

2. Scale



You hear the word "scale" often when you work around people who produce or use geographic information. If you listen closely, you'll notice that the term has several different meanings, depending on the context in which it is used. You'll hear talk about the scales of geographic phenomena and about the scales at which phenomena are represented on maps and aerial imagery. You may even hear the word used as a verb, as in "scaling a map" or "downscaling." The goal of this section is to help you learn to tell these different meanings apart, and to be able to use concepts of scale to help make sense of geographic data.

Specifically, in this part of Chapter 2 you will learn to:

1. calculate map scale using representative fractions;
2. describe the general relationship between map scale, detail, and accuracy.

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The Nature of Geographic Information

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