

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Where do I get a mapcode?

See our [web page](#) on how to get a mapcode.

<http://www.mapcode.com/usedevice.html>

I don't like my mapcode; I want a different mapcode.

A mapcode is just a different way of representing a longitude/latitude. Since the longitude/latitude of a particular location is fixed, so is its mapcode.

However, there are still two things you can try if you do not like the mapcode for a particular location:

- (1) Most locations have one or more *alternative* mapcodes. One of them may be more to your liking.
- (2) Sometimes, a spot a few steps to the right or left will do just as well to identify a particular location – while yielding a different mapcode (and different alternative mapcodes).

My mapcode is not precise enough

A mapcode will get you within meters of a particular location. In practice this means “you’re there”. But what if it takes you to an apartment block housing a dozen different families? Or to a row of front doors *very* close to each other? How do you distinguish between them?

Answer: For some professional applications, you can use a *high-precision mapcode* (a mapcode that is precise to 1 meter, or even to 1 millimeter). Tap the “precision” option one or more times (at bottom right of our “Map” screen). For example, mapcode **NLD 49.4V** takes you to within a few meters of the entrance of an office building in Amsterdam, but **NLD 49.4V-P6** takes you to within 8 centimeters of the doorknob of that entrance.

The extra precision comes at the cost of a slightly longer mapcode. Although perfectly appropriate for certain professional applications, it is worth considering *why* you deem your mapcode “not precise enough”. Is it simply because some other house or business shares the same mapcode? Then consider how a destination *always* consists of two parts: an “address” (e.g. a street name and house number, or a mapcode) and a “recipient” (e.g. a person, or company). A mapcode will get you to within a few meters. Are you sure that isn’t enough to find the recipient?

The mapcode / the map / the address is “wrong”

A mapcode always correctly represents a longitude/latitude (and vice versa). However, maps (even very precise-looking satellite photo maps) can be imprecise in three ways:

- (1) **Address errors:** if you enter an address in the search box of a computer map (e.g. Google Earth, a TomTom navigation system, the iPhone Maps app), it may put a marker in the wrong place. Both the place where they *put* a marker and the place where the marker *should* be, have a mapcode. The question is: which will get you to the right place in the *real world*? The answer is below.
- (2) **Map errors:** different map products may place the same mapcode marker (i.e. the same latitude/longitude) at slightly different spots on their maps. Which map (if any) correctly represents the *real world*? The answer is below.
- (3) **GPS-to-map errors:** If you look up your own position on your phone (e.g. looking at the pulsating blue dot on iPhone Maps or on your Google app), it is

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sometimes be displayed incorrectly (e.g. on the other side of the street from where you are standing). What does this mean? The answer is below.

Answer: You can trust the *real* world. If you want to know where your front door is, go there, take out your phone, and look up your longitude/latitude or your mapcode (e.g. by surfing to <http://www.mapcode.com/m.html>). Most phones nowadays can very precisely measure your position and will furthermore correctly show how precise the measurement is. Even if your phone *draws* the position wrong (see point 3), it will give you the *correct mapcode*. And even when someone else's navigation system *draws* that mapcode in yet another wrong location (see point 2), it will still navigate to the right place in the *real world*.

My mapcode is in the wrong country.

The mapcode system is based on rectangular areas, not on natural borders such as coastlines or mountain chains. The mapcode areas therefore often overlap in ways the countries do not, and valid national mapcodes may be produced for locations that are (sometimes widely) outside the national borders. If this website inadvertently assumes the wrong country, please choose the correct territory yourself.

What are “alternative” mapcodes?

A particular location can have more than one mapcode associated to it ([why?](#)). The shortest mapcode is always preferred. All the other mapcodes are called “alternatives”.

Why are there several possible mapcodes for a single location?

There are four reasons why a particular location can have more than one mapcode:

- (1) *Every* location in a particular country has a "national" mapcode. However, locations in the capital city and certain other densely populated areas often also have alternative, shorter mapcodes.
- (2) *Every* location on Earth has an "international" mapcode. So any location that has a *national* mapcode also has an international mapcode.
- (3) In a number of very large countries, locations both have a national mapcode and a “state” (or “province” or “oblast”) mapcode.
- (4) The mapcode system is based on rectangular areas, not on natural borders such as coastlines or mountain chains. The mapcode areas therefore often overlap in ways the countries do not, and valid national mapcodes may be produced for locations that are (sometimes widely) outside the national borders. If this website inadvertently assumes the wrong country, please choose the correct territory yourself.

When should I use “international” mapcodes?

Local mapcodes (national or state) are preferred over international mapcodes, and shorter mapcodes are preferred over longer mapcodes. International mapcodes are really only intended for locations in international waters, and may sometimes be useful in disputed territories, when picking a specific country name may be politically sensitive.

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Can I use mapcodes in my own system? Are there permissions, limitations, fees? Are there software libraries and tools available? Who made the system? How do mapcodes work?

Mapcodes are free for all and forever. Their use is encouraged and free of restrictions. Background information can be found on the [about mapcodes](#) page. Software and tools are available on our [downloads](#) page under the Apache 2 license.

Is your question not on this list? Please let us know at info@mapcode.com