay...if you don't care about branding yourself as an author. **Branding yourself as an author will help you sell more books.** So, you might want to rethink your ideation strategy.

How to Ideate for Optimal Author Success

Instead of starting with your book idea, start with your general topic area. What do you want to write about over time? **Is there a theme or a subject that floats your boat and for which you'd like to be known?** This is a good place to start.

Now, do a brain dump—a mind map around this topic. Think outside the writer box. Don't just brainstorm your spin-off books, the additional books you will write that are related to your first book idea, but also products and services related to all the books you might write. **Consider how you might build a business around this book.** (Books tend to not be the big money makers for authors...) Brainstorm how you could become an authorpreneur.

When you ideate in this manner, you might end up with a mind map that looks like this:



Your map can include a description of each book, product and service. And each book can be planned out so it follows logically from the next.

Every Author Needs a Map Before They Set Out

Numerous times I've heard bestselling author [Brendon Bouchard](#) say the time for a map is before you enter the forest. The same holds true when you set out on your career as an author. You need a map of where you are going—where you want to end up—before you start writing and before you enter the “forest” of your publishing career.

Believe me, I know. I've taken a bit of a winding path and found myself lost in some dark places. I like to help aspiring authors cut down on their travel time and avoid those scary detours by teaching them (from my own experience) how to take a straighter and more direct path to success. **Mind mapping your career is that way.**

I love taking aspiring authors through [this ideation process](#) as they start their journey into authorship. It's so exciting! I hope you'll consider ideating your book, your books, a business around your books, and your career as an author. Let me know in a comment below how it goes! And visit your-author-coach.com if you need help with the ideation process.

Successful Authors Think Beyond the Book

By Nina Amir

Many wannabe authors have one-tracked minds. They think only about the book they want to write. If you have dreams of creating a career as a successful author and spending your days writing bestselling books, you may be focused primarily on your book idea and time at your computer cranking out manuscripts. In today's publishing environment, however, this type of strategy doesn't often lend itself to successful authorship. If you want to achieve that goal or develop a career as an author, think beyond each one of your books.

The average author doesn't earn a living from the income garnered from book sales. The most successful authors have a big-picture vision of their books—especially nonfiction books—that includes more than just creation of manuscript after manuscript. Their strategy encompasses a variety of other products and services that help them promote, sell and monetize their books. This is how they manage to earn a living as authors and writers as well as succeed at their publishing endeavors.

Products and services related to books allow authors to bring in additional income—besides book sales. Promotion of coaching services and online courses that relate to a particular book, for instance, provide opportunities to encourage clients and customers to purchase the book as well. Additionally, the promotion of products and services increase authors' and the books' online discoverability, which, in turn, increases book sales. And book sales send readers back to authors' websites to purchase supporting products and services.

Let's look at an example to see what this looks like for one particular aspiring author.

One Book Idea, Many Income Streams

Imagine Sarah, an aspiring author who wants to write a memoir about her journey from bankruptcy to successful business ownership. Her initial idea is to share her story. She's always loved writing, and she thinks producing a memoir will be the perfect way to become an author.

However, she thinks larger than this one book idea. Although she has a career, she wants one as an author as well. She doesn't want to give up her business quite yet, but she might want to do so eventually—especially if she can succeed as an author. So she brainstorms ways to monetize her book, including writing several additional spin-off books.

Sarah has no background in finance or business, nor does she have an education in entrepreneurship. (She has a college degree in English, which is why she knows she

can write.) She began her landscape design business because she is passionate about gardening and wanted to work for herself. However, her failure provided life experience that translated into a desire to learn how to succeed at what she really wanted to do—to become a landscape designer and run her own landscape design business.

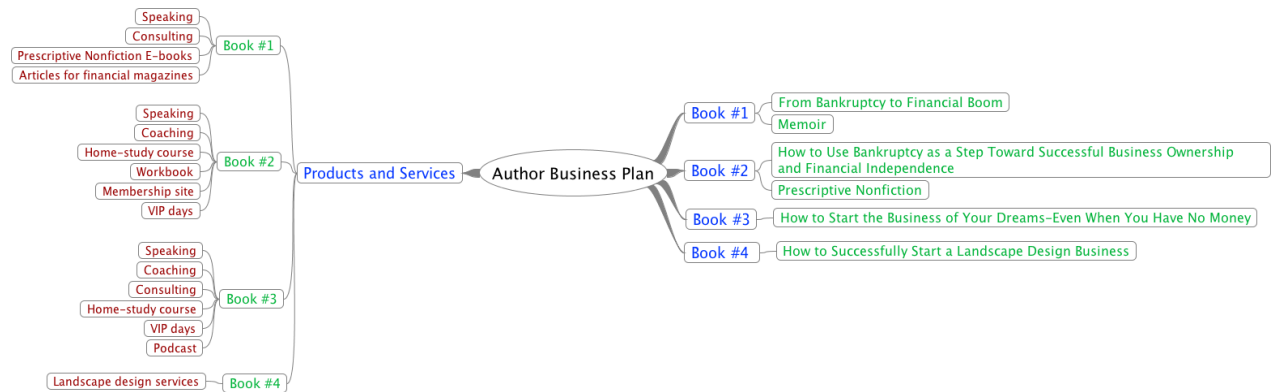
Interestingly enough, after declaring bankruptcy and subsequently achieving success when she re-started her business, Sarah became an expert in an entirely different area. She became an authority on how to build a dream business no matter your financial situation. She discovered this area of expertise when friends and clients would ask her how she succeeded in business or request advice on how to start their dream businesses. She gladly offered them counsel—for free.

While Sarah’s memoir will, indeed, allow her to tell her story, she realizes it doesn’t provide as many monetization opportunities as prescriptive nonfiction. Therefore, she brainstorms three more books, two that are logical spin-offs from the memoir (on topics related to finances and creating your dream business) and one related to both her landscaping business and her personal story.



Next, she brainstorms different products and services for each book. These will allow her to monetize each book as well as to promote them by offering readers a way to:

- dive deeper into the subject matter with courses, events or membership sites
- get one-on-one support from Sarah through coaching or consulting options
- continue learning about the subject with additional short e-books or workbooks
- meet Sarah and hear her speak on the topic
- increase her visibility and discoverability online



Now Sarah has a plan for becoming a successful author. She can prioritize the book ideas, and then release them in the order that seems most effective for her writing career, branding or business. She will build out her products and services as she releases each book.

Beyond-the-Book Strategy Results

Sarah’s plan achieves a variety of results that allow her to create a career as a successful author. By thinking beyond her one initial book idea she:

- brands herself with a series of spin-off books, which helps her attract readers, customers, and clients; a brand also helps potential readers and clients know who she is and what she does or offers.
- increases her book sales with a “long-tail effect”; the more books she writes and publishes, the more books she sells.
- enhances her expert status; multiple books, products, and services create a sense of authority or thought leadership in her subject area, which helps her attract readers, clients, customers, and speaking and media appearances.
- earns money from a variety of sources rather than just book sales.
- makes it possible to develop an income related to her books as well as from her books.

As Sarah implements this strategy, her income as an author is based upon book, product, and service sales. She earns more money than the average author who writes one or two books and relies on book sales alone for income. While she doesn’t spend all of her time writing, thinking beyond the book allows Sarah to focus all her attention on activities related to her writing and books. The more successful her “author business” becomes, the more time she can spend writing.

Eventually, Sarah might earn enough as an author to give up or sell her landscape design business. However, she loves this work as much as writing. She wants to continue to grow landscape design business through her writing, successfully combining her two passions. She can author more books spun off from the first one on landscaping (Book #4). She also can create online courses related to landscape

design or provide coaching or consulting to other landscape designers. If she wants to go a step further, she can create a Google Hangout on Air or a podcast related to landscape design to help promote her books, products and services on this topic.

Beyond-the-Book Opportunities

Can you see how you might think beyond your current book project? Are there products and services that would lend themselves to building an author business around your book? (If you don't know how to create products and services related to your book, read [*Authorpreneur: How to Build a Business Around Your Book*](#).)

Thinking beyond the book opens up a whole new world for you as an author, one filled with a huge number of opportunities restricted only by your imagination and knowledge base. Employ this strategy to create a successful career as an author, one that supports you financially and allows you to pursue your passions.

About the Author

Nina Amir, the Inspiration to Creation Coach, inspires writers to create published products and careers as authors as well as to achieve their goals and fulfill their purpose and potential. She is the author of [*How to Blog a Book*](#) and [*The Author Training Manual*](#), both published by Writer's Digest Books. A developmental editor, proposal consultant, author and book and blog-to-book coach, some of her clients have sold 230,000+ copies of their books and been published by major publishing houses. A popular speaker and workshop leader, she writes four blogs, has self-published 12 books and is the founder of National Nonfiction Writing Month, also known as the Write Nonfiction in November Challenge.

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