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## Why upgrade from Pro 3.5 to Pro 4?

Map Maker Pro 3.5 has been around for sixteen years and is still serving us well. However, version 4 released this year (2016), offers new, useful and user-friendly functionality.

### Keeping pace with Windows

Map Maker Pro is built upon Microsoft Windows. During its lifespan it has evolved to run on Windows 98, 2000, ME, XP, Vista, Windows 7, 8, 8.1. Version 3.5 is still running well on Windows 10 but there will be no further development of this version of Map Maker Pro. The cost of the continual updating and improvements has never been charged to the users. Version 4 has been completely re-written to make the most of the latest developments in computer mapping and is available at a discount price to existing Map Maker licence holders. New licences for Map Maker Pro 4 are still a one-off price, no annual fees.

For comparisons with other mapping packages and the reasons why I recommend Map Maker Pro 4, click [here](#).

### New functionality

You will find a list of the top 10 changes below. One of my favourites is the 'Pan Margin' (Navigate, 'Show Pan Margin'). Whilst drawing, without changing tools, you can now click in this margin and the screen will pan into that direction. This is more than a handy gadget, it is a powerful, time saving tool.

The little North arrow next to the scale bar rotates your view to fit awkward map shapes to the smallest possible paper size. The 'page' tab, shifts from full screen view to page view allowing you to see the map and work on it while it is in page format This is a great new way to envisage a finished map.

Additions to the 'style editor' offer a wider variety of line styles, pattern fills and symbols. The new dedicated symbol editor is very efficient. A style set can now be assigned to the drawing itself or attached to the project and, of course, saved separately. Sharing projects is even easier than before.

Most 'live layer' operations in version 4 are dealt with *in* the project manager and, when the project is saved, the 'live layer' will be saved as a live layer as well - a practical and efficient enhancement.

Drawing interlocking polygons and editing them is approached in a different way in Pro 4 offering an even more efficient way of doing all this compared to Pro 3.5.

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Superfast broadband and faster computers mean that datasets are increasing in size almost without our noticing it. Pro 4 is designed to cope well with these increases.

Although the program has been completely re-written, files created in Pro 3.5 are compatible with version 4. Previous drawings and projects can be opened and, although Pro 4 has new style options, you will find that your previous work will look nearly identical. Maps created in Pro 4 can be opened in version 3.5, though the new style options will not appear. A 3D woodland simulation module is currently under development, a preview can be seen [here](#).

In any complex software glitches and bugs are unavoidable particularly in the early days after a new release, Pro 4 is no exception. Sometimes these are caused by Windows, sometimes it is a Map Maker problem. Like Pro 3.5: try it first on another computer, if the problem persists, send an e-mail to the developers. As per usual: they will do their best to fix it – and promptly.

With this new release, I am convinced that Map Maker, once again, has set a standard and raised the bar. Given the ridiculously low price of Map Maker Pro 4 (still £225 with an upgrade price of £168.75) I think this is pretty good value for money.

Some of Map Maker's tools, have been ahead of the competition with about 13 years. The cutter tool for example, allows you to create sound 'topology' (interlocking polygons). This is absolutely key in serious map making. This advantage is *extraordinary* in this fast moving world of computers and software programs! The Ordnance Survey is *still* struggling with the quality of their topology!

With the many new useful features it is now even easier and faster to make high quality maps and map data. I can recommend upgrading to this new release.

Hanno Koch

PS: On the following pages I list the ten principal differences between version 4 and version 3.5 (taken from the website [www.mapmaker.com](http://www.mapmaker.com))



## The ten principal differences between version 4 and version 3.5

### Attribute data in DRA files

In earlier versions of Map Maker attribute data associated with a DRA file had to be stored in a DBF file or some other external database. In version 4, while you can still link to external data files, the DRA file can contain its own attribute data making data easier to manage – everything can be in one file. DRA files produced in version 4 are still compatible with earlier versions of Map Maker and vice versa.

### Improved styles

There are many more options for styles. The new style files are simple text files making them easier to edit externally or to generate from third party programs. Custom symbols are easier to create in a dedicated symbol editor and are included in the style set rather than as separate files, as was required in earlier versions. Legends are now part of the style set making them easier to transfer between maps. Style sets can include colour “ranges” which were formally separate data filter files. Apart from using style files, style sets can be embedded in DRA files. The project style set is now embedded in the project file.

### Persistent live layer

The live layer is now stored as part of the project file. This means that when you load a project its current live layer is automatically loaded. Similarly you no longer need to remember to save the live layer as a separate operation to saving the project. By default the last project that you were working on is automatically loaded when you start Map Maker. This means that if you have a live layer when you close down Map Maker then when you next start the program you can simply resume where you left off.

### Modify and erase

There are various enhancements to the drawing tools. In particular the polygon tool can now be used in three different modes: draw (default), modify, and erase. When the modify mode is selected then drawing a new polygonal shape, starting in an existing polygon, the result will be the original polygon but modified to include all the area of both the existing polygon and the new shape. This is a lot quicker and easier than moving the vertices of the original polygon one by one. Similarly, the erase mode subtracts the new shape from the original polygon.

### Simpler graphic editing

In earlier versions a double-click with the Edit tool was used to put an object into edit mode. This “edit mode” has now been discarded and the edit tool is used directly to drag and delete vertices as well as introduce new ones. When using the Edit tool the location of nearby vertices is highlighted. The Edit tool can also reposition and rotate captions. The “arrow object” has been discarded as now an arrow is an option associated with all captions. The new on-screen style palette allows you to drag and drop styles and attribute data to assign them to existing objects. Among various new options you can choose to highlight areas where polygons in the live layer overlap.

### Page view

Each project can now be viewed in two different views: map and page. While the map view is for day to day map editing and interrogation, the “page” view is like the earlier page template editor but it lets you see the map as it will appear on the printed page. You can add and edit map furniture and alter the scale and position of the map relative to its frame. By default the page size is the current printer paper size,



however you can specify a larger size – when you come to print, Map Maker will determine how many sheets are required and you can choose to print all or some of them. Earlier versions required a “composition printer driver”, this has been discarded.

### **Lat/Long files viewed without the need to convert**

In earlier versions any data in Latitude and Longitude coordinates, such as GPS data, had first to be converted to projected XY coordinates, compatible with your map. Now you can simply load the GPS data as a layer and Map Maker will automatically translate the data into the correct projected coordinates. The same applies to other lat/long data such as KML (Google Earth) and OSM (Open Street Map) files.

### **Rotated views**

It used to be that north always had to be at the top of the map. You can now rotate the map to any orientation.

### **Save to PDF**

In earlier versions, as with any program, you could save maps to PDF by installing a PDF printer driver and “printing” to file. A disadvantage of this was that translucent polygons generally came out opaque because PDF printer drivers did not support that element of Windows graphics. The new version of Map Maker contains its own PDF writer allowing you simply to save to a PDF file where issues such as translucency are correctly rendered.

### **More formats supported**

Over the years some once common file formats have fallen into disuse and new ones have grown in popularity. Version4 of Map Maker attempts to reflect these changes. For instance, MySQL and MS Server databases can be used for attribute data. While long standing vector formats such as SHP and DXF are supported so too are new standards such as GML, OSM, KML, and GPX.