

## WHY Freeplane

- 1 This video explains why you need Freeplane. It tells you What Freeplane is, What Freeplane it is used for, What kind of tasks Freeplane supports And What it requires to use Freeplane.
- 1 Let us start with the first question. What is Freeplane, especially version Freeplane 1.2
- 1 Freeplane originates from Freemind which is software for creating mind maps. A mind map is a diagram of topics which are connected in a tree like structure as you see developing here.
- 1 Let us develop the tree a bit further with a branch for "used for"
- 1 Topics in the tree are called nodes and neighbouring nodes have parent-child relation or are siblings. The central topic in the oval is called the root node.
- 1 Mind maps are originally drawn with pencil on paper. Such mind maps are limited in size and not easy to modify.
- 1 A Freeplane digital map is less limited. It is easy to add and move nodes around in the tree.
- 1 The tree view can be changed by folding and thus hiding branches of the tree. This helps keeping overview when developing large mind maps.
- 1 Freeplane can support "thinking" and "doing things".
- 1 Thinking may consist of things like Brainstorming, Analysing, Summarizing and Structuring. It is possible to put ideas like this as post-its on the screen. These nodes, which are unconnected to the tree, are called **free nodes**.
- 1 Free nodes can be put at and moved to any position on the screen.
- 1 Free nodes can be connected to the tree structure too. In that case they will take over the appearance of the branch they are connected to.
- 1 This is all you need to know for easy and rapid brainstorming.
- 1 This template illustrates Freeplane can support analysing. You see a template with the 4 components a SWOT analysis called Strength, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats. If the mouse cursor is moved over a title, it displays what the title means. The analysis itself is performed by adding child nodes to each title.
- 1 Freeplane is very powerful in summarizing large amounts of complex information. The map you see now contains an overview of major application areas of Freeplane. The map contains several structuring elements.
- 1 In the center is the classic mind map tree. This tree is surrounded by a number of free nodes containing examples of application areas. Sibling nodes are grouped by a so-called summary node which carries an collade. Labelled arrows indicate relations.
- 1 In fact the map is a documented index. Hover the cursor over a node and click the hyperlink that shows in the tooltip. As an example I choose *documentation*. Clicking the link contained in the tool tip will bring me to the Freeplane tutorial.
- 1 Again this Freeplane tutorial is an example of a Freeplane map. Most of its content is hidden by folding. Click any topic to unfold and reveal hidden nodes.
- 1 Clicking the node *Functions index* will open another Freeplane map showing the main visual functions of Freeplane.
- 1 This map is also an index map. Moving the cursor over a particular function makes a text appear which explains where to find the information. Clicking the Freeplane Tutorial jumps to the mind map Tutorial with the node containing your object of interest being selected.
- 1 In summary it was shown that Freeplane can be used to manage information in a system of interrelated modules.
- 1 It can be difficult keeping overview and finding the right information in a store with much information. Freeplane supports with functions for structuring, finding and filtering. Examples of this can be found in the Freeplane documentation, which of course is contained in a Freeplane map.
- 1 Unfolding node Reference shows the structure of Freeplane's main menu. All major information contained in the documentation is connected to these functions. This ordering is useful if you know beforehand which function you are looking for.
- 1 In other cases an ordering in terms of chapters may be more useful. In this map a chapter-like appearance is generated by filtering. Filtering for chapter 1 shows all functions related to the topic of chapter 1.
- 1 Of course it is also possible to find or filter nodes with a particular content. If you enter the term password, you will find all nodes related to password protecting nodes.
- 1 Besides finding information in the current map, you can also find and replace information in all open maps. This makes Freeplane a power tool for retrieving and managing large amounts of unstructured information.
- 1 Hyperlinks may be added to other nodes but also to files, web pages and software applications. Simply select one or more objects and drop them on a node. As a result a child node is created for each selected object with a hyperlink to the object. The hyperlink is the arrow. If clicked, the object opens.
- 1 To be more user friendly, the hyperlink address can be replaced with a meaningful title without the physical hyperlink being broken.
- 1 In addition the title can be documented which any amount of text.
- 1 Like other nodes, a node with a hyperlink can be moved to any position in the map tree. This is handy in managing collections of information.
- 1 In case the files concern internet addresses, necessary passwords can be kept in a child node which itself is password protected. This makes Freeplane a complete, practical tool for managing your information.
- 1 Although Freeplane can support very complicated tasks, I use freeplane the most for noting and classifying my daily tasks at work and at home. This dashboard shows a typical map for this. I use Freeplane because noting and reorganizing tasks is fast and simple.
- 1 Besides, a reminder can be set to signal when a particular task asks my attention..
- 1 On the wiki page special add-ons can be loaded to increase the functionality of Freeplane for doing things at work, at school and at home.
- 1 A typical use case is providing meeting support. Freeplane supports the whole process, starting with designing the agenda, keeping the attendants list, adding notes to agenda topics and finally producing the decisions and action list of the meeting. Here you see an example map produced with Freeplane.
- 1 The attendants list may include e-mail addresses. If an e-mail address is clicked it will open the e-mail program with a new e-mail instance in which the e-mail address is already filled in..
- 1 Because meetings are a recurrent problem, it makes sense to design a reusable template for meetings using the nice styling options of Freeplane This map contains the same meeting information as the former, but differently styled.
- 1 Freeplane has many functions that support writing, from gathering ideas to organizing paragraphs and keeping references. An indented text copied from a text editor is automatically converted in a hierarchy of nodes if pasted into a Freeplane map.
- 1 Writing support is further elaborated in Docear academic literature which is build around Freeplane. It supports marking of paragraphs in PDF documents and automatically copying these paragraphs into a Freeplane map. It also completes references to these documents.
- 1 Freeplane is also useful in developing a script for a video. The basic tree structure shows the structure of the video. At the leaves narratives can be added and a summary of the actions in the video. A filter can be used to see only the narrative, so that a speaker can easily read the text. Closing the filter shows the basic structure.
- 1 Freeplane supports keeping information in a digital vault. The whole map can be protected, only the children of a particular node. The combination is also possible, giving multi-level protection.
- 1 With multi-level protection you can manage your many passwords for Internet and banking, keeping both separated with different passwords.
- 1 Password protection can also be used to put both a school assignment and the solution in the same map. After the student finished his assignment, the solution can be displayed by entering the correct password.
- 1 In conclusion, Freeplane supports a variety of processes related to Thinking and Getting things done. In summary, Freeplane facilitates more than mindmapping and includes information mapping and information management.
- 1 Freeplane supports using styles for formatting nodes. Here you see all the styles I defined for the tutorial. For example I used a green color for nodes the beginner of Freeplane should read first. Note that if the cursor is on a node, the name of the style is displayed "here".
- 1 Connecting a style to a node is made easy in a number of ways. As a first example, by default each branch is given a different edge color. Of course this can be turned of.
- 1 As a second example, a node can be given automatically a different style for each hierarchical level. Freeplane has predefined level styles which can be adapted.
- 1 A third example are so-called conditional styles. To illustrate these I have defined a rule to detect which nodes I revised lately. When I turn on this rule, Freeplane checks which node is revised and applies style *Revision* which adds an *R-icon* to the node.
- 1 Styles are productive not only in making up the appearance of nodes. Styles can be used to classify information as an alternative to attributes. Classified information can be used to find or filter information.
- 1 A special use of styles in Freeplane is to define node templates. A style can have a predefined text and predefined attributes which can be loaded into a new node.
- 1 Unstructured information can be structured using attributes. An attribute consists of two parts, called attribute name and attribute value. As an example one can keep a list of contacts in attributes.
- 1 The attribute's value may contain besides text also hyperlinks. In this way a node can be linked in a systematic way with other nodes. This creates a structured network of nodes which may reside in different mind maps.
- 1 Attributes can be used to classify and filter nodes. Before it was shown that the Freeplane documentation was filtered to show chapters. For this every node of the documentation contains an attribute with the attribute name *Chapter* and as a attribute value the list of chapters the node belongs to.
- 1 I like Freeplane because it supports easy structuring. I like Freeplane even more because it makes entering and editing information fast and easy. To enter a free node, Ctrl + click a free place of the screen.
- 1 To add text to a node, simply start typing while the node is selected and finish by pressing Enter.
- 1 To move the node, click and drag the node in its middle. In case of a free node, connect it to a node in the tree by dragging and dropping it on the node tree.
- 1 To add a child node UNtil it is selected, move the cursor over a node until it is selected and press *Insert*. Again start typing to enter text in the node and finish by pressing *Enter*.
- 1 To add another node below the node just added, press *Enter*, type the node content and press *Enter* again.
- 1 To increase the distance of a node to another node, move the cursor until you see an oval handle. Click and drag this handle to displace the node.
- 1 To format text, simply right-click to open the context menu for text editing.
- 1 For more extensive editing, open a dialog editor. With this you can add bullets, numbers etc.
- 1 These are just a few of the many ways to use Freeplane, which make handling information with Freeplane fast and easy.
- 1 Freeplane maps can be shared with and used by people not having Freeplane installed. The wiki Freeplane contains many examples.
- 1 Freeplane maps can also be exported to many other file formats. Depending on the format, hyperlinks keep working. Some hidden information may not show however.
- 1 In printing large Freeplane maps it may be convenient to change to outline view.
- 1 And it is possible to import many file formats into Freeplane.
- 1 As a final example, I show how an indented text can be copied from a text editor and be dropped on a Freeplane node. The indentation structure is converted automatically into a branch of nodes containing the copied text.
- 1 More examples are presented of the Introduction video "Beginner Editing Guide"
- 1 Finally, it is important that Freeplane runs on many computers and operating systems. The only thing it requires is a version of Java, which is free to download.
- 1 The Freeplane software is open source, which means you are free to use and adapt or extend the software.
- 1 This video has given an impression of the power of using Freeplane. Although the origin of Freeplane is in supporting mind mapping, it has outgrown this purpose. Freeplane could be typed as a tool for information mapping and information management.
- 1 If you want to learn more, visit freeplane.org and download Freeplane. Also view the video guides for learning how to use and edit Freeplane maps.