Map Design

Follow these best practices to create maps that are well designed and accessible.

- **Keep it simple.**

  Use the smallest amount of relevant information possible to tell your story. Avoid unnecessary background imagery and labels that may cause visual clutter and confusion.

- **Use visual hierarchy.**

  Make the most important information "pop." For example, use high contrast, bold text, or large labels to display the data that you want the reader to see first.

- **Make sure text is readable.**

  Use simple, clear fonts that are no smaller than 6-point for labels and 12-point for explanatory text.

- **Use color carefully.**

  Design maps with color contrast in mind. Follow Web Content Accessibility Guidelines for text color and ensure adjacent objects contrast enough that somebody who is colorblind can tell the difference. Test your design by printing it in grayscale.

- **Limit use of patterns.**

  Patterns can be visually distracting. If you must use a pattern, make sure it does not interfere with visibility of symbols and labels.

- **Be consistent in appearance and placement of objects.**

  As much as possible, labels and symbols should be the same size, style, and orientation as other similar elements across your map.

- **Utilize white space.**

  Whenever possible, do not allow objects to overlap. Symbols and labels that touch can blend together for users with low vision.

- **Include a legend.**

  If your map contains any more than a few clearly labeled objects, it is necessary to include a legend. Without a legend, readers will miss vital context that may cause the map to be unreadable.

- **Provide data in an alternative format.**

  If your map is complex, some readers may benefit from having visual elements explained in text. Add a title and description of the map's content for readers who may not be able to interpret the information in a visual format.

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