



MAP READING GUIDE

HOW TO USE
TOPOGRAPHIC MAPS

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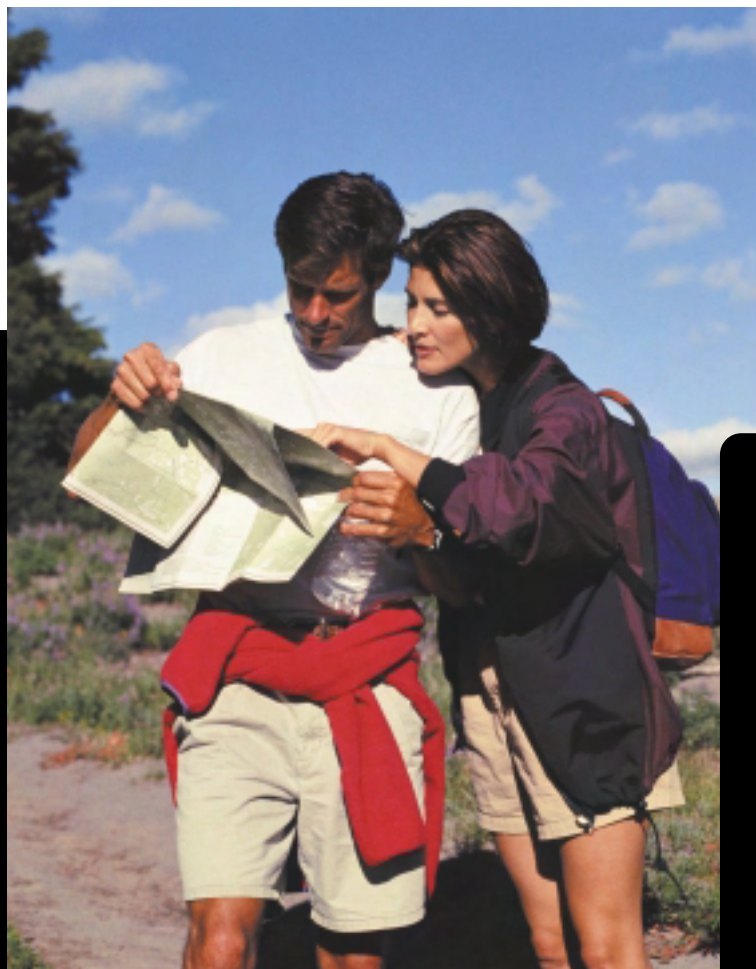
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PREFACE

This booklet will help you use topographic maps. It explains the types of information on topographic maps, how to interpret that information and how to use these maps with satellite positioning instruments, such as the Global Positioning System (GPS) and a compass.

It does not cover the use of other types of maps, such as general reference, thematic, tourist and cadastral.

It will help to read the booklet in sequence because the early chapters explain concepts that are mentioned in later chapters. The glossary also contains definitions of words and terms.

MAP CARDS

Map cards are useful for map reading. These transparent cards have line scales (in kilometres) marked along each edge. Each card also includes a grid reference guide, a compass rose and a bearing guide.

The map card available with this guide has line scales and text that are colour coded for different map scales:

Blue	1:250 000 scale
Black	1:100 000 scale
Red	1:50 000 scale
Green	1:25 000 scale

WITH THANKS TO

Silva Sweden AB, a leading compass supplier, for permission to include text and images from their *Read this, or get lost* leaflet on pages 17 to 23.

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MAP READING GUIDE

HOW TO USE TOPOGRAPHIC MAPS

WHAT IS A TOPOGRAPHIC MAP?

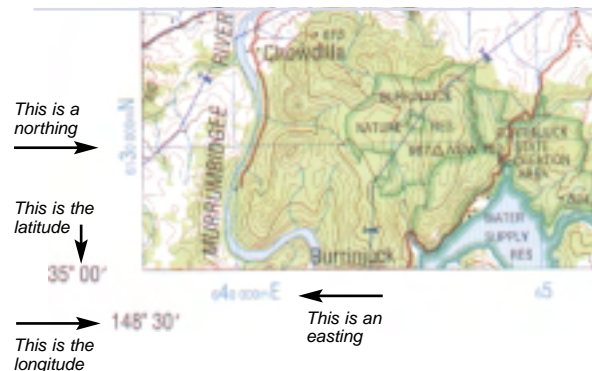
Topographic maps are detailed, accurate graphic representations of features that appear on the Earth's surface. These features include:

- **CULTURAL:** roads, buildings, urban development, railways, airports, names of places and geographic features, administrative boundaries, state and international borders, reserves
- **HYDROGRAPHY:** lakes, rivers, streams, swamps, coastal flats
- **RELIEF:** mountains, valleys, slopes, depressions
- **VEGETATION:** wooded and cleared areas, vineyards and orchards.

A map's legend (or key) lists the features shown on that map, and their corresponding symbols.

Topographic maps usually show a geographic graticule (latitude and longitude, in degrees, minutes and seconds) and a coordinate grid (eastings and northings, in metres), so you can determine relative and absolute positions of mapped features.

Segment of a 1:250 000 scale topographic map (actual size)



Maps are produced from information available on a certain date. Over time, that information may change. Topographic maps include a reliability statement, which states the map's age and accuracy.

WHO MAKES TOPOGRAPHIC MAPS?

Topographic maps of Australia are published by Commonwealth and State government agencies and private industry.

Topographic maps at **1:10 000, 1:25 000 and 1:50 000** scales show geographic features in detail. They are useful for a wide range of activities such as local navigation by vehicle or on foot, locality area planning, study of the environment, and so on.

As well as State agencies, the Department of Defence also produces topographic maps at the **1:50 000** scale, primarily of northern Australia. Some are available to the public through Australia's national mapping agency, AUSLIG, and its retailers.

Defence also produces **1:250 000** scale maps, as does AUSLIG, which produces other small scale maps including **1:100 000, 1:1 million, 1:2.5 million and 1:5 million**. These maps are available through map retailers or direct. AUSLIG publishes the only complete national topographic map coverage. The 1:100 000 and 1:250 000 scale maps are useful for planning travel over large distances, for example, while the 1:1 million, 1:2.5 million and 1:5 million scale maps are best for giving an overview. Topographic maps are also available on CD-ROM.

HOW TO READ A TOPOGRAPHIC MAP

HINT

Pay attention to how your map unfolds, so you can fold it back up again.

The first step in reading a topographic map is to become familiar with the specific characteristics of the map or maps that you are using. Open up your map, check that it covers the places of interest, and then find the following characteristics:

- **Which direction is north?** This is important because direction orients the map to the real world.
- **What symbols are used on the map?** Have a look at the legend. This is important because to understand the map you need to understand the symbols. While there are some "standard" symbols for many features, these and the less common features may vary across different topographic map series.
- **If you are going to use the coordinates** from the map, you will need to determine which coordinate system (or datum) is used on the map. Datums are explained later in this booklet. This information will be contained in the text on the map margin. Few topographic maps include Global Positioning System (GPS) coordinates, though some newer maps show this information.

Remember to set your GPS to the right system, or a compatible one, and to include a reference to the datum when quoting the coordinates. Maps on the new GDA system are compatible with GPS.

The two main parts of a map are:

- the map face, which shows the area mapped and includes information to help you visualise or recognise the area and locate features on the map; and
- the map margin information, which gives details that help you use the map, as well as explanations on when, where and how the information was compiled.

The following sections explain some significant elements of a map.

Map scale

A map represents a given area on the ground. A map scale refers to the relationship (or ratio) between distance on a map and the corresponding distance on the ground. Map scales can be shown using a scale bar.

Scale bar for a 1:250 000 map

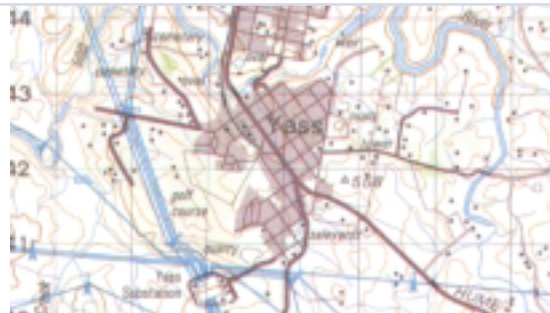


Common scales for Australian topographic maps are:

	Scale	Ground Distance of 1cm on the Map
Larger ↑	1:10 000	100 m
	1:25 000	250 m
	1:50 000	500 m
	1:100 000	1 km
Smaller ↓	1:250 000	2.5 km
	1:1 million	10 km
	1:5 million	50 km
	1:10 million	100 km

To explain scales graphically, let's look at a 1:100 000 scale map. The first number of the scale (1) represents a core unit of distance on the map, while the second (100 000) represents that same distance on the ground.

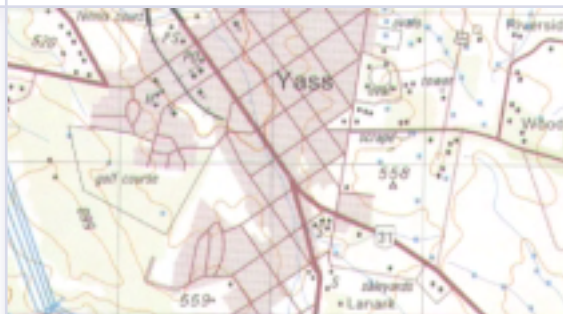
Segment of a 1:100 000 scale map of Yass.



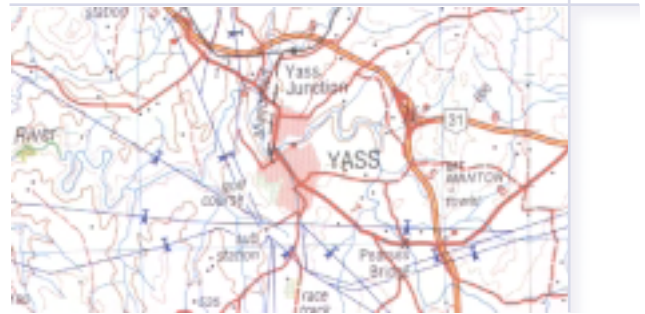
In this case, one centimetre on the map represents 100 000 centimetres, or one kilometre, on the ground.

The larger the scale of a map, the smaller the area that is covered and the more detailed the graphic representation of the ground. So, for example, small scale maps (such as 1:250 000) are good for long distance vehicle navigation, while large scale maps (1:50 000) are ideal for travel on foot.

Segment of a 1:50 000 scale map of Yass



Segment of a 1:250 000 scale map of Yass



Distance

Most topographic maps include a scale bar that you can use to determine the distance between two points on the map. Scales are usually shown in increments of one, five or 10 kilometres.

HINT

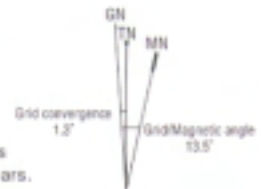
Use a piece of string, ruler or strip of paper to measure the distance between two points on the map. Then compare that measurement to the scale bar on the map to determine how many kilometres the measurement represents.

Directions

Maps usually include a north point diagram in the map margin information which shows the direction of **true north**, **grid north** and **magnetic north** at the centre of the map.

Example of a North points diagram

True North (TN), Grid North (GN) and Magnetic North (MN) are shown diagrammatically for the centre of the map.



MN is correct for 1997 and moves easterly by less than 0.1° in 10 years.

This graphic also shows the actual grid-magnetic angle for the centre of the map face.

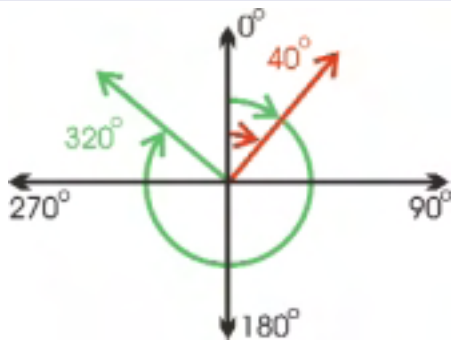
- **True north (TN)** is the direction to the Earth's geographic North Pole.
- **Grid north (GN)** is the direction of the vertical grid lines (eastings) on a topographic map. The angular difference between GN and TN is known as *grid convergence*. This varies across the country, its magnitude and direction east or west of TN being usually less than 2°.

- Magnetic north (MN)** is the direction from any point on the surface of the earth towards the earth's north magnetic pole. The angular difference between TN and MN is known as magnetic declination. As GN is used in preference to TN for map reading purposes, it is more useful to know the difference between GN and MN. This is known as the *Grid/Magnetic angle*. It ranges from about 5° west of true north in Western Australia to about 15° east of true north in eastern Australia. Because the position of the north magnetic pole moves slightly from year to year, the grid/magnetic angle and magnetic declination will vary by a small amount each year. In using a map for accurate navigation, magnetic variation can be important, particularly if the map is several years old.

Bearings

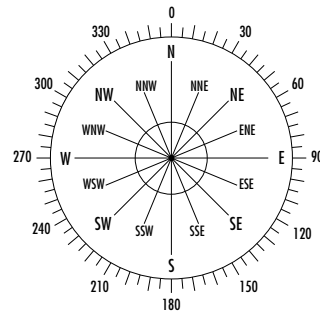
Directions can also be expressed as bearings. A bearing is the clockwise horizontal angle, measured from north to a chosen direction. Bearings are usually shown in degrees and range from 0° (north) to 360° (also north). South is 180°, east is 90°, west is 270°.

Illustration depicting bearings of 40° and 320°



Map cards (see inside front cover) include a compass rose and bearing guide.

A compass rose and bearing guide



where:

W = west

N = north

S = south

E = east

and, for example

ESE = east

south

east

SSW = south

south

west

Map symbols (the legend)

Maps use symbols to represent features on the ground. These features include roads, tracks, rivers, lakes, vegetation, fences, buildings, powerlines, administrative boundaries and the like. Given the size of a map, it is not possible to show all features that occur on the ground. Large scale maps show more detail and a larger number of features.

Colour plays an important part in symbols, and some international conventions apply to the use of colour. For example, blue for water features, black for culture and green for vegetation.

While most symbols are easily recognised as the features they represent, you can always refer to the map's legend.

Sample legend

Legend	
Principal road, Built-up area, Locality	sealed unsealed
Secondary road, Bridge, Causeway	
Minor road, Embankment, Cutting	
Vehicle track; Gate; Stock grid	
Dual carriageway; Distance in kilometres	
Route marker: National, State	
Airport; Landing ground; Helipad	
Multiple track railway; Station or siding	
Single track railway; Bridge; Tunnel	
Power transmission line	
Homestead; Buildings; Plain	
Fence; Levee; Open cut mine	
Mine; Windpump; Yard	
Contour with value; Depression contour	
Horizontal control point; Spot elevation	

Symbols are grouped in themes on the Legend. Two or more symbols are often shown on the same line. The first feature named on the line corresponds to the first symbol on the same line, and so on.

Relief shading

Some maps show relief shading. As with hypsometric tinting and contour lines, this shading helps you visualise the terrain. Hills and valleys are shaded as if they were illuminated from the north-west, with heavy shading representing steeper slopes.

Example of relief shading. Source: Armidale 1:100 000 scale NTMS.



Hypsometric tinting

This is usually the application of different colours to the areas between contours on a map. On a small scale map, the representation of relief through this layer system is simplified as a series of elevation zones.

Example of hypsometric tinting. Source: Armidale World Aeronautical Chart.



Contour lines

Topographic maps also show contour lines. These lines, which join points of equal height, represent the relief in the terrain depicted. For example, if there are many contour lines close together, the terrain is steep. Contour lines that are far apart indicate land with gentle slopes.

HINT

Contour values read uphill, so as you read the contour numbers, you would be looking up hill.

Examples of contour shapes



Datums

Mapping and coordinate systems are based on a datum, which is a mathematical surface that best fits the shape of the Earth. Australia's previous datum, the Australian Geodetic Datum (AGD) was defined in 1966 and best fitted the shape of the Earth in the Australian region only.

An updated version of this datum, known as AGD84, was adopted by some Australian States in 1984. AGD84 coordinates are based on the same datum as

HINT

Look for the GDA logo on your topographic map. If it is not present, check the datum used. Remember, your GPS may show your location as 200m different if the map is not on the GDA.

AGD66 and for map reading and navigation purposes can be regarded as being the same.

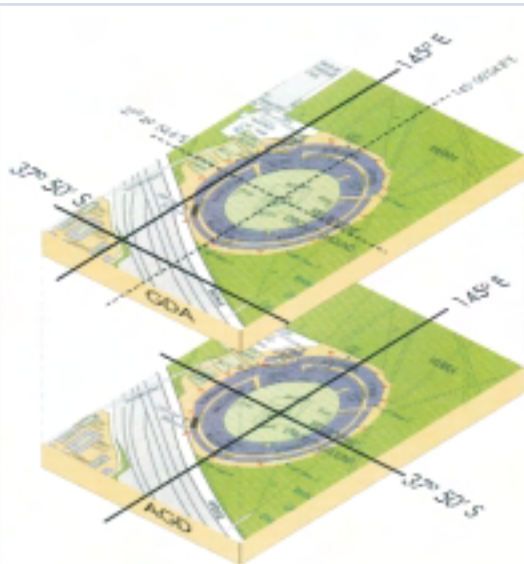
From the year 2000, all Australian mapping authorities are using a new datum, the Geocentric Datum of Australia (GDA). This new datum was defined in 1994, and is based on a mathematical surface that best fits the shape of the Earth as a whole, with its origin at the Earth's centre of mass, hence the term "geocentric".

The primary reason for this change is the widespread use of satellite-based navigation systems such as the Global Positioning System (GPS), which is based on a geocentric datum known as the World Geocentric System 1984 (WGS84). For most practical purposes, WGS84 and GDA coordinates are the same.

A major implication of this change is that GDA coordinates, both latitudes and longitudes, and eastings and northings, differ from their AGD predecessors by approximately 200 metres in a north-easterly direction.



This illustrates the difference between latitude and longitude coordinates generated from both AGD and GDA datum.



The diagram on the previous page illustrates the difference between latitude and longitude coordinates generated from both the AGD and GDA datum. While features on the ground will not change, their coordinates will change by approximately 200m in a north-easterly direction.

Map coordinates

Map coordinates are usually shown in one of two ways:

- **geographical coordinates**, given as latitude and longitude values in degrees, minutes and seconds; or
- **grid coordinates**, given as easting and northing values, in metres.

Geographical coordinates—latitude and longitude

You can find or express a location using the geographic coordinates of latitude (north or south) and longitude (east or west).

These are measured in degrees ($^{\circ}$), minutes ($'$) and seconds ($''$). For example, the geographical coordinates for a position could be stated as: $33^{\circ}40'30''S$, $153^{\circ}10'40''E$. Each degree is divided into 60 minutes; each minute is divided into 60 seconds.

HINT

Because of its location in the southern hemisphere, all Australian coordinates are south and east.

Latitude is the angular expression of the distance north or south from the equator (0° latitude). The South Pole is at $90^{\circ}S$; the North Pole at $90^{\circ}N$.

Longitude is the angular expression of the distance east or west from the imaginary line known as the Prime Meridian— 0° longitude on all maps.

Latitude and longitude coordinates are shown at each corner of a map's face. On some maps, short black lines along the edges of the map face indicate the minutes of latitude and longitude. When expressing coordinates, latitude is given first.

Grid coordinates—eastings and northings

Grid lines can also be used to find or express a location. Grid lines are the equally spaced vertical and horizontal intersecting lines superimposed over

the entire map face. Each line is numbered at the edge of the map face. On 1:100 000 scale maps, the distance between adjacent lines represents 1000 metres or 1 km.

The following terms are used to indicate the different types of coordinates and their datum (see explanation of datums on p9):

- AGD66 & AGD84 – geographical coordinates based on the AGD
- AMG66 & AMG84 – grid coordinates based on the AGD
- GDA94 – geographical coordinates based on the GDA
- MGA94 – grid coordinates based on the GDA

Maps are normally printed so grid north points to the top of the sheet (when the print is the normal way up). One set of grid lines runs north-south, while the other runs east-west. The position of a point on the map is described as its distance east from a north-south line and its distance north of an east-west line.

For this reason, grid lines are also called:

- eastings – these are the vertical lines running from top to bottom (north to south). They divide the map from west to east. Their values increase towards the east; and
- northings – these are the horizontal lines running from left to right (west to east). They divide the map from north to south. Their values increase towards the north.

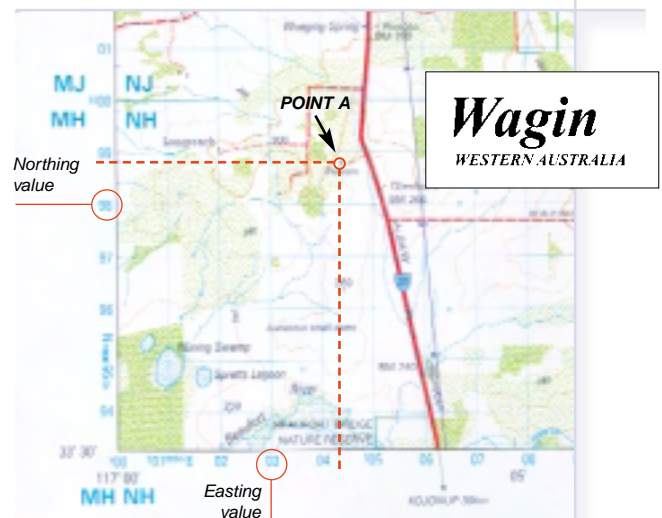
The squares formed by intersecting eastings and northings are called grid squares. On 1:100 000 scale maps, each square represents an area of 100 hectares or one square kilometre.

How to determine a grid reference

A grid reference is used to describe a unique position on the face of the map. The degree of accuracy required will determine the method used to generate a grid reference. All methods follow a similar approach.

A four figure grid reference is used to identify which grid square contains a map feature. A six figure grid reference will further specify the position to an accuracy of one tenth of the grid interval. An eight figure reference will identify a position to an accuracy of one hundredth of the grid interval.

Example of determining a grid reference (not to scale)



To obtain a complete four figure grid reference for point A (Panoro), on the map above, you need to:

1. Note the **map name** and **number**.
The grid zone number, a unique identifier, can be used as an alternative. It is found in the map margin. Point A is located on the Wagin map sheet. The grid zone number is 50H and the map sheet number is 2331 (not shown above).
2. Locate the **vertical grid line to the left** of the position and read the two figure easting value (read from the top or bottom of the map). Point A's easting value is 04.
3. Locate the **horizontal grid line below** the position and read the two figure northing value (read from the left or right side of the map). Point A's northing value is 98.
4. Note the **datum** of the map from the map margin. The Wagin Map is on GDA.

HINT

If a grid reference starts with a zero, remember to include it.

HINT

Use the corresponding scale grid on a map card to help in estimating the number of tenths, from a grid line to a position.

Therefore, the complete four figure grid reference for Point A is: Wagin, 2331, 0498, GDA.

The precision of a grid reference can be improved by dividing the relevant grid square into a ten by ten grid, and then determining the easting and northing tenths unit of the chosen position. Hence, the six figure grid reference for point A is: Wagin, 2331, 044988, GDA.

PLANNING A TRIP

Planning a successful route through rough country usually requires a topographic map, a compass, perhaps a Global Positioning System (GPS) receiver, and observation of various landforms. Streams and vegetation can help with navigation but may hinder your progress.

Make sure you have the right scale map for the trip you are planning. Obviously, journeys on foot should be supported by a larger scale map, or set of maps.

Often, route finding does not require great accuracy, but it does require planning. Before setting out, study the map. Find your start and finish points. The terrain depicted on the map will help you select a suitable route, and anticipate and make best use of the features you will encounter.

For example, you may discover a leading spur or main ridge that will help you avoid a river valley with cliffs or steep terrain. You will also be able to measure the route's distance and any heights to climb, allowing you to estimate how long each stage of the trip will take.

USING A GPS

The Global Positioning System (GPS) is a satellite-based navigation system developed by the United States of America's Department of Defense. It is widely used for civilian navigation and positioning, surveying and scientific applications, and is an excellent tool, best used with a map.

GPS receivers have many useful features for navigation, such as the ability to store positions and determine speed and direction of travel, which are beyond the scope of this Guide.

Provided it is used correctly, a comparatively inexpensive, hand-held GPS receiver can provide positions with an accuracy better than 30 metres and often at the 10 metre level.

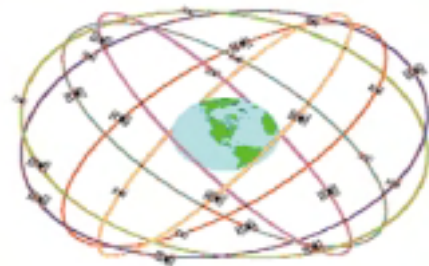
Example of a GPS



The GPS satellite system

There are 24 GPS satellites orbiting the Earth. A GPS receiver calculates position by measuring distances to four or more of these satellites. GPS is accessible 24 hours a day, anywhere in the world, in all weather.

Illustration of the GPS constellation of satellites



HINT

Set your GPS datum to match your map datum.

Using GPS with a map

GPS is based on the WGS84 datum (see explanation of datums on page 9). However, not all maps have a WGS84 datum. It is important to check which datum your map is based upon.

This datum information will be shown in the map margin. For the best match between coordinates of your map and GPS receiver, configure the GPS receiver to display coordinates (geographical or grid) on the same datum as the map being used.

Most GPS receivers have the ability to display either geographic or grid coordinates on a number of national and regional datums. It is important to know how to set the correct datum in your receiver. Please consult the GPS receiver's user guide for details. If the datum you need is not offered in your receiver, consult your GPS dealer or local surveying and mapping authority for assistance.

It is recommended practice to check your GPS receiver against well-defined map features every time you use it. Visit a feature such as a road intersection, determine its position by GPS and compare this with coordinates calculated from a map. The larger the scale of this map, the better. The coordinates of survey control marks or trig points, may be obtained from your local surveying and mapping authority and used for this purpose.

HINT

Metal objects such as cars, fence posts, steel power poles and transmission lines, can affect the accuracy of a compass reading. Stand clear of such items when using a compass - at least one metre from metal fence posts and up to 20 metres from a car.

THE MAGNETIC COMPASS

A magnetic compass is an important aid to route-finding and anyone who ventures into untracked country should carry one.

A compass works on the principle that the pivoting magnetised needle (or the north point of the swinging dial) always points to the north magnetic pole.

As a result, you can use a compass with graduations (degrees) marked on it to measure the bearing of a chosen direction from magnetic north.

Compass errors

Geological features such as iron ore deposits and dolerite rock that has been struck by lightning can affect a compass. It is even possible for the needle to become reverse-polarised if it is stored for a long time near a strongly magnetised object.

It is therefore advisable to treat magnetic bearings with caution and to check the accuracy of your compass. Determine magnetic bearings between objects at least one kilometre apart, using information available from a map and compare them with your compass bearing. This should be repeated in different directions. Check for local anomalies by reading bearings between objects about 100 metres apart in both directions. The bearings should differ by 180 degrees.

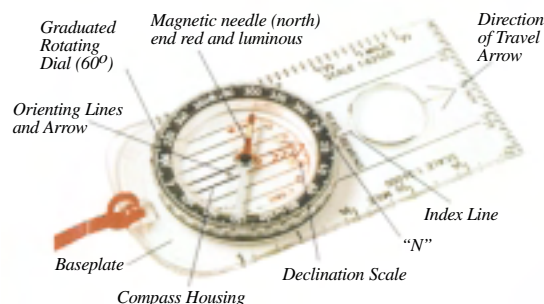
Features of a compass

There are numerous types of compasses.

The pivoted needle, adjustable dial compass is the most useful type. See sample Silva compass below.

As well as a north-pointing Needle, it usually has a transparent base with a Direction of Travel Arrow and Orienting Lines marked on the Rotating Dial housing, whereby it can be used as a protractor for measuring grid bearings on a map.

Features of the Silva* compass
* registered name of Silva AB.



Using your compass to reach a destination

To follow compass bearings to your chosen destination, you will either need to determine magnetic bearings from visible features along the route, or will already have these bearings.

To determine magnetic bearings:

1. Select a visible feature along the route you want to travel. Holding the compass level, point the Direction of Travel Arrow at the visible feature.
2. Find your bearing to the visible feature by turning the Compass Dial until the "N" aligns with the red end of the Needle. Read your bearing in degrees at the Index Line.
3. Keeping the Needle aligned with the "N", proceed in the direction indicated by the bearing at the Index Line. The bearing will help you keep on track when the feature is not visible. Repeat this procedure until you reach your destination.



When magnetic bearings are known:

1. If you've been given a bearing in degrees to travel, turn the dial so that the bearing is set at the Index Line. Hold the compass level in front of you, with the Direction of Travel Arrow pointing straight ahead.
2. Turn your body until the red end of the Needle is aligned with the "N" on the dial. You are now facing your direction of travel.
3. Pick out a visible feature in line with your bearing and walk to it. Repeat the procedure until you reach your destination.

Conversion of bearings

Magnetic bearings measured with a compass must be converted to grid bearings for plotting on a map. Similarly, grid bearings measured on a map must be converted to magnetic bearings for compass navigation on the ground.

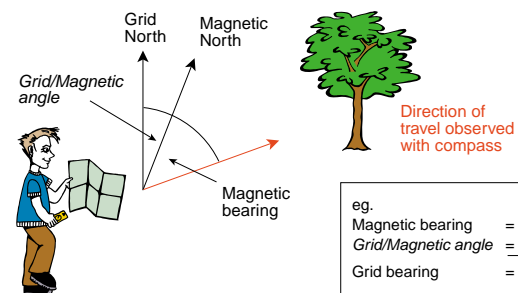
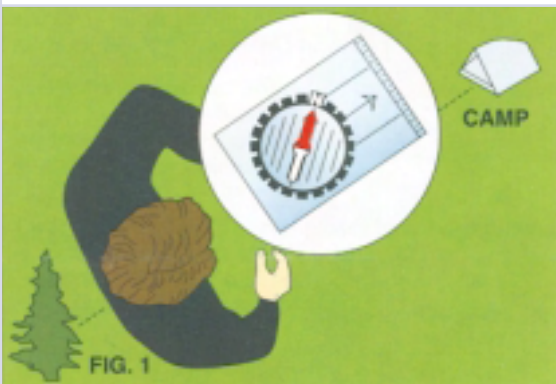
The *Grid/Magnetic angle* is the difference between grid north and magnetic north. If magnetic north is east of grid north, it is a positive value. If magnetic north is west of true north, it is a negative value.

To convert from a Magnetic bearing to a Grid bearing, Add the *Grid/Magnetic angle* to the magnetic bearing.

To convert a grid bearing to a magnetic bearing, subtract the *Grid/Magnetic angle* (see page 5).

HINT

The M A G rule is:
Magnetic Add Grid



SIMPLE USES OF A MAP

Orienting a map

It is a good habit to orient your map before reading it. To do this, hold your map horizontally and rotate it until its direction and features correspond to what you see before you on the ground.

If you are unable to identify the surrounding features, you can use the compass to orient the map. To do this:

- lay the map flat and place your compass so the baseplate side edge lies along any grid north line, and the Direction of Travel arrow is also pointing to grid north;
- rotate the map and compass until the north point of the compass needle is east or west of the Index Line by the amount of the *Grid/Magnetic angle* shown in the map's margin.

Once the map is oriented, you should be able to identify prominent features in the landscape.

HINT

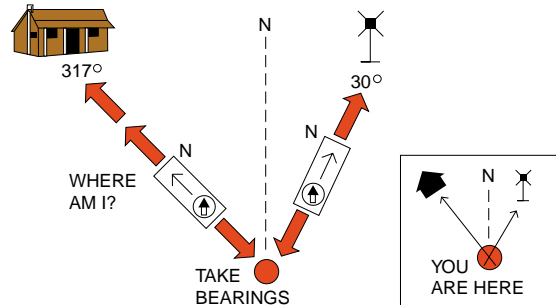
Pack your map and compass in an easy-to-reach place. In wet weather, put the map, with the appropriate area displayed, in a clear plastic bag.

Finding your present position

If you have a GPS receiver, you can use it to determine your coordinates, remembering to set it to a datum corresponding to the datum on your map. Or, once you can identify surrounding features on the ground and on the map, you can use the following procedure to find your current position:

1. Choose two visible features and find these on your map. Now point the Direction of Travel Arrow towards one feature and rotate the Compass Dial until the red end of the Needle points to the "N" on the dial.
2. Add the *Grid/Magnetic angle* to the bearing shown at the Index Line and turn the dial to the new bearing.

Finding your present position



3. Place the compass on your map with the side edge of the Baseplate touching the feature and pivot it until the Orienting Arrow or lines align with the grid north lines. Draw a line from the feature along the side of the Baseplate across the map.
4. Repeat this process with the second feature. Where the two lines intersect is your location.

Setting a course

Once you have oriented your map and identified your position, you can set a course. Do this by sighting or by laying a straight line (using the edge of the map card or a piece of string) across the map. It is also good practice to identify a distant visible feature that is on the line, such as a rocky outcrop, and proceed. Then identify another feature on the line, and so on, until you reach your destination.

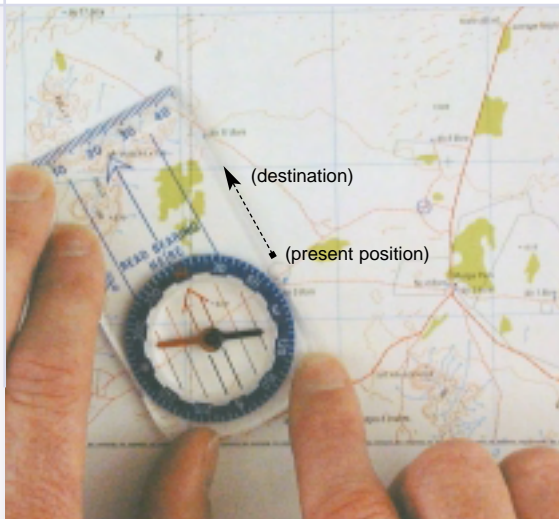
When features are sparse, you could use a GPS receiver. First, determine the coordinates of the destination point from the map and enter them into the receiver, then walk in the approximate direction of your destination, letting the receiver point you in the right direction as you go.

HINT

Check your map to determine if there are land features that may prevent you from following your GPS bearing.

Or you can use your map and compass in this way:

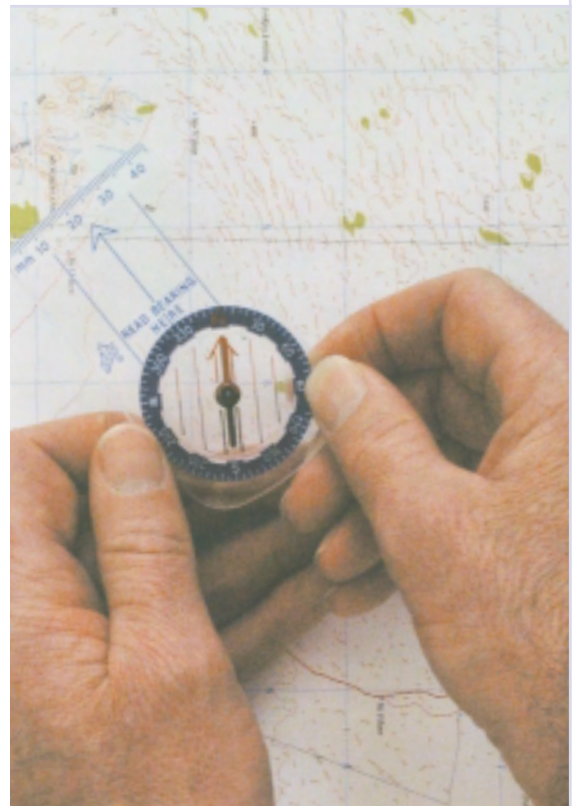
1. Before you start on your way, place the compass on the map so that the side edge of the Baseplate connects your present position (No 5 Bore) to your destination (No 11 Bore), and the Direction of Travel Arrow is also pointing that way.



2. Turn the compass dial until the Orienting Lines are parallel with the grid north lines on the map and the Orienting Arrow is also pointing to grid north.



3. The dial's reading at the Index Line shows the grid bearing. Subtract the *Grid/Magnetic angle* from this bearing and turn the dial to show the new magnetic bearing at the Index Line.



4. Put the map aside. Hold the compass steady and level in front of you with the Direction of Travel Arrow pointing straight ahead. Turn your body until the red end of the Needle is directly over the Orienting Arrow, pointing to the "N" on the dial. The Direction of Travel Arrow now points to your destination (No 11 Bore). Look up, align the Direction of Travel Arrow with a feature and walk to it. Repeat this procedure until you reach your destination.

GLOSSARY

AGD Australian Geodetic Datum – the framework used for coordinates in Australia since 1966. It is now being superseded by the Geocentric Datum of Australia (GDA).

AHD Australian Height Datum - the datum used for the determination of elevations in Australia. The determination used a national network of bench marks and tide gauges, and set mean sea level as zero elevation.

AMG Australian Map Grid - a Cartesian coordinate system based on the Universal Transverse Mercator projection and the Australian Geodetic Datum. The unit of measure is the metre.

Bearing – geographic orientation of a line given as an angle measurement in degrees clockwise from north.

Cadastral map – a map showing land boundaries and parcels.

Cartography – the art and science of producing maps, charts and other representations of spatial relationships.

Contour – a line drawn on a map joining all the points on the Earth that are the same height above sea level.

Coordinates – linear or angular values which designate the position of a point in a given reference or grid system.

Coordinate, geographic – a system of spherical coordinates commonly known as latitude and longitude.

Coordinates, grid – a plane-rectangular coordinate system expressed as eastings and northings.

Datum – a mathematical surface on which a mapping and coordinate system is based.

Elevation – the height above mean sea level.

GDA Geocentric Datum of Australia - a new coordinate framework for Australia which is compatible with the Global Positioning System (GPS). The GDA was adopted in 1994 and implemented from the year 2000.

Geocentric Datum – a datum which has its origin at the Earth's centre of mass. The advantage of the geocentric datum is that it is directly compatible with satellite-based navigation systems.

Geographical coordinates – a position given in terms of latitude and longitude.

Geographical grid – grid derived from geographical coordinates (commonly referred to as longitude and latitude or graticule).

GPS Global Positioning System – is a satellite based navigation system developed by the United States Department of Defense and widely used for civilian navigation and positioning.

Graticule – a network of lines on a map or chart representing the parallels of latitude and meridians of longitude of the Earth.

Grid – two sets of parallel lines intersecting at right angles to form squares.

Grid convergence – the angular difference in direction between Grid North and True North.

Hypsometric tint – a shade or tint of colour between two contours showing high and low land at a glance.

Latitude – the latitude of a feature is its angular distance on a meridian, measured northwards or southwards from the Equator.

Longitude – an angular distance measured east or west from a reference meridian (Greenwich).

Map – a representation of the Earth’s surface.

A cadastral map is one showing the land subdivided into units of ownership; a topographic map is one showing the physical and superficial features as they appear on the ground; a thematic map displays a particular theme, such as vegetation or population density.

Map Grid of Australia 1994 (MGA94) – a cartesian coordinate system based on the Universal Transverse Mercator projection and the Geocentric Datum of Australia 1994. The unit of measure is the metre.

Map projection – any systematic way of representing the meridians and parallels of the Earth upon a plane surface.

Mercator projection – the conformal cylindrical projection tangential to the Equator, possessing the additional valuable property that all rhumb lines are represented by straight lines. Used extensively for hydrographic and aeronautical charts.

Meridian – an imaginary line from the North Pole to the South Pole connecting points of equal longitude.

Relief – the deviation of an area of the Earth’s surface from a plane. It refers to the physical shape of the surface of the Earth.

Rhumb line – a curve on the surface of a sphere which cuts all meridians at the same angle; the path which maintains a constant true bearing.

Topography – description or representation on a map of the physical and cultural surface features.

Transverse Mercator (TM) projection –

A conformal cylindrical map projection, originally devised by Gauss, also known as the Gauss-Kruger projection. As its name implies, its construction is on the same principle as the Mercator projection, the only difference being that the great circle of tangency is now any nominated meridian. Meridians and parallels are curved lines, except for the central meridian for a specified zone (meridian of tangency), which remains a straight line. Projection zones are established about the central meridian and vary in width from two degrees to six degrees of longitude, with some overlap between zones. The amount of scale distortion may become unacceptable at distances greater than about 1.5 degrees in longitude from the central meridian. In a modified form the projection is in general use for topographic mapping at scales of 1:250 000 and larger. See Universal Transverse Mercator projection.

Universal Transverse Mercator (UTM) –

A world wide systematic application of the Transverse Mercator Projection applying to the region between 80°S and 84°N latitude. The UTM is a modified TM projection whereby the natural scale of the central meridian is scaled by a factor of 0.9996 to enable a wider area to be mapped with acceptable distortion. Each Zone is six degrees of longitude in width with a half degree of overlap within the adjoining zone and having a true origin at the intersection of the central meridian of that zone and the Equator.

WGS84 World Geodetic System 1984 –

a geocentric geodetic datum developed by the United States Department of Defense for use with GPS. For most practical purposes, GDA94 is equivalent to WGS84.