

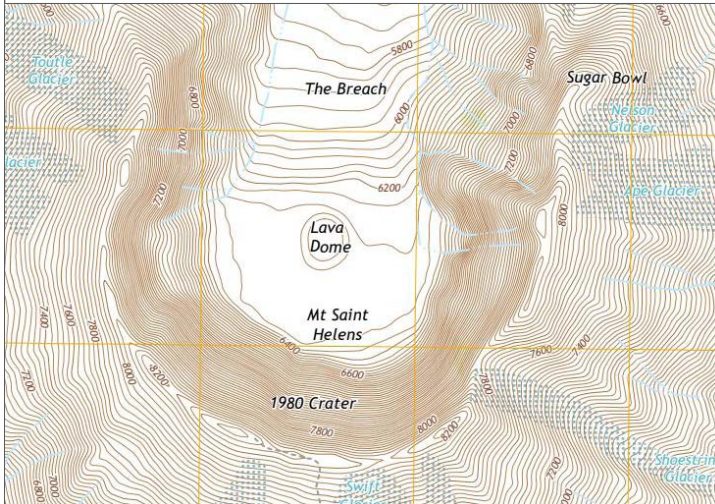


# Bathymetric Maps

A map is a flat model of all or part of Earth's surface drawn to a specific scale.

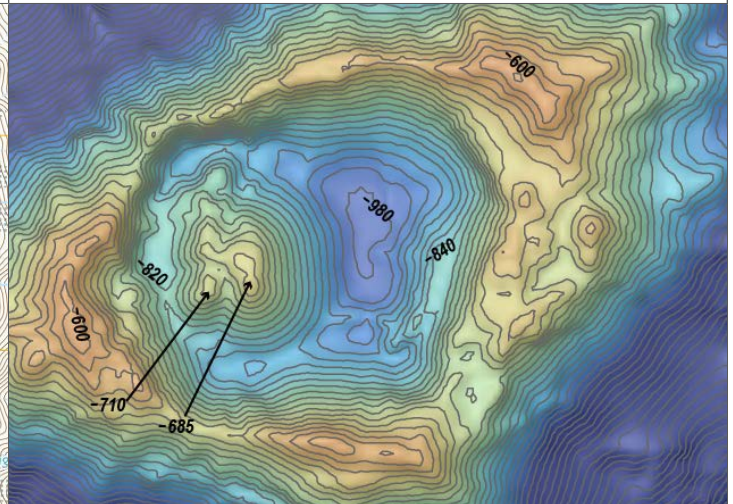
The better maps communicate information, the more effective they are as real-world models.

**Topographic maps** show the elevation of landforms above sea level.

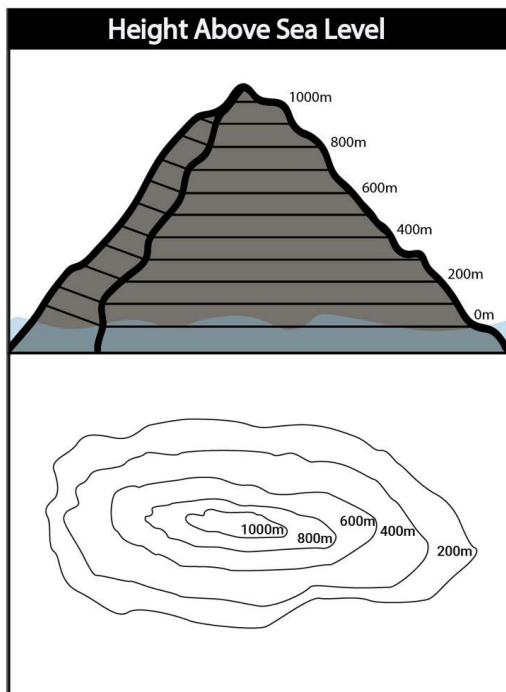


Topographic map of Mt. St. Helens, an active volcano in Washington State. Image courtesy of USGS.

**Bathymetric maps** show depths of landforms below sea level.



Bathymetric map of Vailulu'u Seamount, an active hotspot volcano in the Samoan archipelago. Image courtesy of NOAA Ocean Exploration, American Samoa 2017.



Topographic elevations and bathymetric depths are often shown on maps with **contour lines**. A contour line represents a corresponding imaginary line on the surface of the land or bottom of the ocean that has the same elevation or depth along its entire length.

The highest elevation, or peak, of a mountain or seamount is represented by the smallest circle in the center of the contour line rings. On a mountain, the contour lines are labeled with positive numbers showing elevation above sea level. Contour lines on a seamount are negative, showing their depth below sea level.

