

Short instructions on using the free version of Lucidchart software

Lucidchart is a web-based proprietary **platform** that is used to allow users to collaborate on drawing, revising and sharing charts and diagrams. If you do not have Visio this is a good alternative. **Lucidchart** runs on browsers that support HTML5. It can run on a Windows, Android or Apple OS computer running a browser like Firefox. It has besides the paid version also a freeware version that is free forever provided you do use it only for personal needs (that is not the same as a trial version for the paid software that is only available for 7 days and we do not need that).

To start : Click on https://www.lucidchart.com/pages/tour/flowchart_freeware

Click the “sign-up for free” tab on the upper-right of the page. Then select free sign-up option between the two options the site gives. Then in the area Fee single user click on the button Sign-up, then select at the bottom of the prompt, “Sign-up with office 365”. That will take you to the Microsoft login page, where you can put in your school email.

Later you can sign in with your email and password and those can be remembered by your browser.

Note: Be careful not to select the trial version of the paid program as it is free only for 7 days. If you get a message that you are trying a feature from the paid premium version of the software while you followed the instructions, then most likely you have already three open current documents-see the last note at the end of this file. Once you login, you may be taken to your account. Do not elect to try the free trial. Select in that case from the top line of menu items “DOCUMENTS” and proceed as described below.

Once you are logged in the system, after you have to choose from the menu in the left side column

Templates (you can also select from the menus **File /New Document**)

Then scroll down in the left side column to the group of templates labelled **VISUALIZE TECHNICAL SYSTEMS**, from which you can select the options in point 1 or 2 below:

1. **To draw an Entity Relationship Diagram or a Dataflow diagram** you click on: **Database diagram**

Then choose the first template: **Blank ERD and Data flow** and follow the next instructions a or b:

- a) **For drawing an ERD:**

Scroll down the left menu to the item labelled **Entity relationship**.

Drag the first symbol in the row for **entity** to the working area and continue adding the other entities. Then one by one **add attributes** for each entity, indicating primary keys **PKs** and foreign keys **FKs**. If you need more attributes/fields then increase or decrease the number of fields in the top left button. Once you have finished the attributes you can now **add the relationships**. To draw a relationship, place the cursor at the boundary of the entity on the One side of the relationship and drag it to the entity on the

Many side – the crow feet symbol will appear on the many side of the relationship. Do not forget to simplify any M:N relationship to two 1:M relationships with an intersection entity.

b) For drawing a Data flow diagram :

Scroll the left menu down past Entity relationship to **Data flow**.

For external entities use the left most symbol in the first row and drag it to the work area. You can type its name inside it.

For process – use the rightmost symbol in the first row. You can type the process name inside it.

For data store – use from second row the symbol to the left of Process.

You draw the data inputs and outputs in the DFD with the mouse cursor.

2. For drawing a use case diagram :

Select **System Diagrams**, scroll through the menu of templates and select **Use case diagram**.

Use the ellipse (you can type the use case name in it) **and the actor symbols**. You can add the lines for association then .

IMPORTANT further notes:

- Note that most other templates of this software are not available in the free version, if you select them you will be notified that you can start a free 7 day trial version of the paid software but you do not need that as you can do all your work using the Free version and just the above simple templates.
- **Note that you can save your files. Then you can copy and paste your drawing in a Word document with all tasks of your assignment.**
- Note that your current work stays till you decide to delete it from the work area.
- You may get a message that you are **trying to open a feature of the paid premium version of the software** but in fact you may not be able to proceed just because you have already 3 open documents. If you have **at one time 3 open documents** then **you will not be allowed to draw a fourth document in the free version**- you need to save some of the documents and **delete it from the work area so that you have only up to 3 documents open** (When you select Documents then under RECENT Documents you will see the currently open documents, click next to the name of a document on the right and you will see a menu appearing with the **Delete** operation in it that you must select to delete a document in order to reduce the number of current documents to less than 3). The boundary of 3 open documents is for the free version and you need to respect it as you do not want to pay monthly for a year to use this software.

Conclusion: Lucidchart has many options but most of them are in the paid version. Note that for our needs the free version is sufficient for drawing all the simple diagrams we use in our class from the three templates listed above. It may not be better than Visio but the most basic version of Lucidchart is available for free and that is enough for our drawing needs.