Create Your Own Study Guide

If your professor doesn't give you a study guide before a big exam — make your own!

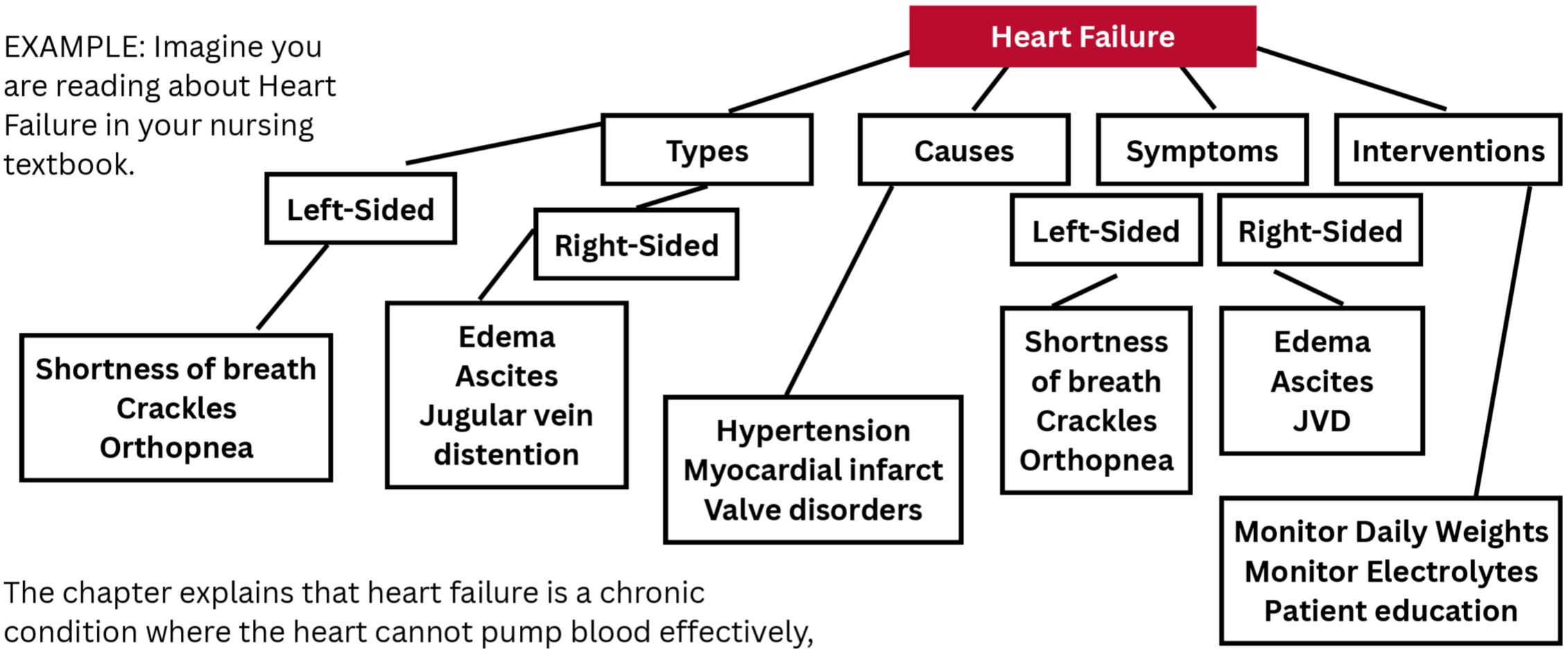
Creating a study guide is one of the best ways to organize lecture notes and textbook material. A good guide not only helps you manage large amounts of information but also strengthens your memory and deepens your understanding of the subject.

4 Ways to Make Your Own Study Guide

1. Concept Map

This tool organizes information that isn't sequential or chronological. Concepts move from general to specific, with details, examples, and real-life applications added along the way.

EXAMPLE: Imagine you are reading about Heart Failure in your nursing textbook.



The chapter explains that heart failure is a chronic condition where the heart cannot pump blood effectively, and it distinguishes between left-sided and right-sided failure. It notes that common causes include hypertension, myocardial infarction, and valve disorders.

The text goes on to describe the symptoms: left-sided failure often leads to shortness of breath, crackles, and orthopnea, while right-sided failure is more likely to cause edema, ascites, and jugular vein distention. Finally, the chapter outlines nursing interventions, such as monitoring daily weights, restricting sodium and fluids, giving diuretics, and educating patients about lifestyle changes.

2. Comparison Chart

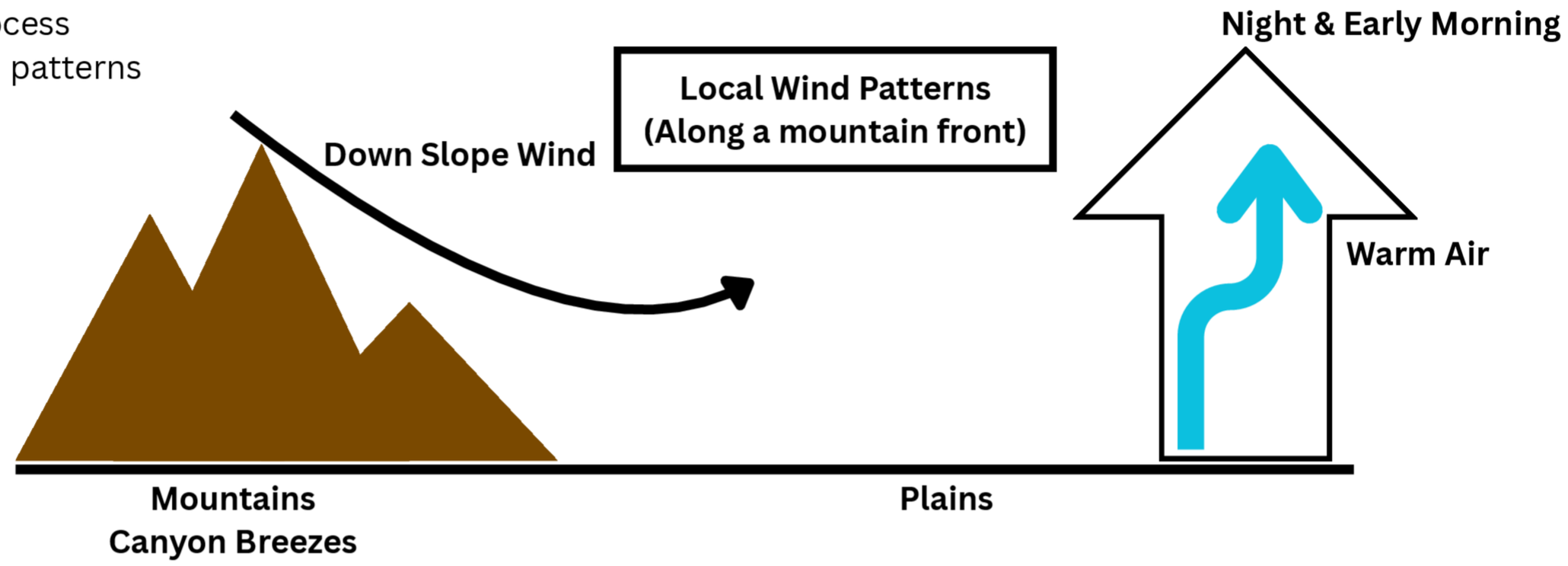
A comparison chart helps to organize information into categories and to explain relationships between categories or characteristics. With this tool, it is easier to see the differences and similarities between facts, theories, theorists, processes, etc.

Memory Type	Information Stored	Capacity	Duration of Info	Format
Sensory	Temporary; senses	High	< 1 second (vision); few seconds (hearing)	Literal
Short-term	Brief; info. Currently being used	Limited	< 20 seconds	Auditory and verbal
Long-term	Relatively permanent	Unlimited	Long or Permanent	Semantic

3. Process Diagram:

A process diagram is a tool that visually shows the steps, stages, or methods involved in how something happens. For instance, a geology class might use one to explain how rock layers form, while a nutrition class could illustrate the stages of digestion. In political science, a process diagram can map out how a bill becomes a law, and in human development, it can outline the stages of child growth. By breaking down complex information into clear visuals, process diagrams make it easier to understand and remember key concepts.

EXAMPLE: A process diagram of wind patterns (geography)



4. Informal Outline:

An informal outline is a study tool that helps organize information by showing how ideas connect to the main topic and by ranking details according to importance. It is also one of the most common formats students use when taking notes.

Three Major Psychological Approaches to Personality

1. Dynamic (also called psychoanalytic)
    a. Characteristics
        i. Person continually in conflict; opposing forces
        ii. Source of forces = psychic apparatus
2. Psychic Apparatus
    a. ID: Instinctual drives possessed at birth such as hunger, thirst, sex, and aggression most important drives (per Freud)
    b. EGO: Reconciles demands of id with “real” world moderates and guides basic instincts in line with society’s norms; provides capactiy for delayed gratification
    c. SUPER EGO: Conscience (“internalized parent”) shaped by social forces such as school, church, and close acquaintances
3. Humanistic
4. Social Learning

Using tools like process diagrams and informal outlines can make studying more effective by helping you organize complex information and see how ideas relate to each other. By visualizing steps, stages, or priorities, you can better understand and remember key concepts, whether you are learning science, politics, or human development.

Practicing these strategies regularly can make your study sessions more focused and help you retain information more confidently.