



Clustering

Clustering is a method developed by Gabriele L. Rico in which associations are collected based on a core word. Similar to a mind map, this creates a network of ideas with cross-connections. In contrast to a mind map, however, a cluster is less hierarchical in its structure. The creation of a cluster is more chaotic and freer. The aim is not to collect only useful ideas according to a previously considered structure, but to allow associations to unfold freely. However, a resulting cluster is not a random product, rather it structures itself during the creation process. The prerequisite for the method to work is therefore a basic attitude of trust. By muting your inner critic and planner, you may be surprised at where the initial chaos leads you. The value of clustering lies in the fact that by creating it you can organise your associations and recognise where your mental focus lies. In this way, a cluster can serve as an organising tool and form the basis for your text production.

What can a cluster do for you?

- Good method for warming up and getting into writing
- Quick way of collecting and organising thoughts
- Makes cross-connections and focal points recognisable
- Can be used as a writing plan

Create a cluster

- Find a quiet time and place to write. Set aside ten minutes for the cluster and plan additional time for writing.
- If you are trying out this method for the first time, it is worth working on a topic that is not relevant to your studies.
- Write down a key word in the centre of a sheet of paper. It is also possible to write down a group of words. Draw a circle around this core.
- From this centre, write down associations and mark each word with a circle again. Connect the circles with lines to form a 'branch'.
- Follow one branch at first. When it is exhausted, you can start a next one from the centre.
- If you can't think of any more associations, you can 'doze'.
- Draw arrows and circles thicker - don't stop, but continue your creative process and soon a new flood of ideas will begin.
- It is important that you do not limit yourself by criticising what you write and that you do not create a plan for how to proceed.
- If at any point you suddenly realise what you want to write about, you can stop working on the cluster and start writing.





(Further) processing a cluster

A cluster is one thing above all: a starting point for further processing. First let your cluster sink in as a whole and then make connections, add to it and reorganise it. You can also create a more in-depth follow-up cluster for a selected term from your first cluster. You can then move on to writing. Start with any word, this will usually come intuitively to you. Write for about eight minutes, but no more than half to three quarters of a page. You do not have to include all the associations in your cluster. Try to return to your opening word at the end. In this way, you create a well-rounded text that contains your most important associations to a core and can form the basis for further work. A detailed cluster can also be used as a writing plan.

