

Your Guide to Building a Blog – In Mind Map Form For Us Visual People

by Debi J

[Dare to Get Personal Blog](#)
[Debi J's Blog](#)

Edit it, personalize it, add colors to it, add links to it... but if you want someone else to have one, please send them over to my website to get one. That way they have a chance to sign up for future updates and giveaways of other mindmaps I create. AND, they'll send ME their questions (unless of course you'd rather they call you... that's cool too!) ☺

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Should You Read This? That Will Depend...

1. Are you a visual learner?
2. Do you blog?
3. Are you planning to generate income from your blogging?
4. Have you ever felt overwhelmed while creating a blog?
5. Do you have multiple blogs?
6. Do you have to hunt down information when you start a new blog?
7. Are you losing track of information about your blog?
8. Do you know which tools you are using for each blog you own?

If you answer yes to any of the above questions, there's a good chance that these mind maps will be worth checking out.

When I started blogging, I just started. I didn't bother to read any guides until I couldn't figure something out. Then I'd struggle thru a ton of information until I finished whatever step I was working on, and then I'd move on.

Then I decided to set up another blog and guess what? Since setup is primarily a ***do it and move on*** type of job, I'd forgotten many of the steps I'd done on the first one!

Of course by then, I'd also added plugins, changed the settings, set up headers, footers, optin boxes and more. But which ones? What settings? What layout did I use? Which colors?

I didn't know. So I was bouncing back and forth from my original blog to my new one, jotting stuff down, hunting down the information and getting frustrated because I couldn't find what I was looking for, much less duplicate it!

Well, enough is enough!

Yep, I finally got to the point where I started putting everything about my blog in writing. The goal was to have easier access to it whenever I started a new blog.

I started bookmarking, copying, pasting, linking and organizing all my information and you know what?

I still couldn't find anything as fast as I wanted!

The thing is, I'm a visual person and a "Big Picture" kinda gal... but the detail work still has to be done. That's where I'd get myself into a never ending time wasting loop.

My days were starting fine. I'd jot down a short list of what I planned to get done. But then I had to get the details done. That meant I was off and running to search which meant reading and visiting other sites... which meant finding other things that caught my attention... things that I thought would fit into my business plan. But where?

If I wanted to add something new to my plans, I had to figure out where it should go. If I wanted to add a post, I had to flip thru pages of my posts inside WordPress to make sure I hadn't already posted something like it before.

And with all this site to site and page to page traveling, the only thought that kept coming to mind is, "What the hell am I gonna do as this grows?!".

So I started mapping it out on paper. Notes, lines, circles, arrows... my entire blog on paper... until I started making changes and adjustments, adding stuff, crossing stuff out.

Nope, that's not gonna work either.

Suddenly last week it hit me. Why not a make a mind map?! I started playing with them last year, but then stopped when I went back to work because I just didn't have time for my business.

And since they've been working for me, I wanted to offer them to others because I KNOW I'm not the only one that runs up against these issues. Or maybe I am? ☺

Either way, I'm done wasting time hunting down information that should be right there at my fingertips. And I'm done having to redo my files without being able to figure out where the new information would fit best into the old. And I'm definitely done with not knowing what's working and what's not working on my blog in a glance!

Time can't be given back. And time spent on setup is time I'm losing to grow my business and spend with my family!

Forewarned is Forearmed (and an excuse to voice my opinions) ☺

Warning 1: There are a lot of different ways to start a blog. Different platforms, themes, plugins, tools and ways to put it all together.

There's no right or wrong way... just lots OF ways. What I've put into this file is what I know, what I've used, what I still use and what people I trust and respect use and suggest.

Warning 2: Don't build your business using any single platform, tool or resource that you don't own and control.

Initially, you're going to have everything in one place. But as your business grows, keep in mind that if someone else owns it, they can make changes any time they want and it could seriously affect your business and income.

Over the past few years, hell even in the past few months, I've seen and heard a lot of stories of people losing everything they've worked for because their business was built on a site that gets shut down.

Or they lost access to their income for months at a time because of access problems or because a company decided to close their user account. Policy changes, technology changes and competitor buyouts can also affect your business, especially in today's fast-changing online world.

Obviously, you can take or leave any and all advice that I offer. But it would be very unethical of me to know it's a possibility and to not let you know, so at least think carefully about it.

Using The Map

If you're familiar with **FreeMind**, you can skip over this part.

If not, I've included a quick basic tutorial for getting started. There are quite a few Mind Mapping software programs on the market. I've used several of them and personally have a couple of favorites, but for the most part, they behave the same. The difference is in the templates, ease of use and cost.

I chose FreeMind for this project for a couple reasons. It's free, and it's simple to use, which means everyone can get access to it, and everyone can be taught to use it.

First things first. If you don't already have it, go grab a copy (yes, it's free) for whatever operating system you use, from the page here:

<http://freemind.sourceforge.net/wiki/index.php/Download#Download>

It's compatible with several other mindmapping programs, just in case you have a preference. I know it works with Freeplane and Xmind, among others. And if you're a Mac phone or tablet user, you can use it with iThoughts or iMindmap. Oh, and I believe it's good with Thinking Space for those of you using Android devices.

Once you've downloaded, install it.

Now, look for the file called BloggingMindmap.mm which is in the same directory as this file. Open that file.

First, the general stuff.

On the right hand side, you'll see a group of "nodes" that point to the various steps it takes to build a blog. This particular mindmap covers the technical steps to getting set up. I'm working on more mindmaps that will cover what to do once it's online.

If you take a close look at the nodes, there are several that have a small circle at the outer right edge. That small circle lets you know that there are additional topics related to that node. These are called "child nodes". If you click on any node with a small circle on its right, it will open up to show you what's there.

This lets you focus on one area of the map at a time and avoid information overload (Or distraction mode if you're like me!). You can put everything into these maps, and still keep it so that it never overwhelms you.

Keep It Simple

Yes, there are a lot of things you can do to pretty this up. I suggest that you just use it as the tool it's designed for, unless you're going to start offering mindmaps to your subscribers. ☺

Extreme Beginners Note

You'll see these notes from me here and there because I remember what it was like when I first started my computer programming degree. I thought for sure that if I touched the wrong key I'd erase everything on the college computers! Also, I get questions like these a lot... so do NOT feel like you're the only one out there learning basics!!

So for those of you computer whizzes who have forgotten what it's like to get on a computer for the first time, feel free to skip on down to the "On to the Software" section below. But for those of you who are just learning how to do stuff other than email, this is the **MOST IMPORTANT** key combination you'll ever learn... **"Ctrl-Z"**.

A key combination written like that means you press the "Ctrl" key, hold it down, and then press "Z" on your keyboard. (A "Ctrl-Shift-K" means hold the "Ctrl" AND "Shift" keys at the same time and then press the "K" key).

When you do ANY thing that you didn't intend to do or don't like, "Ctrl-Z" will Undo it... fix it... change it back to what it was before you did whatever you did... YAY!!

In fact, even if you don't notice you did something wrong until you've done a few more things (I'm usually typing faster than I notice), you just keep tapping the "Z" (while holding "Ctrl"), until you're back to the step you want to be on.

Your next best friends will be (other than **SAVE** or **"Ctrl-S"**):

"Ctrl-X" – This will cut a single node or group of nodes so you can move them.

"Ctrl-Y" – This will "paste" a single node or group of nodes (whatever you last copied).

"Ctrl-C" – This will "copy" a single node or group of nodes so you can duplicate them.

NOTE: You can use the mouse for this also. Just mouse over the node and press your right mouse button to see the options displayed. Then click on the option you want.

Personalize It!

The whole advantage to using Mindmaps is that it gives you the ability to add, remove, and change the structure of your business as you go, not to mention being able to see it visually as a whole. For me, that makes it much easier to see where a new idea should fit (and if I change my mind down the road, I just move it again!)

On to the Software

I've only included the basic keystrokes here for personalizing the map. If there's something that comes up that you want to do differently or can't figure out, just click on the "Email Debi" node that's on the map and drop me a note!

1. **Add a node to right** – Press the "Ins" key. Then type the text you want & press "Enter".
2. **Edit topic with subtopics** – Click on node, then press "F2" and start typing.
3. **Edit topic without subtopics** – Sometimes these will gray so you can treat like above (Press "F2" then type). Many times they go straight to edit mode (cursor inside node) so you can just start typing.
4. **Delete a node** – Click on the node, then press "Del" key.
5. **Open subtopic nodes** – Click on the node (only applies to nodes with a small dot on the right side of the node).
6. **Hide subtopic nodes** – Click on a node a second time.
7. **Add a node below currently active (gray) node** – Click on node, then press "Enter" key. Type in the desired text and press "Enter".
8. **Change the order of "sibling" nodes** (nodes branching directly off the same "parent" node) – Hold down the "Ctrl" key and then press your up and down arrows to move the node around.
9. **Cut / Copy and Paste parts of map (single nodes or entire branches)** – Highlight desired node, then use the following keystroke combination, based on what you're doing:
 - a. Ctrl-X cuts the highlighted node and any child nodes branching off from it.
 - b. Ctrl-C copies them.
 - c. Ctrl-V pastes them, but be sure to highlight the node where you want them placed BEFORE pressing Ctrl-V.
 - d. **NOTE:** You can use the mouse for this also. (Right click for the options.)
10. **Mark off tasks as you finish** – Click on the node, press F2, then click on the green checkmark over on the far left in the icon bar. It adds a check to the node. Then for your next blog or website setup, you can start Unchecking them! ☺

Note 1: These instructions are for the Windows version. The docs/help files for the version you're using will explain any differences for other operating systems.

Note 2: If you are working on a map, but then you switch over to another program and come back, you can accidentally highlight a node that you didn't intend to and cause it to highlight to gray. So, if you leave FreeMind and come back, just tap your mouse in a

white area of the map before pressing any other keys. This will keep you from editing something you don't want to edit!

Don't worry. Do it enough times and it'll become second nature.

Note 3: When you click on nodes that have subtopics, the node turns gray, but if you click nodes that do NOT have subtopics, it turns to Edit mode (cursor is inside box vs. box going gray). If it does that, press the "Enter" key once and it will go gray.

What Now?

Since this is an editable file, make a copy of it before you start making changes. That way there's no chance of messing up the original map as you learn to personalize it. And, you're going to be more willing to play around with it if you know you can always re-open the original!!

Rename the copy to something like "JoesBlogMap.mm" or something you'll recognize.

If you simply want a visual way to see the setup steps and what you use in the way of tools, themes, autoresponder and plugins, just add your own stuff and you're golden.

If you want to do even more with it, like see what categories you use, which posts you've created and when you've added them and such, or stay tuned for my next ones... there's a LOT I'm gonna be doing with these because I AM a visual person!

What? You really didn't think this was the end product, did you?

Contact Me

At the bottom of the map toward the center left, you'll see a node that says "Email Debi."

Click on that and your default emailer will open up, with my address and the subject line already filled in.

Feel free to use that to send me your comments or suggestions, what you like, what you don't, and what type of nodes or information you'd like to see added. As a subscriber, you'll receive the updated map once a week or month, depending on how many changes I make. I'll let you know on your subscriber emails when there's been a major change.

Play around with it and get used to the program before you start adding a bunch of nodes. Then as you work with the map and new ideas come to you, just add a node where you think it will fit in. You can go back and add to it later. This way you don't lose your ideas and you also don't lose your focus on the task at hand (at least not if you get into the habit of keeping all the parent nodes closed while you work on one at a time!).

As you're adding stuff, some things will become blaringly obvious as not being the way you want. For example, when I started adding my existing categories to my map, it became real clear real fast that I was using what should have been tags for categories!

You'll start to see what you have on your blog that does nothing for your bottom line. Delete those sections. Get rid of everything that's not contributing to your desired end result.

Get rid of the clutter.

When you think you're "Done", save it and walk away from it for a few days and go back to your regular activities. Then come back and see if there are things you forgot to add or topics that you can eliminate.

The key is to be on the lookout for ways to become more productive, save time and increase your bottom line.

Keep in mind that this map can easily be adapted to any projects you're working on, not just this blog setup.

Some Final Tips

You have everything you need here as far as what it takes to set up a blog. I have more mindmaps in progress that will cover more details of actual blogging, building relationships, list building and such. But this wasn't meant to be all-encompassing. It's meant for those who want the basics of setup. And it's for those who want to go further, but who can use time to learn the tool before expanding on the plan.

Special Tricks for Braver Folks

You can link directly from your mindmap nodes to the places you have listed inside them... websites, email addresses, files on your computer and more!

1. **Link a node to a website or email address** – Highlight the node you want to embed the link on and hit "Ctrl-K". That will open a text gadget where you can just type or paste the URL into. For an email address, you'd format it just like a mailto: link on a website.
 - a. **Example:** mailto:youreemailaddress@yourmail.com?Subject=What You Want to See in the Subject Line when people send you an email
 - b. If you hover over the "Email Debi" node in the Blogging Mindmap and look at the bottom left corner of the screen, you can see the formatting.
2. **Link to a file on your computer** – Hold down both the "Shift" and "Ctrl" keys and then press the 'K' key. That will bring up a file selector. Browse to where the desired file is on your machine and click on that. Save the node, and you're good to go.

After that, when you click on that node, the website or local file will open in whatever program is set as the default for it on your computer. This is a great way to make sure you're keeping your mindmap up-to-date.

I'm really bad about wandering off to another file and then forgetting to come back where I started. Mindmaps let me link to a file or website, do what I have to do, and then close it out because I know that at any given time, I can just click it again to open.

No more tedious searches for files!!

So... Get going. Once you have your current blog mapped out, setting up future blogs will be much more of a plug and play type deal rather than a nightmare. And you'll be able to relax a bit more knowing that you didn't forget anything!!

By the way, PLEASE don't spend a ton of time trying to figure out the software or let it frustrate you before you send me a question!! This is supposed to be fun! And if it's not, you'll give up on it before you ever figure out how much of a time-saver it could be for you. Of course if you give it an honest-to-goodness shot and you still don't like it, it could be that you're less of a visual person and may do better with seeing your blog in list form.

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For those who don't already get it, I also run a blog called Debi J's Blog (original right?). It's where I talk about the business building side of blogging. I cover what works for me, what doesn't work, what kind of numbers I'm getting, which products I'm using (or NOT using) based on my reviews and more. And I send out a weekly email updating what I got done for the week, both here and with my business.

If you're interested in that type of information, you can sign up, at [Debi J's Blog](#).

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