Map Design

Follow these best practices to create maps that are well designed and accessible.
For the complete Map Design Guide and more information on map design and accessibility, visit mn.gov/mnit/accessibility

- **Data and information**

  Too much information can bury the map's story. Make sure a map is the best way to show the information. Choose the appropriate scale and page size for the map.

- **Fonts and annotation**

  Use as few font typefaces as possible, two or three at the most. The minimum font size in print for labels is 6-pt. Font size should reflect the importance of features; important features have larger fonts. The minimum size for explanatory text is 12-pt. Approved State of Minnesota brand fonts include: Brandon Grotesque, Brandon Text and Calibri. Times New Roman Italic is recommended for water labels and is also an approved font.

- **Labels**

  Labels should be consistent throughout. Consider uniformity in orientation and placement. Labels should never overlap and should not exceed a 90° angle (not upside down). Use leader lines when necessary. Use appropriately-sized halos to emphasize information on a busy background.

- **Color**

  Use color checkers to evaluate accessibility. Important information should stand out and basemap information should fall into the background. Sample schemes and color checker resources are available in the full online guide.

- **Symbology**

  Imitate the real world whenever possible. Choose colors and symbols that people associate with the feature types you're representing. Be consistent across maps.

- **Patterns**

  Limit the use of patterns. One or two are enough, with transparent backgrounds. Never use dashed lines on top of an opaque pattern.

- **Line styles**

  There should be no more than six line styles in a given map. If more, determine if more than one map is necessary for the information. Line weights should differ by **at least** 1-pt. when using for the same features and color (e.g., Major Roads 3-pt., County Roads 2-pt., Town/City Roads 1-pt.). If using 0.5-pt. increments, use lighter versions of the same color on lesser elements.

- **Background layers (imagery)**

  Visually subdue background images such as aerial photos with transparency or muted colors, so the added map information is easily seen.