

# Getting Started with ArcView GIS

Projects are the fundamental organizational units in ArcView GIS. If you are a new ArcView GIS user, developing a systematic approach to creating and managing projects can save you time and avoid problems. Storing utilities, such as scripts or extensions, in a central location and reusing legends are also good strategies. The following suggestions should help you become more productive with ArcView GIS.

## Organize Projects and Data

Before starting any project, take a moment to organize your resources and plan out the structure of the project. Choose names for directories, subdirectories, and files and locate data sources.

1. Use Windows Explorer or another file management program to create a project folder and related subfolders before starting ArcView GIS.
2. If you are using grid data, segregate grid files from other data types. Do not use operating system commands with grid data sets. Rename, copy, or delete grid data sets by using the Data Source Manager that comes with ArcView Spatial Analyst and ArcView 3D Analyst. To avoid conflicts, adopt a conservative naming convention: use lowercase letters and numbers, do not include spaces in file or folder names, limit the name length to eight characters, and don't begin a file or folder name with a number.
3. After opening a blank project, immediately modify the working directory by choosing File>Set the Working Directory and typing the path to your data (e.g., c:\myproject\mydata\). In the dialog, Now ArcView GIS will save files to the specified directory instead of a default temp directory. This eliminates the need to constantly path through directories when saving files and ensures your files are all saved in the same place.
4. Save projects early and often, especially after adding or removing any extensions or adding scripts. Save projects as numbered versions (e.g., geo\_ca1.apr, geo\_ca2.apr) to create backups of your project. Delete older versions as newer ones are added.

## Create a Utilities Folder

Create a Utilities folder for sample or custom scripts, extensions, legends, and other resources such as data conversion programs. This will keep them handy so that you can use them with other projects. Create appropriately named

folders for each script, extension, custom legend, or other resources and keep the readme files or other documentation for these resources together. This strategy is helpful if you need to reload ArcView GIS or transfer files to a new computer.

## Save and Reuse Legends

Once you have developed the perfect legend for a particular type of theme, you can save and reuse it with other similar themes.

## Save Custom Legends


1. Choose Theme>Legend Editor or double-click on the desired theme to open the Legend Editor.
2. Use the Legend Editor to set the classification ranges, colors, and marker symbols for the theme.
3. Click the Save button in the Legend Editor. In the dialog box, navigate to your Utilities folder or some other location and save the custom legend you just created using a lowercase, eight-character name that contains no spaces. Accept the default .avl file extension.

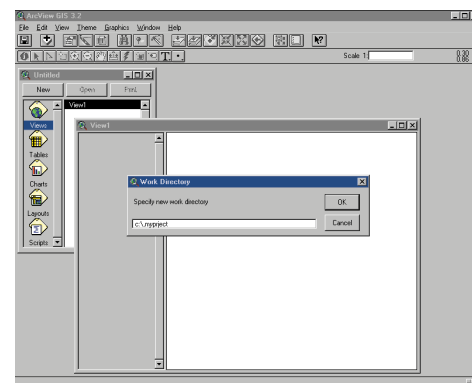
## Apply Custom Legends

1. Apply a custom legend to another theme by opening the Legend Editor for the theme as described in Step 1 in the preceding section. If the custom legend applies marker symbols, the number of classes in the custom legend and the theme must be the same.
2. In the Legend Editor, click on the Load button and navigate to the Utilities or another folder where you have saved the desired legend. Click on OK.
3. To make a custom legend load with a theme, use the Legend Editor to save the legend with exactly the same name as the name for the theme's shapefile and store the legend file in the same directory as the shapefile. When ArcView GIS loads the theme, it will automatically apply a legend with the same name to the theme and load any necessary standard palettes.

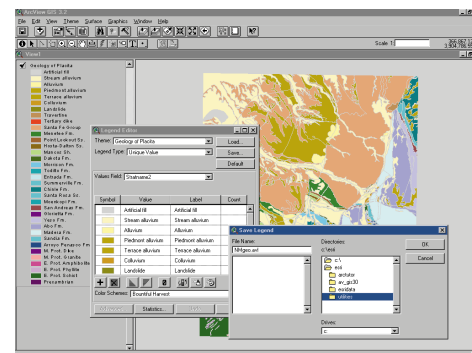
## Sample Scripts and Extensions

When adding sample scripts or extensions, always copy the sample script or extension and then add it to the program files. Keep the original samples in the Samples folder in the ArcView GIS directory or your Utilities folder.

For more information on using ArcView GIS, read *Getting to Know ArcView GIS*, available from ESRI Press through the GIS Store. 



*Set the Working directory for a new project to save time and make sure all files for the project are saved to the same place.*



*Save custom legends for use with other projects.*