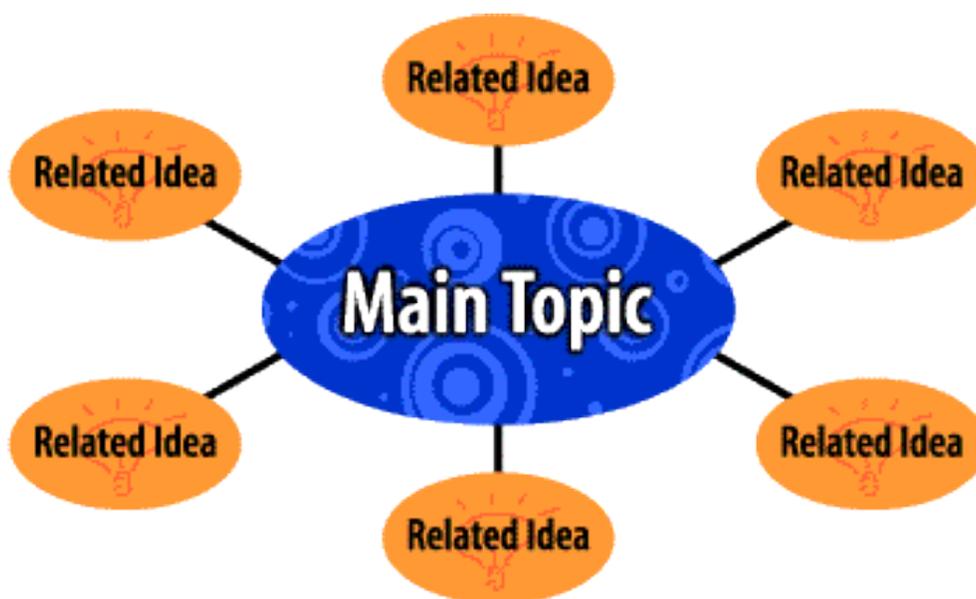# In Context Toolbox – How to Create a Concept Web

The **In Context Toolbox** tip sheets are designed to help middle school and high school researchers prepare a written report. This document will explain how to **create a concept** to jump start your report.

> Need more help with your report? Visit Help in any In Context resources for more **In Context Toolbox Tip Sheets**!

Making a concept web is a great way to get your research project going. Concept webs help you organize your thoughts and ideas about the topic you're studying. When you make a concept web about your topic, you'll soon be able to find the information you need to write a grade-A report. The picture below shows what a simple concept web looks like:

Main Topic

A very short statement that describes what you're studying. Two or three words are usually all you need. For example, if you're supposed to write a report about the world's tropical rain forests, you could use **Rain Forests** as your main topic.

Related Idea

These are concepts, thoughts, and ideas that pertain to the main topic. Whenever you study a topic, you'll soon start to uncover important details about it. Every time you find out something meaningful about your topic, put it in your concept web as a related idea. Two or three words are usually enough to describe a related idea.
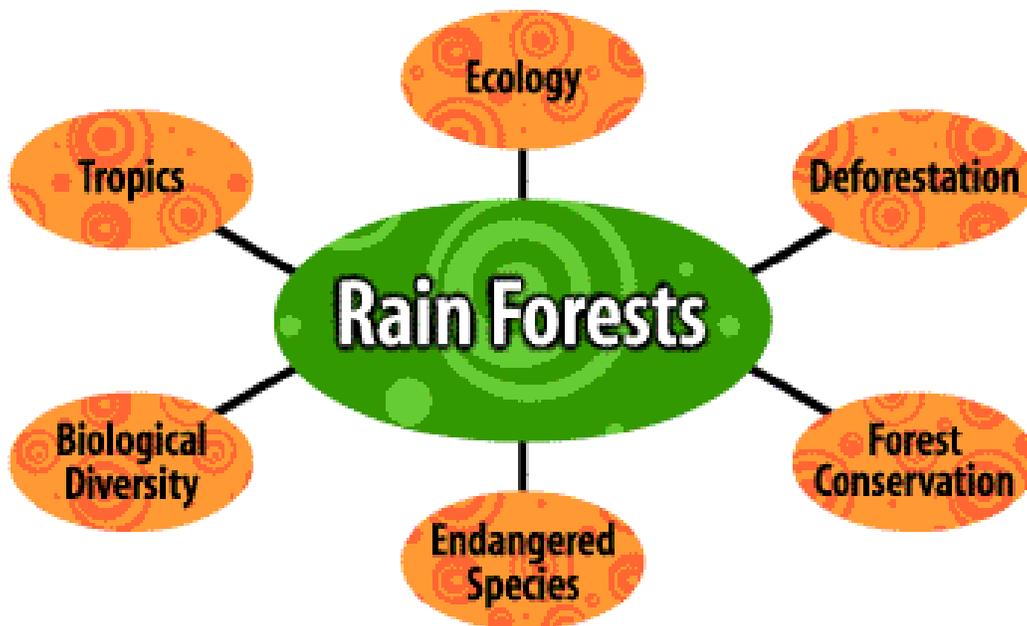
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A Simple Concept Web example

Let's say you really did have to write a report on tropical rain forests, and you decide to make your own concept web. Great! Here's how you do it:

1. Write **Rain Forests** in the center circle as the main topic.

2. If you already know some related ideas (like **tropics** or **ecology**), write them in one of the circles attached to the center circle.

3. Use one of the In Context databases (e.g. *Science In Context, Global Issues In Context, Student Resources In Context*) or another library resource and do a search on the words in your main topic circle: "rain forests".

4. Find some articles about rain forests that you think are good ones.

5. Read these articles thoroughly and discover some related ideas about your topic. Think of a way to describe each related idea in as few words as possible. Then write these words in one of the circles attached to the center circle.

6. Do a new search, this time using the words in one of your related idea circles as the search words.

7. Keep filling in the small circles with related ideas until you're sure you've covered everything that's important about rain forests.

After you've done some research and found some related ideas, your concept web might look like this:

A Great Big Hint:

If you're having trouble finding related ideas for your concept web, the In Context databases can actually find some for you! It works like this: every time you find a good article about your topic using this product, look for the "**Related Subjects"** area. You should see links for other topics. Chances are, those topics you see are ideas that are closely related to your main topic. So, take advantage of them and click to find more articles on those topics!

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Complex Concept Webs

Consider our Rain Forest concept web once again. Every one of the related ideas in the small circles is an interesting research topic in itself. So, let's do some research using the related idea words as our search words. As we do this, we'll discover more concepts that are worth exploring. For example, if we search on **biological diversity** and **endangered species**, we can find a few more meaningful ideas related to this topic. Here's how our concept web looks now:

Got the idea? Good! Now you're ready to make your own concept webs!

Need more help? Ask your librarian!

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