



Free Training Transcript: Getting Started with Mapping

Welcome to Getting Started with Mapping in Tableau. This video covers the various options for mapping and using background images in Tableau Desktop.

At its core, geographical analysis comes down to plotting points. The map image provides the background and coordinates are plotted on it.

Coordinate Points

Latitude indicates how far up or down from the equator, Longitude indicates how far east or west from the Prime Meridian.

Any point on a map can be represented with latitude and longitude coordinates. In Tableau, coordinates need to be in decimal format. Positive latitudes indicate the northern hemisphere, positive longitudes indicate eastward from the Prime Meridian. In this way, every point on the globe has unique latitude and longitude coordinates. Incidentally, Tableau uses same projection as Google Maps, which is Web Mercator.

Plotting Latitude and Longitude

If your dataset has latitude and longitude fields, Tableau can automatically plot them on a map.

On the other hand, if your data doesn't have latitude and longitude but you have geographic place names such as city, country, or province, Tableau will determine their coordinates for you provide the fields latitude (generated) and longitude (generated).

Custom Geocoding

If your data contains locations (without latitude and longitude coordinates) that Tableau cannot recognize, you can add to the database and enter your own custom geocoding, or simply blend in the geographic data. The videos Expanding Tableau's Mapping Capabilities and Custom Geocoding go into more depth.

Polygon Maps

Locations can be plotted on a map in two ways – as a point or mark to represent the entire area, or a polygon, covering the area. Tableau has polygon data, or filled maps, for many geographic locations built in. It's also possible to provide your own polygon data to create custom polygon maps, such as this map of National Parks in the UK. Check out the Polygon Maps video for more information, including creating custom territories on maps.

Other Map Services and Background Images

If the default map tiles aren't what you need – maybe your analysis is of ocean currents – Tableau offers the option for connecting to Mapbox or a Web Map Service. There's a video on each of these options.

If you need to do something like plot the locations of cavities on a dental chart, you can upload an image directly and assign it coordinates – as shown in the Background Images video.

Conclusion

The options for geographic analysis in Tableau are extensive and powerful, and there are many options for customization to make sure your analysis needs are met.

We invite you to continue with the Free Training videos to learn more about using Tableau.