



Contributing to OpenStreetMap

1 Overview

Contributing to open data projects is an easy way to get “your feet wet”, so to speak, in the world of open source software. The *OpenStreetMap* Project (<https://www.openstreetmap.org>) is an open source, open data project whose purpose is similar to *Google* maps, but not proprietary. Its mission is to map the entire world in as much detail as possible. It depends upon ordinary citizens to assist in this project. Editing the map is a good first contribution because

- it will give you practice in learning how to use a new API (the map editor),
- it will give you practice in interacting with a community of global contributors, and
- you will be performing a positive, beneficial service.

There is little downside to this exercise other than the fact that you need to invest your time and effort to do it.

2 Learning How to Edit the Map

To start, you need an account on *OpenStreetMap.org*, which you should have before starting this activity. Anyone with an account can contribute to *OpenStreetMap*. Over the course of the semester, you will make at least five independent contributions to the map. Two contributions are independent if they are changes to different places on the map. To do so, you need to learn how to edit the map. There are four different editors that you can use. They are the *iD* editor, *Potlatch 2*, *JOSM*, and *Merkaartor*. The instructions below are for using the *iD* editor.

The *iD* editor has a built in interactive tutorial. You should begin by running the tutorial. To access it, do the following:

1. Login on the *OpenStreetMap.org* homepage using your username and password.
2. Start *iD*: on the *OpenStreetMap.org* homepage click the "*Edit*" button or, if you have set another default editor in your user preferences, click "*iD*" inside the "*Edit* " menu),
3. Click the “?” icon located at the bottom of the right-hand side panel over the map; this brings up a pop-up window with a “*help*” item. Click on the *help* item.
4. A window will pop up, or slide out. At the bottom of the window, click the large "*Start the Walkthrough*" button below the list of help chapters.

The walkthrough is an interactive webpage that steps you through the basic of editing the map, using an imaginary place. It does not have to be done in one sitting; you can return to it whenever you want. The entire walkthrough might take about one hour to complete. Once you have completed it, you are ready to do some mapping. You can always get more help by using the help button at the top of the map in the toolbar, or by typing H.



3 Details

Your job is to make some useful edits of the map. The easiest way to do this is to pick the geographic region that you know the best, which is usually someplace in which you have lived for a while. When you are in editing mode, there is a toolbar on the right hand side that has several buttons. The one that looks like an arrowhead centers the map on your current location, based on what your browser sends to OpenStreetMap. For whatever area you choose, zoom into it at a high enough level of detail so that you can see the roads, parks, buildings, and so on, with their associated names and tags. Look for things that are out of date, or that you know have changed and have not been updated on the map. These might be useful changes such as filling in details about a shop or business that you frequent. If you make multiple changes to a single location, such as by modifying multiple properties of a building, it is treated as a single contribution.

Make your changes and submit them. If they get approved, you have made a contribution.

3.1 Journaling Your Contributions

Your blog has a page for listing contributions. For each approved contribution that you make, you need to create an entry on that page according to the page's instructions. Specifically, in the column where a link is expected, put a link to the contribution. This explains how you can get that link, in case you have not discovered it yet.

Every user's contribution history is publicly available. To see it, you enter the URL

`https://www.openstreetmap.org/user/username/history`

into your browser's address bar, where the word `username` is replaced by the actual username in which you are interested. On the left hand side of the page is a list of *changesets*. Each changeset represents an edit and each changeset has an identification number and a URL. If you right-click anywhere over the changeset, you can copy that URL and paste it into the blog's contribution page.