How to make a concept map to help synthesize research conclusions

Concept mapping can help us organize research findings to highlight the ways in which ideas, experiments, data, and processes relate to each other. Concept mapping should be approached as a generative activity – one in which messy and incomplete thinking is allowed. Visualizing relationship can often help us discover important connections – even new breakthroughs – by showing us what we do, and don't, know about how concepts are related.

First, make sure you have your list of brief summaries of the conclusions from each of your sources.

Second, reduce these summaries to their main components or concepts.
E.g. If your summary statement was: "Growth rate is positively related to cell size," the key concepts would be growth rate and cell size.

In either VUE or PowerPoint, make rectangles and write these key concepts inside of them. Tip: Key concepts should only be one to a few words long.

Third, draw arrows or links between the concepts and label them with the relationship. E.g. For the summary statement above, the link between the concepts 'growth rate' and 'cell size' would be: "positive correlation."