

Use Visuals to Scaffold Learning and Help Students Organize Their Thinking

Engaging visuals help students understand complex relationships or patterns connected to key course concepts, principles, or ideas. Internet resources and software applications provide a multitude of options for instructors to integrate engaging visuals into their online presentations.

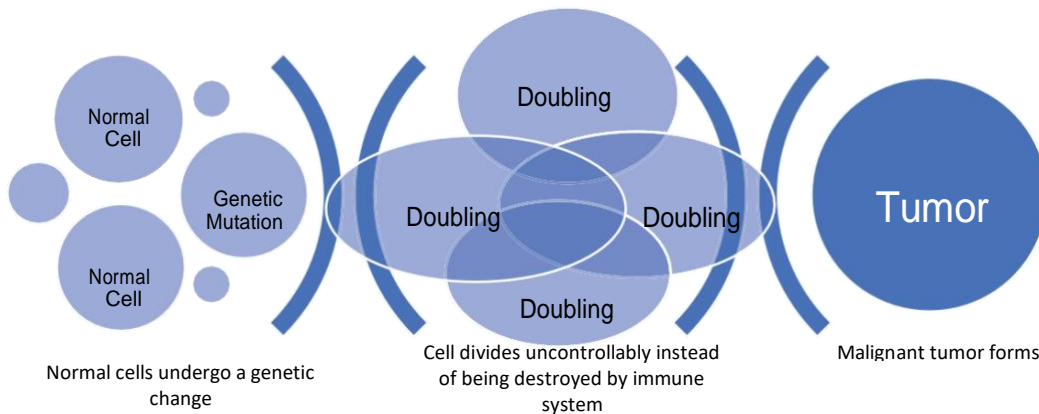
Visual Images

Visual images not only make presentations visually engaging but can also enhance learning and retention (Nilson, 2016). According to Miller (2014), “visual imagery is particularly powerful; we are more likely to recall a word if it’s accompanied with a picture” (p. 95). Miller also goes on to explain that the visuals need to be meaningful and aligned to the learning. If not, they can actually be detrimental to learning. Check with your educational technology department and library to find out if your school has a subscription to any digital image collections. You can also find free image collections online, such as

- EveryStockPhoto: <http://www.everystockphoto.com/>
- Wikimedia Commons: https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/Main_Page
- Artstor’s Public Collections: <http://library.artstor.org/>
- Flickr Creative Commons: <https://www.flickr.com/creativecommons/>
- Public Domain Pictures: <https://www.publicdomainpictures.net/en/>

Create Engaging Concept Maps With SmartArt

SmartArt, a tool integrated into PowerPoint, offers several customizable templates for visually demonstrating relationships between concepts, illustrating complex processes, or providing an overview of how topics or concepts fit together. Below is an example of a concept map made with SmartArt illustrating the process of cancer cell development.



- [Watch a YouTube video demonstrating how to create a concept map using SmartArt.](#) Below are additional practices for using SmartArt to create concept maps.

- Add animation to emphasize ideas or show information in phases as you offer explanations, which can help students more easily process information. [Watch a YouTube video on animating a SmartArt graphic.](#)
- Use images to illustrate the relationship between concepts. [Watch a YouTube video demonstrating how to insert photos or pictures along with text into SmartArt.](#)

Have Students Engage With Concept Maps

Copy your concept map into Word to create a document that students can interact with. You can then remove all, most, or a few words for students to fill in.

- **Create a note-taking activity.** Provide students with a blank concept map to accompany your microlecture and ask them to fill it in while listening.
- **Ask students to finish partially completed concept maps.** Leave the key points blank and ask students to fill in the information from memory. Introduce this as a study skill activity by suggesting students first fill in what they remember in one color and then go back to check and complete the concept map with another color.
- **Ask students to re-create concept maps that they are familiar with.** For concept maps that students will need to refer to quite often, it can be helpful for them to re-create the map from memory or by following an example.

References

Darby, F., & Lang, J. M. (2019). *Small teaching online: Applying learning science in online classes*. Jossey-Bass.

Miller, M. D. (2014). *Minds online*. Harvard University Press.

Nilson, L. B. (2016). *Teaching at its best: A research-based resource for college instructors* (4th ed.). Jossey-Bass.