

The National Topographic System of Canada

The **National Topographic System (NTS)** provides general-purpose topographic map coverage of Canada. These maps depict *in detail* ground relief (landforms and terrain), drainage (lakes and rivers), forest cover, administrative areas, populated areas, transportation routes and facilities (including roads and railways), and other man-made features.



1/50 000 National Topographic System map sample - 031G05 Ottawa, Ontario

A **1/50 000 scale topographic map** is ideal for recreational activities such as cycling, canoeing, snowmobiling, fishing, camping and hiking. Accurately shown are hills, valleys, lakes, rivers, streams, rapids, portages, trails and wooded areas; major, secondary and side roads, and all man-made features such as buildings, power lines, dams and cut lines. A 1/50 000 scale map covers an area approximately 1000 square kilometres.

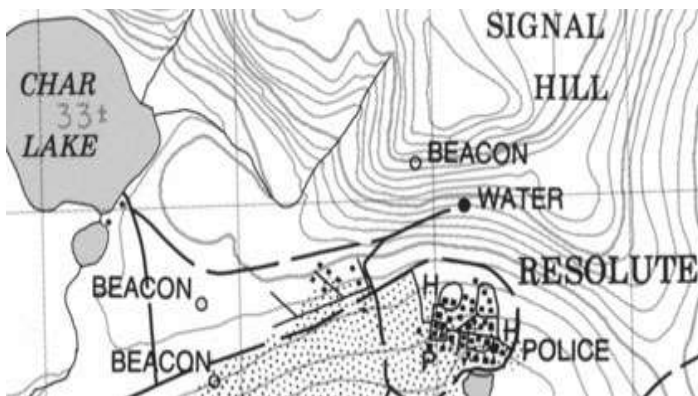
Maps at this scale are used by all levels of government and industry for flood control, forest fire control, real estate planning, development of natural resources, environmental issues, right-of-way, highway planning, and depiction of crop areas. In fact, maps at the 1/50 000 scale can be used for almost any conceivable requirement.

A **1/250 000 scale topographic map** is considered to be a reconnaissance-type map. It covers the same area of land as sixteen 1/50 000 scale maps. This scale is popular not only as a detailed overview of a large area, but also as a detailed road map for use when travelling on back roads and side roads. A full 1/250 000 scale map shows an area approximately the size of Prince Edward Island.



1/250 000 National Topographic System map sample - 031G Ottawa, Ontario

Meanwhile, vast sections of Canada's northern regions are sparsely populated, if at all. Monochrome (black and white) maps have been produced for many of these areas. The 1/50 000 scale monochrome map provides the same detailed depiction of the landmass as the 1/50 000 scale polychrome (colour) map.



1/50 000 National Topographic System map sample - 058F11 Resolute, Nunavut

To help you understand what topographic maps are and how to use them, we have answered many commonly asked questions and provided some explanations of topographic terms and symbols in the [TOPO 101](#) section of the Centre for Topographic Information Web Site.