

Google My Maps is a familiar online mapping platform that uses a Google account and relies on the input of spatial location. It can accommodate a broad range of datapoints without becoming unwieldy. Individual geographic locations can be added pin by pin, but the platform is particularly effective at accommodating data layers imported from a spreadsheet. To use Google My Maps effectively, consider the location of events (their latitude and longitude) and be consistent with the use of spatial location. Here is how to get started with Google My Maps.

1. Open Google Chrome. This is the most compatible web browser. Make sure to sign into a Google account.
2. Open Google My Maps at <https://www.google.com/maps/about/mymaps/>.
3. Open an Excel spreadsheet or a Google Sheet. Column headers on the spreadsheet can be any dimension of the data that needs representation. However, one of the columns must be labeled “Latitude, Longitude.” The latitude and longitude must be formatted in decimal values, separated by a comma, and be contained within brackets. The latitude and longitude can be gotten from Google Maps. Simply click on a Google map outside Google My Maps to drop a pin at the desired location and right click or right click on an existing pin. Copy the latitude and longitude. For example, the existing pin for the Clark building is [40.57276950352601,lon:-105.0830459954018].
4. In Google My Maps, click on the “Get Started” button. This opens the My Maps platform as part of the Google account. In My Maps, click on the red “Create New Map” button. This opens the online mapping platform. To title the map, click on the “Untitled map” text and in the pop-up box, edit the map title.
5. Google My Maps automatically opens with an untitled map layer in the menu at the top left. In that menu, under “Untitled Map,” “Untitled Layer,” click on the “Import” command. A first pop-up box will appear that allows files to be uploaded or imported from Google Drive. Click on the “Upload” tab and select the Excel file and click the “Select” button. There is also an option to connect to a Google Sheet via Google Drive. The second pop-up box requires choosing which of the columns on the spreadsheet position the placemarks on the map. Select the “Latitude, Longitude” column. The third pop-up box requires positioning the order of latitude and longitude. Select the “latitude, longitude” option. Close the pop-up box and select “Continue.” The fourth and final pop-up box requires choosing which of the columns on the spreadsheet will provide the placemark titles. Select the appropriate column based on the dataset. Then select “Finish” and wait for the map to populate.
6. Return to the menu at the upper left of the map. This time click on the “Uniform Style” item. In the pop-up box, use the first dropdown item “Uniform Style” under “Style by Data Column” select the appropriate column to organize the data. This arranges the data by color according to that criteria.
7. To add more data layers, click on the “Add layer” option below the title. Google My Maps can accommodate up to 10 layers.
8. Beyond loading the dataset in bulk, each of the individual pinpoint locations can be selected and media can be added. Click on a pinpoint and observe the tool bar to the bottom right the pop-up box. Both colors and icons can be altered. Descriptions can also be altered. Images can be added by uploading an image or inputting an image URL (the file contains an image file format extension in the address).
9. To export the map, click on the three dots by the title of the map and select “Print Map.” In the Print Map pop-up box, select “Landscape” and “Image.” In the print dialogue box, save as PDF.

Domestic References



Figure 1: Example of a Google My Maps project. The dataset that produced these visualizations are the presidential state of the union addresses from 1977 to 2021 and depicts the domestic references made in each speech.