

# Transcript: Map Text

This is the transcript for the training video on “How to make your map text stand out.”

Hi, my name is Amy, and I am with the State of Minnesota Accessible Maps community here to share some insights about the use of styles on text and how it affects the readability of your map annotation.

When we use text on any manner of background, sometimes it's necessary to embellish that important text to make it pop on top of the background that is being used.

Many different effects can be used to help make this happen.

The effect, whatever it may be, must allow for the original hard edges of the annotation's shape to be maintained in order to be more accessible to more people.

Additionally, sometimes the background itself needs to be modified for more ease of reading the data on top of it.

Let's take a look at a couple of examples.

Here we have an aerial photo background. This is set at 100% opacity, and when we look at some

basic colors on top of it, like black, green, and white, it is obvious that the white color really does stand out on the dark background.

If this aerial photo is able to be brought back to 50% opacity, then obviously, that rule changes.

Your text standards may have to vary based on the coloring of your background.

Now let's go back to our 100% opacity, and we are now going to add some different text with different stylings applied to them.

Here we have a blue text with a black outline, a white text with a shadow style applied, and a white text with black halo surrounding it.

These styles are somewhat helping with the readability of the text, but some styles are still more difficult to read, because they interfere with the original shape of the text itself, or they blur the boundary between the text outline and the elements outside of the text.

This blue text has a simple, thin, black outline applied to it, which keeps that defined edge of the shape of the text, but this outline is taking away from the width of the original shape.

With the shadowed text, the text does pop, but it begins to blur the shape of each letter, which is difficult for those with low vision to differentiate.

And now for the haloed text.

The full width of the original text is maintained, and the black halo behind the text is supporting it rather than taking away from it.

But again, if this image is able to be pulled back to 50% opacity, then most of the text becomes more easily readable, because the background isn't competing with the text.

Now let's take a look at another example.

Here we have a topographical hill shaded image with the same color of text and style combinations that we had in the previous example.

This background has dark and light areas and every shade in between.

Because of this, almost none of the color combinations pop off the page, and in this case, the haloed text is really the only option.

But again, if the background can be pulled back, say to 50% opacity again, then it does help the text become more easily readable and create more options while still easily seeing the topographical background information.

For this last example, here we have a map with a lot of text that covers other elements like roads, streets, and streams.

On the left side of the image, we have all the text that crosses over these elements surrounded by a 2-point-wide matching background halo, which sort of helps cut them out of the graphic so that they are read more easily.

And on the right side of the image, some of the text does not have that halo, and some of the letters are a bit more difficult to distinguish.

But if we add that same 2-point matching halo to each of these…

Then it starts to pop those texts off of the page.

Now, it needs to be said that even too thick of a halo can actually be a problem with accessibility as well.

If the halo covers too much information like symbols or other labels, then it becomes inaccessible.

As you can see, if we inflate this 2-point halo to 6 points, it starts to cover this symbol and starts to disconnect it from the rest of the information below.

But proper use of halos can be a very effective tool in getting your text to pop off your map and be more easily read by your user.

In closing, there are many ways to help your readers see the important things you want them to see on your map.

Using proper text styles and adjusting competing features when possible can increase the effectiveness

of the information you are trying to portray.

That's all for now, and thanks for joining me on this video.

Have a great day.