Blogging Basics

By posting a brief description of weekly GIS assignments, students share their experience with fellow classmates, other GIS enthusiasts, and earn participation points in our GIS courses. By the end of their coursework, our students will have created a sort of GIS Journal or portfolio showcasing examples of work completed for all their GIS courses.

Utilizing a personal blog to share work is a great way to view classmate’s maps, see how others complete the same task (for style), provide feedback to fellow students’ work, build a sense of community, and ultimately help each other make better end-products. It is important for our students to practice communicating what they did, why they did it and what information is displayed on their map clearly and succinctly. In this guide we will help students make the most of their blogging experience with sections on how to make a blog post with an image, how to use a label gadget and some blog best practices.

How to make a blog post with an image

1. From your blog select “New Post” from the top.

2. Give your new post a title. Include a brief statement about your map.

3. Select the Insert Image Icon.
4. From here Upload, select Choose Files, navigate to you locally stored image, select it and hit open. Then OK.

5. Your image should appear with your text. Click on the image itself to change the image size and position if you would like to.
6. Before you select Publish, make sure to add a label to your posting. This should be either the class name or the class number.

7. Select Publish when you are finished.

How to use the label gadget

Blogs need to be organized so that instructors and visitors can find your posts easily by course. To do this, you need to use the label gadget.

1. After creating your blog, go to the ‘Layout’ menu.
2. Choose to 'Add a Gadget'.

3. A new window pops up. Scroll down the list of basic gadgets until you find the 'Label' one. Click the + to add it to your blog.

4. Configure your labels and save

5. When you make a post, be sure to label your post for the appropriate class.

6. After you've made a few posts your label section will look similar to this.

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**Blog Best Practices**

It is important to be able to communicate what you did, why you did, and what information are you displaying with your map. There is no need to write a five paragraph essay with your blog posts, but they should follow any special instructions given in the assignment for the post and summarize what you are learning in class that week and explain your map. Being able to explain what you did is important so your instructors know you’ve understood what they are teaching and it gives you practice so that when
you get a job in the GIS field, you are able to explain your work to your supervisor. Here are some examples of blog posts that we like:

In the title of this post, the student included the class, which Module/Week, and the title of the lab. In the post, the student began with a short introduction, moved into some of what they learned that week, and finished with what they did in class. A very good post! The student also included a label to the class it was for.

Module 12 - Cartography - Google Earth

In our final week of Cartographic Skills class, before we start our final projects, we will explore Google Earth.

Many of us look at Google Earth and Street View all the time, to find out how to get to a destination, or just for fun. It has a lot of additional capabilities that we explore in class. For example, it is easy to export an ArcMap layer or map as a KML file, which can be imported into the appropriate location in Google Earth, completing the work from ArcGIS.

Creating a tour is also a very useful and fun aspect of Google Earth. You can create your own tour by placing markers as you like (those little yellow push-pins), then zoom from one to the other and even zoom in close to see 3D buildings and landscapes and street views. Or, create a path, then have the tour follow the path. The tour will be recorded as a video, which can be shared with others. You can then save the video and share it to be viewed on Google Earth.

Here are two views of First United Methodist Church, St. Petersburg, Florida, taken with a Google Earth camera. On the left is a Street View photo, and on the right is a 3D photorealistic model of the church. St. Petersburg is part of a Google Earth Tour made by students in Cartography Skills class at the University of West Florida, April 2014.
FAQs

- What if I don't do it?
  Your participation grade assessed in all GIS courses will suffer each week/assignment you don't post to your blog.

- How many blog sites do I need to make?
  You only need one blog site.
Will I use the same blog for all GIS classes?
Yes, you will use the same blog for all courses in the Online GIS Certificate program. Just make sure your instructors know what the link is (and that it shows up on the main course blog after the first two weeks of class). Instructors share a blog list to help streamline this process.

How should I organize my blog so instructors and visitors can find my posts easily by course?
Add the label gadget to your blog. Label each post according to course title or course number it's for.

I have accessed the design layout. I can add the gadgets to the design but when I go to view my blog, they don't show up. Could there be something wrong?
The Labels option will only appear when you are publishing a post. Just write a test message and select a Label (or create a new one). Use "preview" to see the labels. Hit "Publish" when you are happy with your post.