Map-Making Tools

Making maps requires tools, ranging from a pencil to sophisticated GIS software. Choosing which tool is appropriate depends on your reason for making the map. To work with the chosen tools, your data may have to be transformed. Map-making tools vary in their ability to control map design. It is often necessary to use different map-making tools together. Extensive resources exist to help you to learn how to use the tools you choose.

1 Making maps without computers
Map making without a computer is possible.

2 Making maps on the internet
The internet has democratized map making.

3 Making maps with GIS
Sophisticated spatial analysis and map making are aided by GIS.
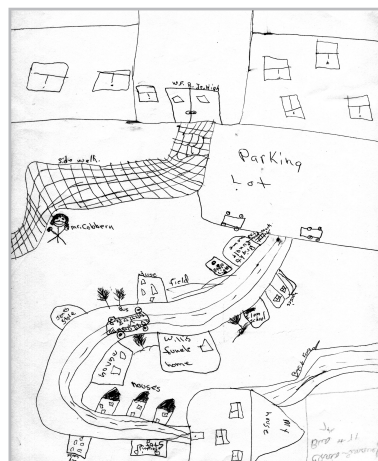
4 Graphic Design Tools
Graphic design software helps you to create refined maps.

1 Making maps without computers

You certainly don't need a computer to make maps. Indeed, map making with pencils and paper is appropriate, inexpensive, and effective in *many* instances. A sketch map made with pencils and paper may be your final map, or it may be a vital step in the process of producing a map with other tools.

Win the election! Volunteers for the Democratic presidential candidate go door to door in a key city in a swing state. Using a map printed from an internet site and a pen, they mark their opponent's supporters as an **X** and their supporters as an **O**. A filled **O** means a supporter who may not vote (such as an elderly person with no transportation). These people will be called on election day to urge them to vote and to offer free transport to the polls.

Sketch maps: To learn something about the effect of riding the bus on middle schoolers' home ranges, G. T. Wells compared sketch maps made by walkers and riders. This map was made by Chris, who rode bus #71. In this situation, nothing more than a sketch map with pencil and pen is necessary.

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