

reading maps. However, this *User*
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payable and valuable experience.

SECTION 1: Introducing Maps

Maps have been in use since ancient times as a means of representing the relative positions of features on the earth's surface. Today, there are many different kinds of maps providing information for many different purposes. They include:

- topographic maps, which represent portions of the earth's surface and show relief, and natural and man-made features
- bathymetric maps, which show seabed relief
- cadastral maps, which show surveyed boundaries of land parcels or properties
- aeronautical and hydrographic charts, which are maps designed especially for air and sea navigation
- thematic maps, which illustrate a theme, for example population, climate, land use, manufacturing industry, geology, etc.
- town maps and street directories, which show roads and streets, shopping centres, public buildings and facilities

Plans are usually large scale depictions of property boundaries, development sites, etc. and are distinguishable from maps, which usually show much larger areas.

You can use maps to derive information which will assist you in finding your way about cities or the countryside. They provide you with pre-knowledge of the layout of roads and streets, and of the terrain in general.

Atlases, which are collections (usually in book form) of general reference and/or thematic maps covering a region, country or the world, are valuable sources of information on many subjects difficult to comprehend from words alone.

Maps therefore are used as sources of information by many people. Competence in map reading will make you more mobile, independent and knowledgeable.

Maps can help you to understand more about your immediate surroundings and the world in general. This *User Guide* aims to develop skills in the interpretation of tactual and low vision maps to the point where you can use maps to plan a journey, move freely between places and as a source of information for educational and research purposes.

Development of map reading skills depends largely upon the understanding of certain concepts and conventions peculiar to mapping, and the development of mental and physical skills which can only be achieved with practice. Hopefully, the following sections will provide you with adequate explanations of cartographic 'concepts' while the accompanying maps and illustrations will enable you to practise various aspects of map interpretation and use.

Some of the concepts of mapping are:

- A map is a bird's-eye view shown on a plane (i.e. flat) surface
- Mapped size and distance relate to real world size and distance
- Mapped shape relates to real world shape
- Map direction relates to direction in the real world
- Map symbols usually represent real and tangible features on the earth's surface
- Lines on a map signify continuity, despite changes in direction and intersection with other symbols.

Skills which need to be developed in

- systematic scanning and perception
- use of map scale
- map and user orientation
- symbol recognition and discrimination
- shape (outline) recognition
- tracing line symbols

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