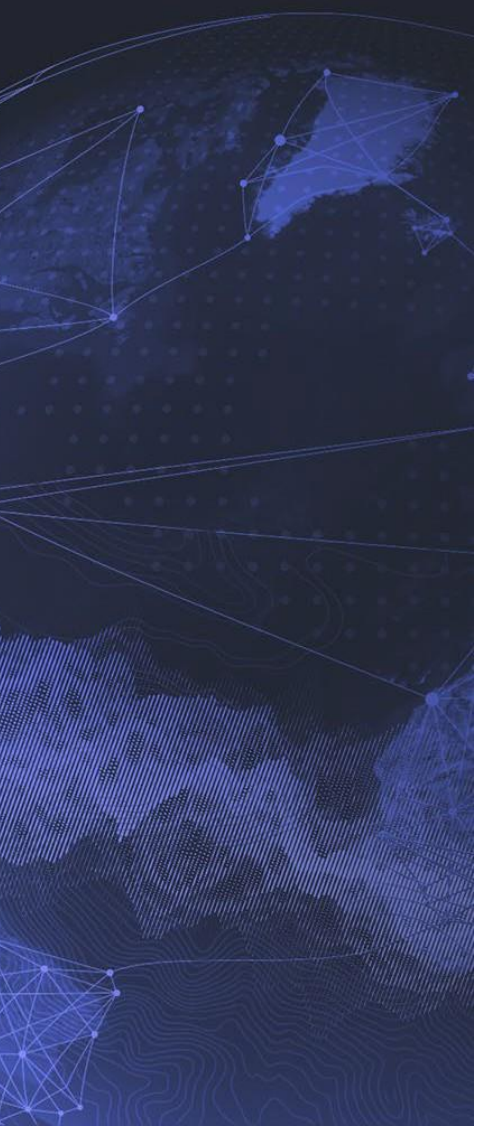

July 2026

ArcGIS Online Implementation Guide

Essential tasks and best practices for setting up ArcGIS Online

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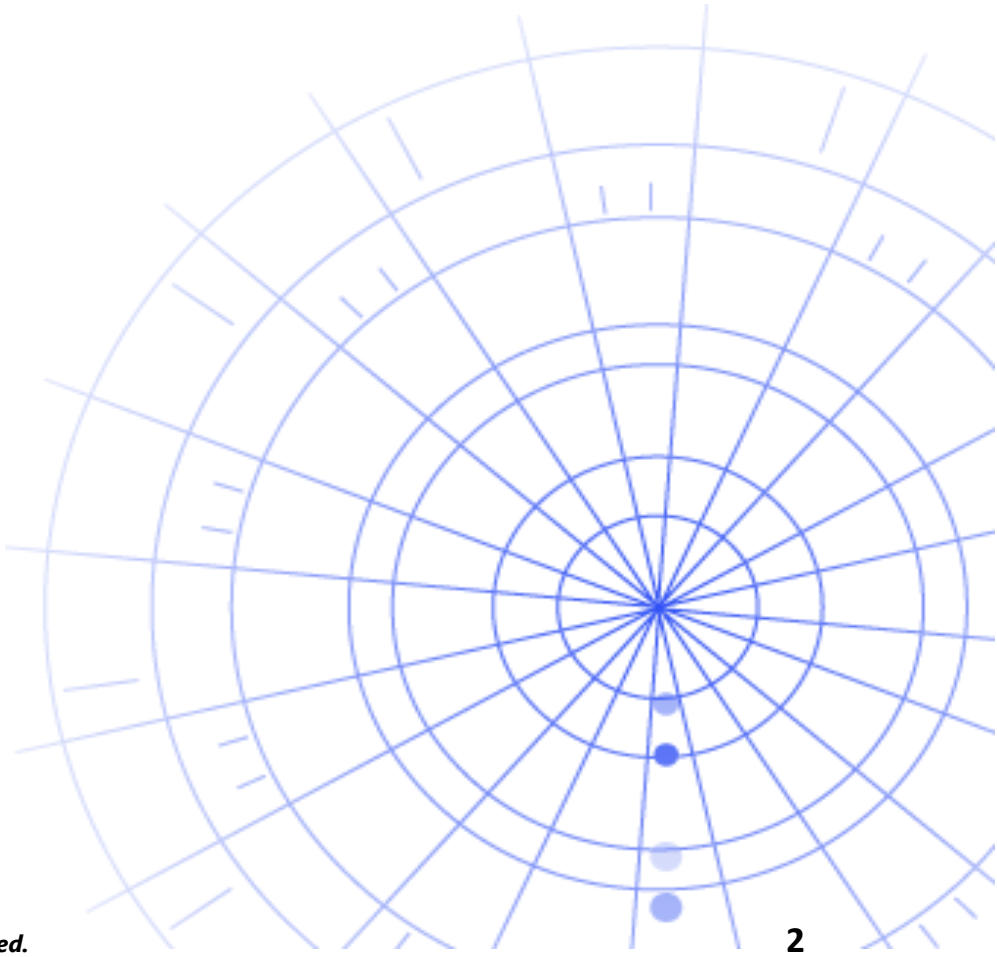
Task checklist

TASK	COMPLETE
1. Explore ArcGIS Online	☐
2. Activate your subscription	☐
3. Configure your organization settings	☐
4. Create groups	☐
5. Add members	☐
6. Create content	☐
7. Learn more	☐



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1. Explore ArcGIS Online

Welcome to ArcGIS Online. If you have little or no geographic information system (GIS) experience, this guide can help you get started with Esri's mapping and analytics software. ArcGIS Online allows you to connect people, locations, and data by creating interactive 2D and 3D maps, charts, infographics, and more to visualize and explore your data. Analysis tools help you discover and refine your data's story. You can also share maps and apps to influence change.

Before setting up ArcGIS Online, you can complete a few tutorials. These tutorials guide you through the fundamentals of mapping and analysis, such as the following:

- Navigate and create maps in ArcGIS Online.
- Share a map.
- Create a no-code web app.
- Make a walk-time map.
- Create a 3D web scene.
- Understand the main types of data layers supported in ArcGIS Online and what you can do with them.

Start the mapping and analysis tutorials

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2. Activate your subscription

When you purchase an ArcGIS Online subscription, you can configure your site in a way that makes sense for your organization. For example, you can set the security and sharing policies, assign privileges and credits to members based on the work they need to do, and configure your home page and gallery to reflect your brand. You can also integrate your organization's identity management system.

Main components

A subscription to ArcGIS Online includes the following main components:

Home page—Your home page is often a user's first impression of your site. Include a banner and logo, feature maps and apps, and provide descriptions, links, or resources to help your users get the most out of your site.

Groups—Groups are a way to organize your members and content around specific projects, workflows, and initiatives. You can set up groups to allow access to specific items based on your organization's structure. Groups also allow collaboration with members of other organizations.

Members—Add new members to ArcGIS Online directly or by invitation. You can add members in bulk or one at a time. You can set up their accounts for them, allow them to create their own accounts, or use your existing organization-specific login system.

Content—Your ArcGIS Online content includes maps, apps, and layers. It also provides resources to store, categorize, edit, and share what you've created.

These components work together to create the ArcGIS Online experience that meets your organization's requirements.

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Tips for activating your subscription

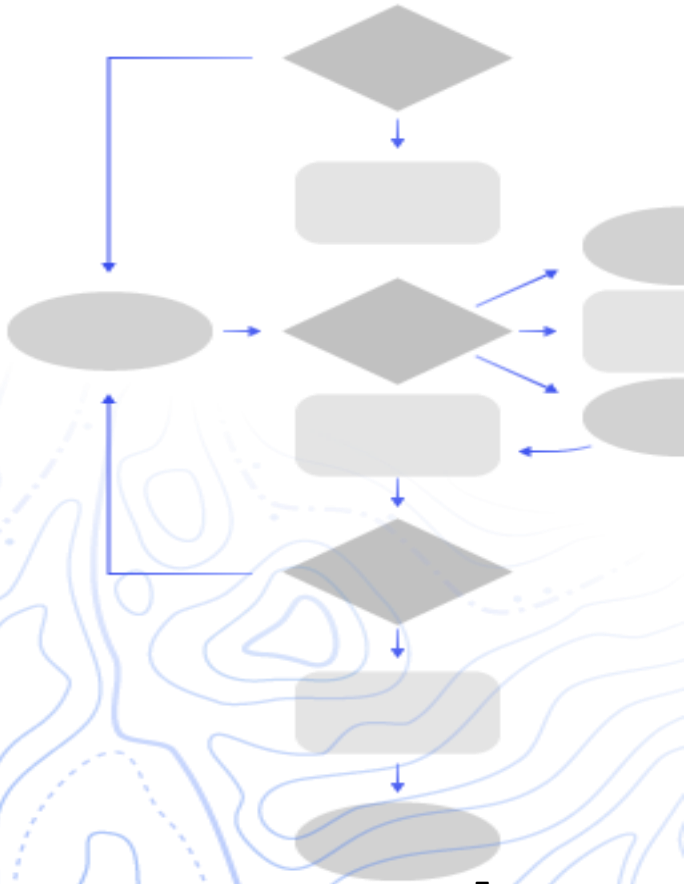
You must decide the following things when you set up ArcGIS Online:

A name for your ArcGIS Online site—The organization name appears in the banner on the home page. Choose a distinct and accurate name that represents your organization or the purpose of your ArcGIS Online site.

A short name—The short name appears in the URL link to your ArcGIS Online site (for example, sample-org-name.maps.arcgis.com). Carefully consider the name you want to use. You can change it later, but you may need to manually update the URLs of some of your content.

Administrative contact—Consider having two or more organization administrators as points of contact. These administrators and their email addresses are listed in automatic emails sent from ArcGIS Online when members request password resets, help with their usernames, modifications to their accounts, or assistance with any issues related to the allocation of credits to their accounts. Administrative contacts also receive email notifications about the subscription.

Learn how to activate your subscription



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3. Configure your organization settings

Start by configuring ArcGIS Online to meet your organization's needs. For example, you can specify whether members can search for and share content outside the organization. Some configuration is done as part of the subscription activation—for example, setting up your organization's URL. As you get started, focus on the appearance of your home page and the security settings of the site.

Customize the appearance

Think about your brand and how to best represent it on your site. The following are recommendations for creating an effective home page:

- Design and organize a professional-looking home page. Use a custom banner and logo and describe the purpose of your site.
- Showcase your best maps and apps as featured content on your home page.

Learn how to set up your home page

Security considerations

ArcGIS Online is a secure, reliable, and flexible site. You can configure the privacy and security controls that make sense for your organization. For example, you can configure the password policy, including the password length, complexity, and history requirements. You can allow members to share content outside your organization or only allow sharing within the organization. You can also set up organization-specific logins and multifactor authentication.

Access to your ArcGIS Online organization, your data, and all other assets must be through HTTPS. This helps protect your information. You can also visit ArcGIS Trust Center for additional details about security, privacy, and compliance.

Learn how to set up your security policies

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4. Create groups

Groups create structure for your organization and are a way to organize items you want to share with members of your organization, other organizations, and with the public. You can set up private groups that require an invitation to become a member, or public groups that allow anyone to become a member. You can use groups as a tool to support your workflows and ensure that finished content is shared with the intended audience. For example, you can create a working group and a broadcast group for items related to a project. The working group can be a private group used for sharing in-progress work. The broadcast group can be a public group used for sharing finished content with your organization, specified individuals, or everyone.

You can also use groups to showcase content on the home page and gallery and build custom galleries for basemaps and apps. Creating groups when you set up your organization allows you to organize members and content into groups as you add them.

Learn how to create groups

Collaborations

Collaborations are trusted relationships that allow organizations to work together on content through groups, and offer various methods of sharing maps, apps, layers, and more with other organizations.

Partnered collaborations include two or more ArcGIS Online organizations that allow their members to work closely with each other and each other's content using groups. Once you create a collaboration, all participating organizations can view and manage it.

Distributed collaborations establish trust between two ArcGIS Enterprise environments or an ArcGIS Online organization and one or more ArcGIS Enterprise environments. Participating organizations use groups to share content as either references or copies. The organization that creates the collaboration is the host, and other participating organizations are guests. If an ArcGIS Online organization participates in a distributed collaboration, it must be the host.

Learn more about collaborations

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5. Add members

ArcGIS Online has a flexible system for adding members to your organization. You can add members automatically or invite them to join your organization. You can add and invite members one at a time, or you can upload a file and add and invite members in bulk. You can enable your existing organization-specific login system, set up member accounts yourself, or allow members to create their own accounts. As part of the invitation process, you also designate user types and roles and assign members to the groups you've created.

Learn how to add members

Best practices

Best practices for adding members are described below. Most can be done as part of the invitation process.

- **Configure organization-specific logins**—If you use an organization-specific login system such as Okta or Google Workspace, add members using their SAML or OpenID Connect logins. This allows members to sign in to ArcGIS Online with their existing logins instead of creating new ArcGIS accounts.
  Learn how to configure logins

- **Assign user types**—User types determine the privileges and apps that can be assigned to members. There are a variety of user types to match the way a team works. Assign user types based on the members' needs and requirements. For example, the Professional Plus user type has access to all the capabilities in ArcGIS Online and most of the apps, while the Viewer user type can only view items that are shared with them and have access to a small set of apps.
  Learn more about user types

- **Select roles**—Consider the privileges each member needs. You can assign privileges through a default role, or you can create custom roles based on the specific privileges you want that role to have. Every subscription must have at least one administrator role, but it is recommended that you assign at least two administrators for your organization.
  Learn how to configure custom roles

- **Automatically add members to groups**—Specify the groups you want members to join. Members are added automatically without needing to request membership or accept an

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invitation.
Learn how to add members to groups

- **Allocate a credit budget**—You can manage member credit usage by setting a specified number of credits that the member can use for transaction-based services and tools such as spatial analysis.
  Learn how to allocate credit budgets

- **Manage Esri access**—Enable Esri access for members who need to use other web resources such as support, training, and forums or to manage their email communications from Esri.
  Learn how to enable Esri access

- **Manage add-on licenses**—Each user type includes access to specific apps. Apps that are not included with an assigned user type can be licensed and assigned as needed to specific members as add-on licenses.
  Learn how to manage licenses

- **Categorize members**—Set up hierarchical categories for organizing and filtering members in your organization according to characteristics, such as department, location, and expertise.
  Learn how to set up member categories

- **Set new member defaults**—Specify member properties to assign by default when adding new members to your organization. You can configure properties such as user type, role, credit allocation, and groups.
  Learn how to configure new member defaults

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6. Create content

ArcGIS Online includes everything you need to create and share maps, scenes, apps, notebooks, analysis models, and layers. You can add existing content such as spreadsheets and ArcGIS Server services, and you can create content such as maps, apps, and hosted web layers.

Consider how your content will be used and optimize it for the best experience. For example, refine layers with appropriate transparency, scale ranges, and labels; configure pop-ups in your maps; and create multiple views of your feature layers with different access and editing properties.

Include complete details so the item is easy to find and use. Designate items as authoritative when you want to promote them as reliable and boost them in search results. Set up content categories for your organization and groups.

Tips

See the following tips to create content:

- Create a map by combining a basemap with your data. You can apply smart mapping defaults to quickly style the map.
  Learn how to create maps

- ArcGIS Online includes a variety of templates and widgets to help you create focused web apps.
  Learn how to create apps

- Choose from several templates to create layers for use in your maps and apps to collect data.
  Learn how to create feature layers

- When you save or add your content to ArcGIS Online, it's stored as an item in **My content**, where you can search all your items or browse by filters such as item type and date.
  Learn how to add items

- All content has an associated item page for additional details. You can also modify item settings and access more options to interact with the item.
  Learn how to use item pages

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- Use content categories to organize group content and content across your organization.
  Learn how to set up content categories

- Share your content to allow others to use it. You can share with groups, your organization, or everyone.
  Learn how to share content

- If your map is picked up by social media or is viewed by thousands or millions of users at once, you'll want the map to load as quickly as possible.
  Learn how to optimize maps for high demand

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7. Learn more

As an organization administrator, you're responsible for setting up ArcGIS Online. It's equally important to maintain members, items, and groups to keep your organization uncluttered and up to date. The resources in this section can help you with these maintenance tasks. They also help you learn more about ArcGIS Online.

Monitor activity

Access activity-based metrics and real-time usage reports to help monitor content and members. An interactive dashboard provides details about your organization's credit usage, member status and activity, content usage, apps, and groups. You can also create, export, and save detailed reports of your organization's members, content, credits, and other resources and activities.
Learn how to use the dashboard

Credit usage

ArcGIS Online is a paid subscription service. Esri assigns each subscription service credits that function as currency. You use credits when using certain content, analytical functions, and data storage. You can enable credit budgeting to manage credits for transaction-based services and tools such as spatial analysis. Assign a flexible allocation of credits to some or all organization members or set a default allocation for new members.
Learn more about credit usage

Additional resources

See the following resources to learn more:

- ArcGIS Online help is a key resource for learning how to use the software in general and to perform specific tasks. It also includes best practices for organization maintenance, what's new, troubleshooting, and FAQ.

- The tutorial gallery has a collection of guided tutorials to help you learn about ArcGIS. It also includes multiple tutorial series of related resources about a specific subject, such as administration.

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- Esri Academy includes instructor-led courses, webinars, learning plans, and other training resources to help you learn more about managing an ArcGIS Online organization.

- The GIS community, including Esri, shares thousands of trusted, ready-to-use layers, maps, apps, scenes and other geospatial content in ArcGIS Living Atlas of the World. ArcGIS Living Atlas covers everything from historical census data to environmental conditions derived from live sensor networks and earth observations.

- ArcGIS API for Python can help you expedite and maintain administrative tasks. For example, use the API to set up the folder structure in **My content**. You can also use it to update URLs for service or app items. https://marketplace.arcgis.com/Get the latest information about service availability from ArcGIS Online Health Dashboard.

FAQ

Can I try ArcGIS Online before purchasing a subscription?

Yes. If you don't have an account yet, you can get a free ArcGIS Online trial. With an ArcGIS Online trial, you are the administrator of your trial organization. You can purchase a subscription at the end of the trial and continue using the organization and content you created.

Can I add more members or credits?

Yes. Your ArcGIS Online subscriptions can grow with your organization. You can add more members or credits at any time.

Where can I get answers to more questions?

Read the ArcGIS Online FAQ, explore Esri Community discussions, or contact Esri.

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