

## Google MyMaps

<https://www.google.com/maps/about/mymaps/>

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The Google suite of products provides some of the most ubiquitous web mapping services available online. You've no doubt used Google Maps, Google Earth, and Google Street View to find route directions, locate recent satellite imagery, and view panoramic street-level images of a city. But are you familiar with a lesser known member of the Google mapping family named *Google MyMaps*? This interactive online tool makes it amazingly easy to create, annotate and share customized maps. Users accomplish this by using the *MyMaps* editor to overlay their own icons, images, and place descriptions overtop of a Google map.

Creating a map of your own involves signing-in to your Google Account, navigating to the *MyMaps* page, and then clicking "CREATE A NEW MAP." Once created a file will automatically be saved to your Google Drive storage. Give the map a title, pick a base map style (e.g., street map, satellite, terrain, etc.) and you're ready to add your own map features using the toolbar. These features can include placemark icons, lines, and polygons (i.e., shapes) that are customizable to your preferred styles and colors. If desired, similar features can be grouped on their own GIS-like "layers" whose visibility can be switched on or off. An example of a simple map created using this tool is one I made to display locations of casinos and horseracing facilities in Alberta, Canada <<https://bit.ly/2vsbld5>>. Maps containing more detailed and descriptive local information can also be created using *MyMaps*. Typically this involves adding custom textual annotations and photographs to placemarks and/or polygons representing

geographic areas. An example of such a map is one created by the City of Lethbridge for volunteers to use to locate the distinct zones designated for trash clean-up within the city's river valley conservation area <<http://bit.ly/2qYhkqO>>.

*MyMaps* has an intuitive interface which means that the learning curve for creating a map is relatively shallow though first-time users may find that customization options can seem hidden. Despite lacking the full functionality of specialized GIS software tools, *MyMaps* is an excellent choice for individuals seeking to incorporate a map into a research assignment or embed into a webpage. It is particularly useful for visualizing directions (driving, walking or cycling) and providing personalized maps containing background details about specific points of local interest.

**In Short:** *Google MyMaps* is an easy-to-use free web mapping tool that allows users to create attractive maps for personal use or sharing online. ***Recommended.***