Using Concept Maps as Learning Tools

A Note-Taking Tool
- Distribute a simplified map of your lecture to students to use as an outline for note-taking.
- Teach students about concept maps early in the semester, and encourage students to take notes in a concept mapping format.

A Tool for Studying
- Have students map various size units of text or their lecture notes in preparation for an exam.

Collaborative Mapping
- Have students create a collaborative map:
  - Have students work in groups to diagram their understanding of a topic. Working together will help the class generate discussion about the topic. Any mistakes that appear will show a lack of understanding by more than one student. Students will also be able to learn from each other.

Preparation for Laboratory Exercises or Practicum Experiences
- Have students construct maps of background information prior to the experience:
  - During the experience (if possible, otherwise periodically throughout the experience) have students link procedures and events to their background map.
  - After the experience, have students map any conclusions or summaries and synthesize these into their original map.
  - Such an experience can help students reflect on events and help make connections between theory and background, and practical applications.

Learning from Pre- and Post-mapping
- Have students create a map of their knowledge of the course material at the beginning of the course. Collect this map from students and save it for them.
- Have students create a map of their knowledge of the course material at the end of the course. Return students’ map from the beginning of the course so that they can see all of the learning that occurred during the course.

Reading Preparation and Summary
- Teach students how to pre-map a book before reading it. Pre-mapping can be done by skimming the table of contents, foreword, introductions, summaries, charts, etc. As students read the book, they can make notes on Post-its that can later be transferred to their pre-map of the book. This map can also be used as a guide to think about the content in the book while reading it.
- After finishing the book, students can map the entire book using cues from the pre-map and Post-its. Such mapping techniques can also serve as a useful summary.