Making Pleasing Screenshots from ESRI Software

Screenshots that have been correctly and carefully created enhance articles, tutorials, and presentations. The best results are obtained by considering the purpose of the image, setting up the shot, and using a method of screen capture that will produce reliable and reproducible results.

Getting Ready

Decide what each screenshot should tell the reader. Is it demonstrating GIS use in a particular industry or illustrating a process? If it is a process, sometimes a single image will not communicate the message. When you are showing a process or highlighting two or more conditions, several screenshots may be required. For best results, capture dialogs and windows containing tables, charts, or locator maps separately.

Select an appropriate project. The data used in the project should relate to purpose of the screenshot and you should have specific permission to use that data or it should be data that can be used without restriction such as the sample data that comes with ESRI software products.

Before choosing a method for capturing a screenshot, ask yourself the following questions:

➡ Is the projection appropriate?
➡ Will the map scale show sufficient detail in the area of interest?
➡ Are the colors pleasing?
➡ Is the symbology effective?
➡ Is the application interface set to a neutral color scheme (e.g., Windows Standard for Windows 2000 or Silver or Olive for Windows XP).
➡ For Windows applications, is the Taskbar hidden? Are any unnecessary toolbars closed?
➡ Does the project have an appropriate name? Do data layers have descriptive names?
➡ Does the Table of Contents supply information to the reader? If not, hide it.

Once the shot has been refined, the choice of capture method depends on the GIS product used. For maps in either Data View or Layout View, the Export option in ArcGIS ArcMap usually produces the best results. For other screen images on the Windows platform, the Paint program that comes with the operating system provides a quick, easy, and no-cost method. Third party screen capture software can be used for other platforms or when additional functionality, such as automation or additional file formats, is desired.

Exporting Maps From ArcGIS

If you are exporting from ArcMap, instead of creating a screen capture, you can export an image showing a map extent (Data View) or a map layout (Layout View). The core functionality supplied with ArcMap generates files suitable for high quality reproduction. Procedures for exporting maps using ArcGIS are covered by the following description.

1. After completing and saving the map, make sure the map is in the desired view for output (i.e., Data View or Layout View).

2. Choose File > Export Map. In the Explorer dialog box, choose a file format from the drop-down box. Although ArcGIS will output files in many formats, TIF (Tagged Image File) is the preferred choice. TIF is the most widely supported and versatile bitmap format.

3. If the map is a layout, check the box next to Clip Output to Graphics Extent to capture only the map sheet.

4. Click on the Options button to set additional parameters. Under Options for the TIF format, set the resolution at 300 dots per inch (dpi). Click OK.

5. In the Export dialog box navigate to the desired location for saving the map and click the Export button.
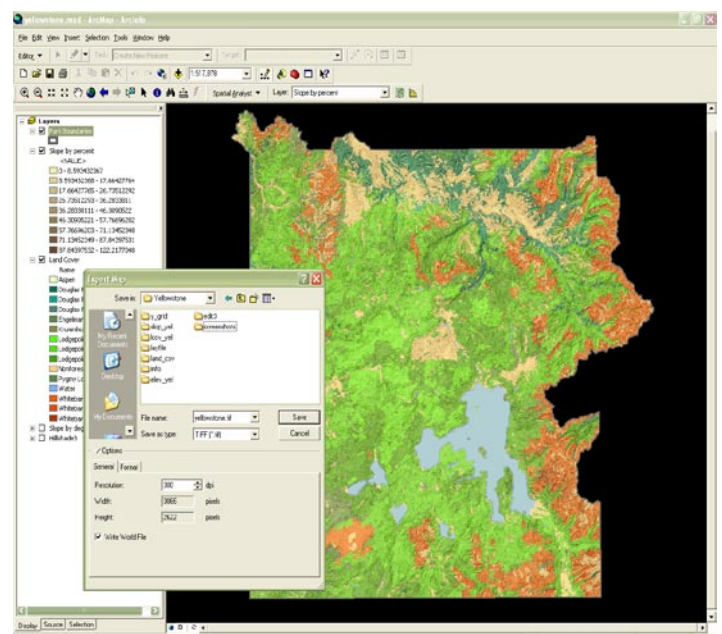
Choose the TIF format when exporting a map from ArcGIS. Set the resolution to 300 dpi.

Using Paint for Windows Screenshots

This procedure will work with ESRI software running on any version of Windows.
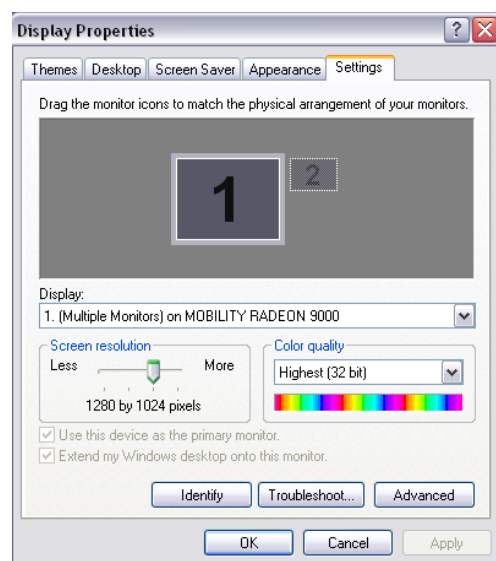
1. Compose the map or other images you want to capture.
2. Right-click anywhere on the desktop and choose Properties from the context menu. Click on the Settings tab and set the screen area and color the highest level the computer can comfortably handle. A minimum setting for the screen area is 1024 by 768 pixels.
3. Click on the Appearance tab and click on the Color Scheme drop-down. Select Windows Standard for Windows 2000 or Silver or Olive for Windows XP. Click Apply and OK to close the Properties dialog box.
4. Close all but the target GIS application. Right-click on the taskbar. In the Taskbar and Start Menu Properties dialog box, check the box next to Auto Hide. Click OK.
5. Open Windows Paint by choosing Start > Programs > Accessories > Paint.
6. Make sure the scrollbars in the Paint window are pushed completely to the left and top of the screen. Minimize Paint.
7. Make the desired GIS application active. Make any necessary adjustments to the map's symbology, text, and/or extent necessary to ensure a pleasing effect.
8. Hold down the Control button and press the Prt Scn/SysRq button to copy the screen to the Windows clipboard.
9. Maximize Paint and paste the image into a blank window by holding the Control button down and pressing the letter V or choosing Edit > Paste from the menu.
10. Use the tools in Paint to crop or clean up the image, if necessary.
11. Save the image with 24-bit color as a bitmap (BMP) format file.

Right-click on the Windows desktop and choose Properties from the context menu. Click on the Settings tab and set the screen area and color.
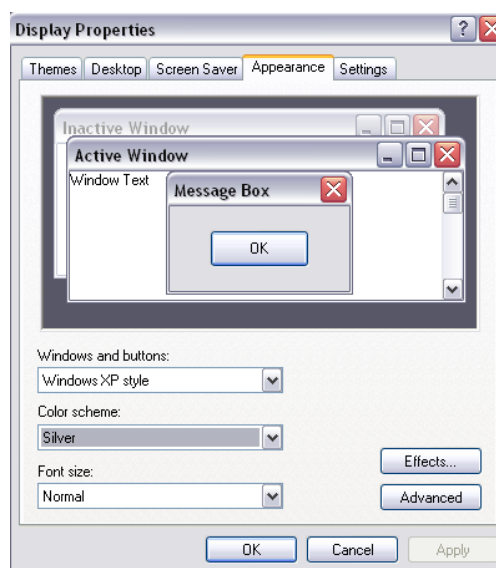
Using Third Party Software

Several readily available programs either specialize in or include screen capture functionality. Jasco's Paint Shop Pro is easy to use, saves files in a variety of formats, and is relatively inexpensive. Hyperionics' HyperSnap-DX is a dedicated screen capture program with several capture styles and export formats. TechSmith's SnagIt is also a dedicated screen capture program that can save not only images but also editable text and video.

Product	URL
Paint Shop Pro	www.corel.com
HyperSnap-DX	www.hyperionics.com
Snagit	www.techsmith.com

Sources of third-party screen capture software.

Click the Appearance tab and select Windows Standard as the Scheme.