

CHAPTER 8670 - TOPOGRAPHY MAPS (1987)

DESCRIPTION OF TOPOGRAPHY MAPS (1987)

8671

The term topography refers to the shape of the physical features of the land surface area. A topographic contour map, familiar to many persons because of its widespread use, is the representation of the actual topography of a given area. Although drawn in two dimensions only, it utilizes contour lines to depict hills, valleys, and mountains (see [Contour Map](#)). Each contour line (A) on the map connects points representing places on the earth's surface that have the same elevation. The points are considered to have equal elevation above some datum plane, usually mean sea level. Ignoring tides, then, an island's 0-foot contour line would coincide with its shoreline. Assuming that the island is a single high hill, a footpath located exactly 20 feet above sea level and continuing entirely around the island at this same elevation would coincide with the 20-foot map contour. In this case, the contour interval or difference in elevation between two successive or adjacent contour lines, would also be 20 feet; the next higher contour would connect all points that were 40 feet above sea level. Wherever the actual terrain is steep, map contour lines are closely spaced (B). Conversely, gentle ground slopes are portrayed by contours spaced widely apart (C). Contour lines curve up a valley but cross the stream or gully at right angles (D). Hills (E) are represented by a series of more or less concentric continuous-loop contour lines. A hollow or topographic depression is depicted by means of one or more closed but hachured lines (F); the hachure "tics" point in toward the center of the depression.

The next map (see [Vertical Elevation](#)) shows how the contour lines look when they are transferred to a map. Here you are looking down on the island from above. By observing how close together the contour lines are on a map, you can tell how steep the land is. The closer together the lines are, the steeper the land. If you were going to climb to the highest point on the island, which side would be the easiest to approach?

As an aid, [Common Symbols](#) should be referred to for topographic map symbols.

FORMS AND/OR FORMS SAMPLES: RETURN TO CDF LIBRARY
HOME PAGE FOR FORMS/FORMS SAMPLES SITE LINK.

[\(see next section\)](#)

[\(see Table of Contents\)](#)