

# 10 Advance Features of Google Maps for the classroom

[Google Maps has been out for 14 years now](#). Digital maps...starting with [Mapquest has been out since 1996](#) (technically 1993 but mapquest was the first mainstream map most people remember). For those of you keeping track that puts us almost 22 years into the digital mapping word. 22 years we have been using digital maps and yet for some reason digital maps have not replaced ([there's that word again](#)) mapping in our schools.

In 2007...11 years ago now....Apple put a map in our pocket. Fast forward to 2018 and almost everyone has a digital map in their pocket. Pilots now fly with iPads, ship captains now navigate with GPS and digital maps. Truck drivers now drive via digital maps and GPS location. So basically every professional that needs to use maps is using digital maps. I'm not saying we need to stop teaching how to read a paper map...but ...that should be 10% of the mapping work a student does not 99%.

With that in mind here are 10 ways you could use Google Maps in the classroom.



## 1. Latitude Longitude Scavenger Hunts

You remember learning about Latitude and Longitude right? Well, in a paper map world it's a place "kind of there" where your two fingers meet. In a digital world it's a specific location. This allows us to do some fun stuff and learn about Latitude and Longitude simultaneously.

**What do these three places have in common?**

24.007233, 38.210118

31.204263, 121.281686

46.986944,-123.812859

Then maybe you have students go to the opposite hemisphere from where these places are and see what's there. Is this math looking at x y axis and how we divide our world? Or is this social studies and looking at landmarks? Or is this English and we have the settings of the books we have read? Or is it History and we're comparing and contrasting battle sites? In a digital mapping world Latitude and Longitude mean more than where your fingers meet...it's an exact location.

**Bonus:** [Google Sightseeing blog: View some great images from around the world](#)

## 2. Earth Picker



[Earth Picker](#) is a fun and addicting game. If you click on the link, kiss the next 30 minutes of your life goodbye. The game reminds me a bit of [Carmen Sandiego](#) back in the day. Only in this game you need to “read an image” a new skill that we need to be teaching students as more and more of our information becomes

visual. What do you see? What clues can you find? A great little game to start teaching digital mapping skills.

**Bonus:** [Yes...Google does have a whole site dedicated to using maps in education](#)

## 3. Smarty Pins



[Smarty Pins](#) is a great game for educators to use and adapt. I encourage educators to play the game for a while, yes the questions are American Centric, however what we're after here is the questions that Google is asking and how the game works. Once you get the hang of it, an educator could create their own questions around

their own content area. Students could put a pin on the map where they think it is...once the true place is revealed they could get driving directions to see how far they were off....now we bring math into the curriculum and have students add and keep track of their own distances. Think settings of books in English class, battles in history class, or create questions in a world language class and the country practicing language skills. Yes the game is fun....even better is how easy it would be to adapt it to fit your curriculum.

**Bonus:** [Create your own mapping game](#)

## 4. My Maps



[My Maps](#) is simply amazing. So much so that the next six ways to use Google Maps is all about My Maps. My Maps allows you to create maps not just read and use them. All of a sudden we become digital map creators and the possibilities become endless.

**Bonus:** [5 ways to use My Maps in the classroom](#)

## 5. Video Tour



Using [My Maps](#) students could add markers along a route of say, [Ferdinand Magellan](#). Students could create videos, or record their voice and actually embed them into a marker for others to learn about what happened at that spot on his travels.

Now....because this is Google....of course you can share a map just like you can a Google Doc. Now you have 10 students working on 10 different explorers all of them adding their routes and videos to the same map. From there we can start to see patterns of routes, patterns of where explorers were going and what they were trying to do. Now we can start asking questions and as we find answers to them we create videos and add more information back to the world.

**Bonus:** [Want some training? No problem Google has you covered!](#)

## 6. Create a map for your community



My Maps isn't new. I've been creating maps for different purposes since about 2007! [Here's a map that I created for friends that came to visit while we lived in Shanghai, China from 2005 – 2008](#). Are you studying your community? Your country? Your state/province? Why not create a map for others from your favorite places to eat, visit, play, etc.

**Bonus:** [See how others are using Google Maps to help their communities](#)

## 7. Create a route

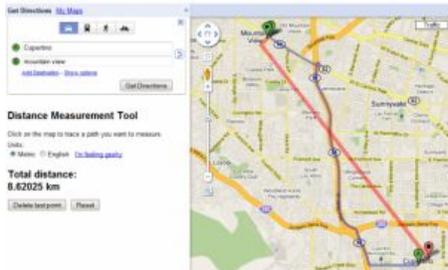


We're talking real skills here! [Here's a route I created when my wife and I visited Croatia last year](#). We had never been to Croatia before and didn't know the roads or how long we should expect to drive between our destinations. Using My Maps we were able to create a route from hotel to hotel and get a close approximation of the driving time we would have each day. So cool and

digital maps has now forever changed the way you travel!

Bonus: [Keep up with what Google is doing with maps](#)

## 8. Measure Distance and Area



In My Maps you get the ability to draw straight lines to see the distance between two points anywhere in the world. Better yet is the ability to draw out an area. Ever wonder just how big Russia is? What if you draw an area map around your country and then move that area over Russia. How many of your countries do you think fit in Russia? In China? On the continent of Africa?

Bonus: [Using Google Maps in math class](#)

## 9. See your World in 3D



If you haven't heard [Google Earth](#) had some major updates in 2017 and it's all new, all web based, and well....you just need to go see it. The new 3D features are incredible. It's better than ever and changing the way we all view our world. Make sure once you are in Google Earth that you check out the **Voyager** link on the left. Then just think of the possibilities this has with students.

Bonus: [40+ Ways to Use Google Earth and Maps in the classroom](#)

## 10. Mobile Maps



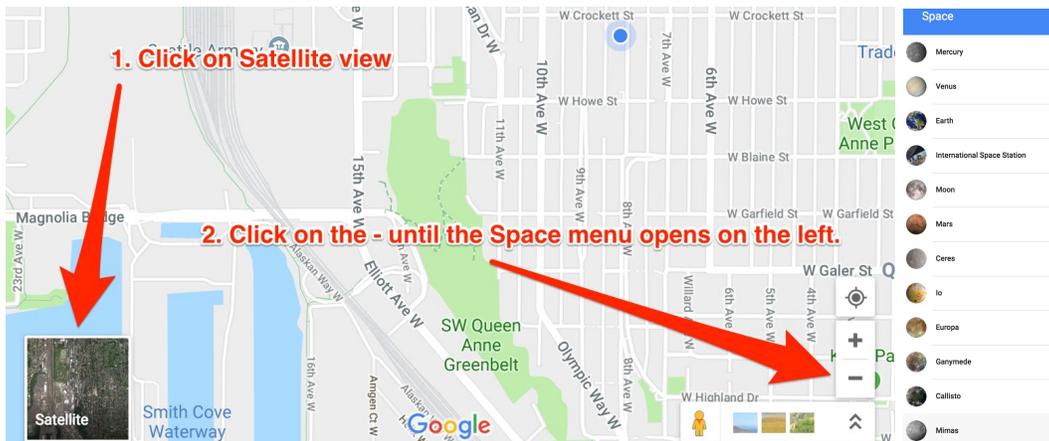
Google Maps is downloadable on every mobile device I know of and My Maps is as well ([Android](#), [iOS](#))! So now you can create maps and use maps on your phone, tablet, and watch. No need to have a class set of laptops when every student has a phone in their pocket. Here's the problem....this is number 10 and now that we have the ability to make and read maps on a mobile device that has GPS on it....we just opened up a whole new way to engage with information, create information, and teach students the skills they'll need for their future in a digital mapping world!

Bonus: [26 more Google Maps tips and tricks](#)

**BONUS: Visit the International Space Station and Moons and Planets  
in our Solar System!**

This will forever change the way we study our universe, our moon and our solar system. Google Maps now includes everything NASA has mapped in our own universe. Here's how to find the hidden Solar System Easter Egg.

1. Go to [google.com/maps](https://www.google.com/maps)
2. In the lower right hand corner click on Satellite View
3. In the lower left hand corner continue click on the - button to zoom out of earth and into space. Keep clicking the - button until the Space menu appears on the left.
4. You're welcome!



The image to the right are some maps I found in an antique shop. Yes...paper maps are now considered antiques.

Yes....paper maps days are numbered. Sure they'll be around for a while yet but ...that's for our generations not theirs. They might never touch a paper map...never have to be frustrated with trying to fold it back up, worry about it ripping or whether it's up to date. I know, I know....we loved our paper maps. But it's time to let them go and embrace a new digital mapping world. For the sake of our students and their future.

