

3.1 Introduction to OpenStreetMap

Overview

OpenStreetMap is a collaborative project to create a free editable world map and is at the core of HOT's mapping activities. You are free to use it for any purpose as long as you credit OSM and its contributors.



The power of OpenStreetMap is that it empowers anyone, anywhere in the world to add information to a collective map and use the data for any purpose. You can think of OSM as the “Wikipedia of maps” – it is an online database and global community of over 5 million registered users. This community collaborates to build a free and open map of the world to which anyone can contribute and which anyone can use in their own context. All that is needed to contribute to OSM is an internet connection and email address.

OpenStreetMap can, and has, been used for a wide variety of purposes - from disaster response to commercial use. The first organized use of OSM in disaster response was following the 2010 Haiti Earthquake. As high-resolution imagery of the affected area was made available to the public, over 600 individuals from the global OSM community began digitizing the imagery and tracing roads and other infrastructure. They made what quickly became the most detailed map of Port-au-Prince in existence, which was then used by search and rescue teams to help route supplies around the devastated capital and to coordinate many other aspects of the response and reconstruction effort.

Training Materials

- Introduction to OSM

Resources and further reading Read

- LearnOSM - Introduction to OSM
- OSM Wiki - About OpenStreetMap

Watch

- Two Minute Tutorial - What is OpenStreetMap?

Opening OSM accounts

With OpenStreetMap (OSM) at the core of mapping activities, it is critical that all team members and participants have activated OSM accounts. This will be necessary before using many mapping tools such as HOT Tasking Manager, JOSM, and HOT Export Tool.

Skills and Technology Needed

- Computer
- Activated email account
- Internet connection

Creating an OSM Account

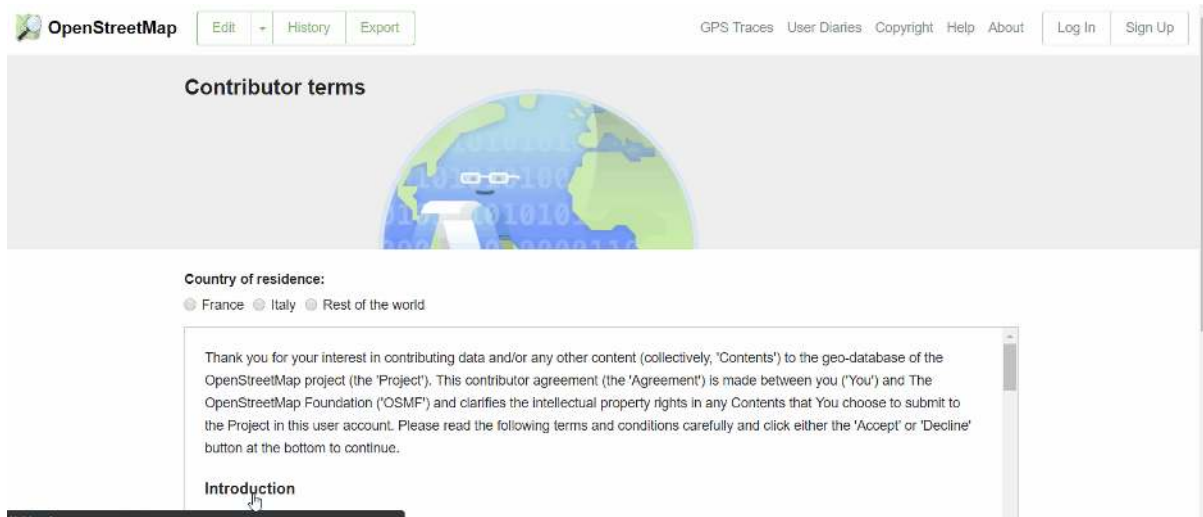
To get started, you will need to create an account on www.openstreetmap.org. Please use the “Sign Up” tab in the top right corner to begin.



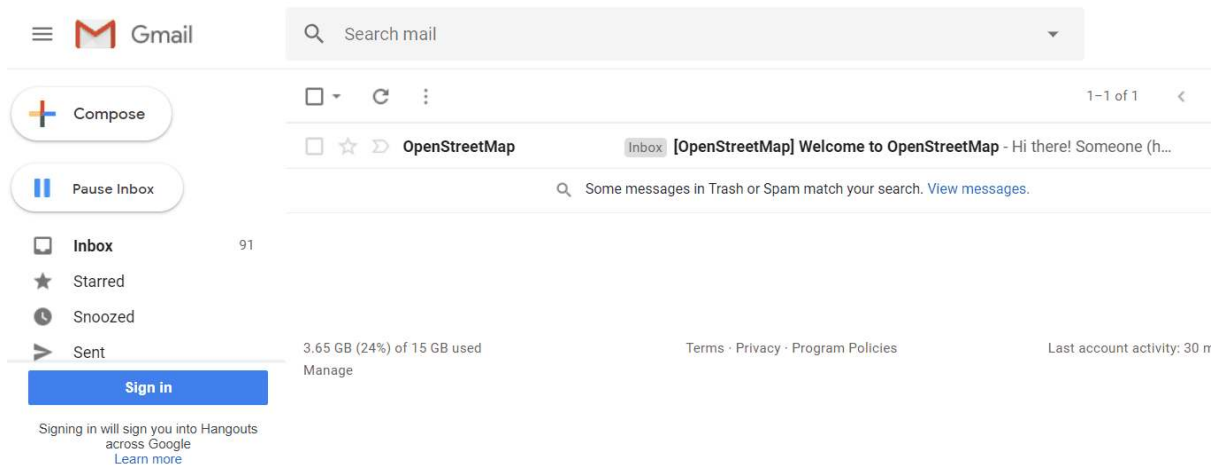
Please fill in all the fields in the form. We recommend using an email you have easy access to e.g. your work email, as you will receive a confirmation email to verify your account. You will not receive any spam/marketing emails. Click the blue “Sign Up” button when finished.

A screenshot of the 'Sign Up' form on the OpenStreetMap website. The form is titled 'Sign Up' and features a cartoon character of a globe with a face and arms. The form fields include: 'Email Address:', 'Confirm Email Address:', 'Display Name:', and a 'Sign Up' button. Below the 'Email Address' field, there is a note: 'Your address is not displayed publicly, see our [privacy policy](#) for more information'. To the right of the form, there is a text block: 'Free and editable: Unlike other maps, OpenStreetMap is completely created by people like you, and it's free for anyone to fix, update, download and use. Sign up to get started contributing. We'll send an email to confirm your account.'

Next, please read and accept the contributor terms and agreements by selecting where you are based (France, Germany, or the Rest of the World), and clicking the blue “Agree” button on the bottom of your screen.



To activate your account, please now check your email and click on the link provided.



Considerations for signing up large numbers of individuals

- Prior to beginning the OSM registration process, all individuals signing up for OSM accounts will need to have an existing and accessible email account. If registering a large group of individuals at one time, we recommend asking the group if they have accessible email accounts. When planning mapathons and trainings in areas where regular email use may be low, we also recommend planning for time in assisting individuals with setting up email accounts.
- Consider internet connectivity and capacity prior to registering large numbers of individuals for OSM accounts. Having individuals taking turns to register or running registration simultaneous to other activities can reduce the load on a slow internet connection.
- It is crucial that usernames and passwords are remembered by participants so that they can access other tools that require OSM accounts to log-in. We recommend encouraging participants to find a way of safely storing this information for future reference.