

ArcGIS StoryMap

Tips, Tools & Resources



ArcGIS StoryMaps: <https://storymaps.arcgis.com>

*Important note: an ArcGIS Online subscription account is required to create an **ArcGIS StoryMap**. Esri also offers a (more limited) free **StoryMap** option at <https://storymaps.com>. [Learn more](#) about the differences.*

Getting Started

First stop: [What are ArcGIS StoryMaps](#) (spoiler, it's a StoryMap)

The StoryMap Road Map & Work Plan

1. Start with a great story!
 1. Identify what the storymap will communicate
2. Planning and Outlining a story ([helpful link](#), [planning worksheet](#))
 1. Identify a target audience
 2. Define key takeaways
 3. Create a content inventory (media, maps, infographics, animations)
 4. Draft an outline on paper
 5. Consider what kind of maps will be needed (express maps vs web maps)
3. Craft a narrative
 1. Formulate an opening idea, pitch, problem
 2. Consider a strong title/image to evoke immediate response from viewers
4. Gather research and digital content
5. Prepare a map(s)
6. Dive into the ArcGIS StoryMaps Builder! ([basic tutorial](#), [another](#))
7. Revise and Refine
8. Publish, Share, and Promote

Good resource: [Nine Steps to Great Storytelling](#)

Add flair: [Examples of Visual Storytelling](#)

StoryMap Project Design

Geography is essentially about three questions: What's where? Why is it there? So what?

Similarly, there are three basic project types:

1. **data report** - a simple recitation of "what's where," such as "Here is the distribution of [A] in our region." (Without a "why" or "so what," or analytical comparisons, these projects run the risk of being rather "ho-hum.")
2. **analysis of relationships** - going beyond "what's where" by clarifying why the patterns came to exist, or how different patterns were detected, such as "These new data sets showed better how factors x/y/z led to the distribution of [A] in our region."
3. **synthesis and evaluation** - integrating patterns and relationships to show the importance of these, or deepening the understanding of the relationships, or exploring how things might be made better, such as "The uneven distribution of [A] in our region, caused by factors x/y/z, generates challenges 1/2/3, which might be addressed by strategies i/ii/iii."

Generally, "data report" projects are simplest to do, while "synthesis and evaluation" projects are most complex. There is no clear boundary here; projects can incorporate all three components in different degrees.

One strategy is to identify an *analytical question* driving the story, such as:

- Where is this invasive species most common in our region, and where are the zones most in need of protection against it?
- Why do some homes in this area suffer more flooding than others?
- How can we reduce bicycle-car accidents in our region?

StoryMap Resources, Tutorials, and Collections

Esri's [ArcGIS StoryMaps Resources](#) - learn about general design elements and explore skills for making effective use of special capabilities

- The [StoryMap Team's YouTube Channel](#) has a bank of videos, including extended presentations and deep dives into topics, but also short, focused, tool-centered how-to movies.
- The [Get to Know ArcGIS StoryMaps pathway](#) on the Learn ArcGIS site has a modest series of items that include some longer and some shorter presentations or lessons about assembling an ArcGIS StoryMap.

Standout resources to take your StoryMaps to the next level

- The 2021 ArcGIS StoryMap Challenge for Oceans webinar (August 2021) included an excellent 28-min step-by-step demo (YouTube video segment, 41:30-1:09:15) [Making an ArcGIS StoryMap](#)
- [Tips to Author a Great Story](#) (Esri User Conference 2022) - Tips and Tricks to take your StoryMap to the next level. Useful!
- StoryMap tutorial on how to create a [StoryMap Collection](#)
- StoryMap tutorial on how to unique look and feel with a [Custom StoryMap Theme](#)
- Critical content blocks: [the sidecar/slideshow collection](#)
- Using [web analytics](#) to measure your traffic in a StoryMap
- Blog post - [Using Alternative Text](#) for Equitable Storytelling
- StoryMap Collection: All about the [StoryMap map tour](#)
- Blog Post - [Map actions](#) add choreography
- Blog post - A StoryMap Game-changer: enter the [Media Layer](#)

StoryMap Collections: Eye candy and inspiration

- Esri's [ArcGIS StoryMap Gallery](#)
- Esri's collection of [nature and conservation StoryMaps](#)
- Outstanding [citizen StoryMaps collection](#) (ie, not authored by Esri)
- Examples of K12 StoryMap authors: [national winners](#) from Esri National StoryMaps Competition
- UConn CLEAR's [StoryMap gallery](#)
- Esri blog post with link to more [StoryMap collections](#)

What is a StoryMap without a Map?

It's not called a StoryMap for nothing. Maps are an integral part of storytelling and StoryMaps. Maps provide geographic content for a story and broaden a reader's perspective. The resources below cover how to add interactive web maps and express maps into a StoryMap.

Tutorial: [Adding maps to an ArcGIS StoryMap](#)

Blog post: [Express maps and when to use them](#)

StoryMap Collection: great examples of how to use the [Express map](#)

Blog post: [Crowdsourcing for digital storytelling](#)

StoryMap Collection: great examples of how to integrate [crowdsourced mapping](#)

Data Sources for Web Maps and StoryMaps

You have an idea for a map, but where does the data come from? Here are a few ideas.

- The Esri Living Atlas includes broad collections of professional data [Esri Living Atlas](#) (try using the "Browse" tab).
- Federal agencies (e.g. USGS, NOAA, Census, etc)
- National or regional nonprofit groups (e.g. Audubon, Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, Appalachian Regional Commission, etc)
- State and local collections of professional data (many states have GIS centers)
- Governmental agencies (state, county, city, municipality, school district, etc)
- Nonprofit groups (watershed groups, community groups)
- Data you generate on your own! Pro tip, you can collect data using Survey123 or FieldMaps or QuickCapture
- You can set up data collection instruments, such as a survey, to be filled in by other people. These "crowd sourced" applications can even sometimes be integrated right into a StoryMap

Helpful tips on using the ArcGIS Online Map Viewer

- Adding data layers to the ArcGIS Online map viewer - [tutorial](#)
- Items in ArcGIS Online - [reference](#)
- [A StoryMap](#) on how to use the ArcGIS Online Map Viewer (May 2023)

A Deeper Dive into Software Instruction

- Instruction about how to use the software of the [ArcGIS School Bundle](#), available free to K12 schools for instructional use.
- For an educator just getting started, a good ramped and scaffolded intro is [Getting Started for Educators](#).
- The 2020 [MappingHour](#) video series was produced at the onset of COVID-19 lockdown, built for educators and parents. See the episode list.
- The [K12 ArcGIS Online Organization](#)'s section "01.Instruction Docs" includes links to useful resources.
- See this summary of [Smart Mapping](#) strategies, within a collection of Story Maps.
- [Esri Training](#) offers software instruction on all of Esri's products. Save for the "[Secondary Students](#)" [learning plan](#), users must be signed in with username with "Esri access enabled," which School Bundle admins can set up for any/all Org members, and which will open up "Maintenance required" instruction. Because they are signed in, users can build a training history.
- [Esri Press](#) offers both hardcopy and digital version books.

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Additional Reading

- [Science, Satellites and Storytelling](#) (interview/article)
- Esri's [StoryScape magazine](#)