

Types of Maps

Type	Political	Physical	Thematic/Special Purpose
How does this map “look”?	Uses contrasting bright colors; borders are emphasized; sometimes is combined with the other types of maps; may include cities	Uses a key, usually with gradations of color from green to brown to show elevation or various blues for water depth; country/ state names may be minimized	Heavy use of colors, patterns, symbols (sometimes of different sizes); may or may not include country/state names depending on the theme
What kind of information is shown on this map?	Political boundaries [politics=power; who has power/control over what land]; usually countries or states	Physical features-- primarily elevation (mountains and plains) and ocean depth; bodies of water (seas, rivers, lakes) and other land forms (islands, valleys, plateaus) are featured prominently	Specific theme/purpose/topic Ex: vegetation, climate, roads, spread of HIV/AIDS, battle sites, religion practiced, where minerals are, etc.
Origin of info?	Human-made	Non-human made	Human and non-human made; DEPENDS!
Can this map change?	Change is possible (if power changes) such as through revolution, independence, splitting up or joining together	Change is very rare and minimal (a volcanic eruption might create a new island, an earthquake could cause a river to change its course slightly, a rise in the level of the ocean could cause a change in the shape of a coastline)	Change? IT DEPENDS! What is the theme of the map you are looking at? Ex: Map of Civil War battles-- no change Map of percentage of a country that can read and write (literacy)-- could change as the country devotes more money to education

