Argument Mapping

Why map?

1. **Organise complex information** - Being able to see the overview and the connections between the details allows us to get to grips with the issue better.
2. **Communicate** - The finished map acts as a guide to presenting the information clearly.
3. **Maintain focus** – Maps enable us to remain focused on the key issues where the natural tendency of thoughts and debates is to meander and stray off topic or go off on tangents.
4. **Think critically** – By conveying the essential parts of an argument, maps make it easier to focus on the quality of the arguments.

General principles

Building principles:
- **The connections**: Argument maps are driven by the questions:
  - "Why should I believe that? What's the evidence for/against it?"
- **The boxes**:
  - There should be only one simple, clear and precise sentence in each box so that anyone can immediately understand it at a glance.
  - Sentences should be claims (statements) that can be argued for or against. Do not use questions or "thought bites" (sentence fragments or vague phrases) in boxes.
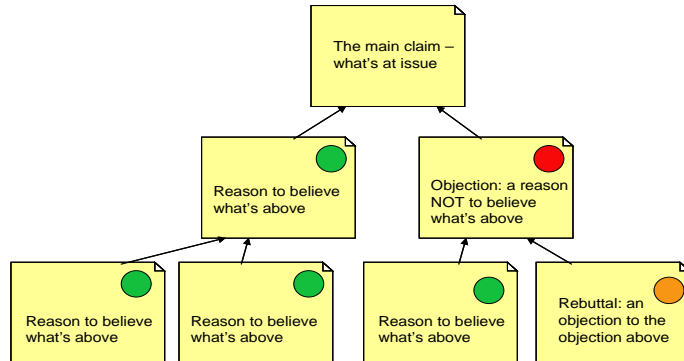
Elements:
- **The Contention** - The statement of the issue under consideration goes at the top of the map. Formulate it as a provisional answer, even if you don't accept it, e.g. "We should act urgently to prevent climate change".
- **Reasons (green boxes)** support whatever is directly above them, to which they are connected with a line.
- **Objections (red boxes)** oppose whatever is directly above them, to which they are connected with a line. Objections to objections are called **Rebuttals**.

Procedure

1. **Begin with the contention** – a statement of the issue under consideration. Write this in the top box. Formulate it carefully and precisely from the start, or you'll have to undo a lot of your work!
2. **Add the top level first** - reasons (green – for) and objections (red – against) that support or oppose the contention.
   - For Reasoning (rough and ready argument mapping) keep them clear and simple.
   - For Analysis (best for critical thinking) articulate any important co-premises that will also need support.
3. **Start at the top and working down in levels** - add evidence to support (reasons – green) or oppose (objections – red) any statement on the map. Ensure you enter all the important arguments.
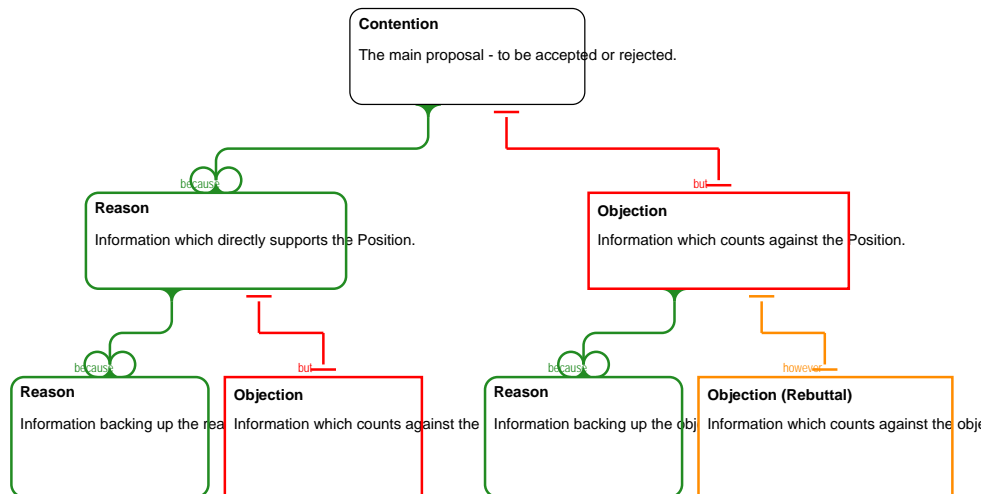
Argument Mapping Conventions

… with post-it notes

The main claim – what's at issue

Reason to believe what's above

Objection: a reason NOT to believe what's above

Reason to believe what's above

Reason to believe what's above

Reason to believe what's above

Rebuttal: an objection to the objection above

… with *Rationale*^{TM}

- in Reasoning

Contention

The main proposal - to be accepted or rejected.

because

but

Reason

Information which directly supports the Position.

Objection

Information which counts against the Position.

because

but

because

however

Reason

Information backing up the rea

Objection

Information which counts against the

Reason

Information backing up the obj

Objection (Rebuttal)

Information which counts against the obje

- in Analysis

Contention

The main proposal - to be accepted or rejected.

Reason   supports

Information which directly supports the Position.

Objection   opposes

Information which counts against the Position.

Reason   supports

Information backing up the reason above.

Objection   opposes

Information which counts against the reason above

Reason   supports

Information backing up the objection immed

Objection (Rebuttal)   rebuts

Information which counts against the objection im