

ENRICH

Reading a Topographic Map

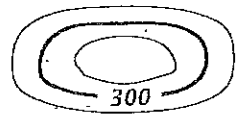
Reading and interpreting a topographic map takes practice. The more of these maps you examine, the better you'll become at figuring out what they show.

◆ Rules for Reading Topographic Maps

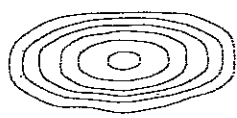
1. All contour lines are drawn as seen from above.
2. The difference in elevation between one contour line and the next is always the same on a given map. This difference is the contour interval.
3. Elevations on one side of a contour line are higher than elevations on the other side of that line.
4. Contour lines never divide or cross another line, although on cliffs they appear to run together.
5. Contour lines never end in the middle of a map. They either form a closed loop or they run off the edge of the map.
6. Contour lines are farther apart on gentle slopes than they are on steep slopes.

Answer the following questions on a separate sheet of paper.

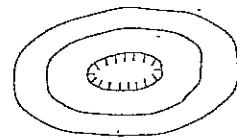
1. If you were making a topographic map, how would you show a steep cliff?
2. Why do you think gentle slopes are shown with more widely spaced lines than steep slopes are?
3. Why do you think one contour line never crosses another contour line?
4. On which map would contour lines probably be easier to read, a topographic map of a city or a topographic map of a wilderness area? Explain.
5. Imagine a place on Earth and make your own topographic map using the rules and symbols you've learned.



Elevation



Hill



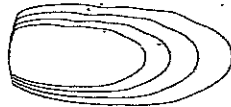
Depression



Stream



Gentle-to-steep elevation



Cliff