

Export to KML Extension Version 2.5 documentation

description

Export to KML is an extension developed for ArcMap 9.x by the City of Portland, Bureau of Planning. The extension allows ArcMap users to export any point, line, or polygon dataset in "keyhole markup language" [KML] format for viewing in the free Google Earth data viewer.

For more information on KML, please refer to the Google Code KML documentation:
<http://code.google.com/apis/kml/documentation/>

One note: This is a free product and is not intended to replace the commercial KML tools available for ArcGIS. While I will continue to maintain and improve the extension's functionality, there are limits to what I am able to do without a substantial investment of time and resources. If you need more sophistication than this tool offers, I encourage you to check out one of the commercial products.

One other note: I want to acknowledge all of the users who have reported errors and sent suggestions on how to improve the extension. You've made this a much more useful tool... thanks.

install/uninstall

You must have local **administrative** rights on your computer to install the *Export to KML* ArcMap extension. Also note that the directory where the installation files are stored cannot have any spaces in the pathname (or the installation will fail).

Important Note: If you are running **Windows Vista**, you must run the install script from a command prompt with administrative privileges (due to differences in the security model between Vista and XP). There are a couple of ways to do this:

1. navigate to "Start" > "All Programs" > "Accessories", right-click on "Command Prompt" and select "Run as Administrator" from the menu that appears. Navigate to the install batch file and run it from the command line;
2. launch an administrative command prompt in the "Start Search" box by typing "cmd" (no quotes) and press CTRL-Shift-Enter when the "cmd.exe" or "Command Prompt" appears in the list. Navigate to the install batch file and run it from the command line.

Many thanks to Johan in Louisiana for figuring this out!

Export to KML Extension Version 2.5 documentation

Make sure you have the latest version of Google Earth installed (Google Earth can be downloaded from <http://earth.google.com/>).

Open the 'Export_to_KML_{version number}.zip' archive and specify a location for the files to be extracted. *Note that an 'Export_to_KML' folder will be created in the specified location.* If you are upgrading from an earlier version of 'Export to KML', extract the files from the downloaded zip file containing the new version into the same directory as the old version (and allow the old directory and files to be overwritten).

Double-click the batch file 'ExporttoKML_INSTALL.bat' to register exporttokml.dll and to add the appropriate registry keys. Open ArcMap, then browse to *Tools – Extensions* and click on the checkbox next to the "Export to KML" extension. Then browse to *View – Toolbars* and click the "Export to KML" toolbar to make it visible. Note that the "Export to KML" button on the toolbar will not be available until at least one layer is added to ArcMap.

If the "Export to KML" toolbar is not listed in ArcMap after running the installation batch file, you will need to also register the extension directly from ArcMap. In ArcMap, select *Tools – Customize*, then press the *Add from File* button. Browse to the 'ExporttoKML.dll' file that was extracted from the downloaded zip archive and select *Open*. The "Export to KML" toolbar will then be added to the list of toolbars. Browse to *View – Toolbars* and click the "Export to KML" toolbar to make it visible. Again, the "Export to KML" button on the toolbar will not be available until at least one layer is added to ArcMap.

To remove the extension, double-click the batch file 'ExporttoKML_UNINSTALL.bat'. If you want to be absolutely sure the extension was completely uninstalled, check to make sure all component categories were removed using "Categories.exe" in C:\Program Files\ArcGIS\Bin. Just manually remove any of the following entries that remain:

- › prjExporttoKML.clsCustomGXFilter from 'ESRI GX Object Filters'
- › prjExporttoKML.clsExporttoKML from 'ESRI Mx Commands'
- › prjExporttoKML.clsExporttoKMLExtension from 'ESRI Mx Extensions'
- › prjExporttoKML.clsExportToKMLToolbar from 'ESRI Mx CommandBars'

what's new in version 2.5

- › styles are now stored in the KML document rather than in each individual feature, greatly improving the efficiency of the output KML and the ability to customize it

Export to KML Extension Version 2.5 documentation

- › implements Schema and ExtendedData tags to improve the transferability of the output KML
- › much better support for HTML layer and feature balloon styles and descriptions
- › now supports coordinate system transformations
- › now exports domain values instead of codes
- › "snippets" now supported

what was new in version 2.4

- › implements Schema and ExtendedData tags and balloon styles (greatly improving the efficiency and transferability of the output KML)
- › better support for HTML layer and feature balloon styles and descriptions
- › selected attributes from the GIS database can now be added to and stored in the output KML using KML's "schema" and "ExtendedData" tags
- › labels and information points can now be vertically offset from exported features
- › layer and features descriptions can now be saved as and imported from files
- › feature "names" are now independent of the feature labels
- › a horizontal "shift" (in X/Y coordinates) can now be applied to exported data
- › supports KML "time stamps" (for time animations); formats date/time formats to Google Earth XML standard
- › labels & information points can now be forced to fall inside polygons

what was new in version 2.3

- › graduated marker symbols are now supported
- › multi-part features are now supported; multi-part features are labeled individually
- › the feature name can now be explicitly defined as one of the layer attributes (in "Labeling and description options"); features in the output KML are sorted on this attribute
- › there is now an option to include point labels as either part of the feature or as a separate label layer
- › fixed issue with commas in European operating systems
- › bunch of other bug fixes, minor tweaks and improvements

main form controls

select layer to export

Export to KML Extension Version 2.5 documentation

Select the point, polyline, or polygon dataset containing the features you want to export to KML format. The layer can be in any ArcGIS format – shapefile, coverage, or GDB. The layer must have a defined spatial reference (it will be reprojected into WGS84 geographic coordinates if necessary). By default, only the selected features will be exported (see *options form controls*). Also note that you will be prompted to specify a “coordinate system transformation” method if converting from a coordinate system different than WGS84 or NAD83 (which are functionally equivalent).

group and color features using the layer’s symbology

If checked, the ArcMap layer symbology is used by the output KML. Symbology can be “single symbol”, “unique values”, “graduated colors” or “graduated symbols” (*multiple unique value fields and class normalization are not currently supported, and the symbol field cannot be in a “joined” table.*) If using a unique value or graduated symbology, the output KML will be “grouped” by the symbol attribute. Each symbol category will have its own folder, name, and symbology. For example, a building polygon dataset could be grouped on an attribute identifying the building use (residential, commercial, etc.). Note that because Google Earth does not currently support hatching and other complex symbology, only the colors and line widths of symbols are used by the output KML.

select an attribute for labeling features (*optional*)

An attribute in the GIS layer that will be used to create feature labels in the output KML. If features are being labeled, this is also the field that will be used to name the individual the features in Google Earth.

select an attribute that represents the height (*optional*)

Specifies an attribute to use for setting each feature’s vertical height. The height of true 3D features, such as 3D shapefiles, can be set using their z-value. Height attributes must be numeric.

height attribute units (*optional – only enabled if an height attribute is selected*)

The linear units of the height attributes, either feet or meters. This ensures that the height or elevation values are in the correct format for Google Earth, which uses meters.

Export to KML Extension Version 2.5 documentation

extrude features based on the height (*optional – only enabled if a height attribute is selected*)

Extrudes features based on their height. All feature types can be extruded in Google Earth – points, polylines, and polygons. By default, features are extruded using the KML altitude mode “relative to ground”, meaning the extrusion value is added to the feature’s surface elevation if terrain is being used, or added to 0 if no terrain is being used (the altitude mode can be changed on the “options” form). For example, a building polygon dataset could be extruded using a field that contains the height the building. The output KML will extrude each building from the ground to its specified height, making them appear 3-dimensional when the view is tilted.

name and location of the output KML

Shows the file name and directory location of the KML file that will be created by the export. The user must browse to the desired directory using the “browse” button, and specify a file name (the .kml extension will be added automatically). Existing KML files can be overwritten.

options form controls

export options

export only the selected features

If checked, only the selected features are exported. If no features are selected, all features are exported. Checked by default.

create Google Maps compatible layer/feature descriptions **new!**

If checked, all layer and feature descriptions will be exported using the KML <description> element, rather than <schema> elements. <BalloonStyles> will also not be exported. This is a much less efficient way to produce the KML, and makes it less distributable (especially among GIS systems), but it will make the KML – at least in theory – Google Maps compatible.

Export to KML Extension Version 2.5 documentation

Keep in mind that many KML and HTML elements are not supported in Google Maps, so you will need to keep your options on export to a minimum. If you have problems, export it again, and make it simpler.

output KML layer name

The name of the layer that will be displayed when the KML is opened in Google Earth. Same as output file name by default.

*output KML layer "snippet" **new!***

The layer snippet is a short description of the layer that appears under the layer name in Google Earth. In theory, you can make this as long as you want, but in practice you should keep it to 1 or 2 lines. *HTML is not supported in snippets.*

use the layer name above as the title of the KML layer description

If checked, the layer name will be shown at the top of the layer description "balloon" in bold (when the layer is "clicked" in Google Earth). Checked by default.

KML layer transparency

The percent transparency of the output KML layer. 0% by default.

KML layer description

The description of the layer that will be displayed when the KML is opened in Google Earth. The user will see the full description when they click on the name of the KML layer. The layer description can include HTML markup and hyperlinks. Each of these items is described briefly below:

- › using HTML tags HTML is fully supported.
- › adding hyperlinks – hyperlinks can be added to the description without tags; any valid URL string is automatically converted to a hyperlink to that URL (e.g. <http://www.google.com>).

Export to KML Extension Version 2.5 documentation

"Save" will save the current layer description out to a "KML layer description" HTML file. The description can be imported from the HTML file using the "Import" button.

apply horizontal shift to features

Allows user to manually shift the output features in the exported KML file by X units along the x-axis and Y units along the y-axis. Units are determined by the exported layer's projection. A shift may be necessary in certain areas if, for example, the Google Earth imagery is not accurately registered.

labeling and feature description options

apply feature colors to labels

If checked, the feature labels will be the same color as the feature they label. If unchecked, all labels will be white.

label features with empty or <null> values

If checked, features with empty or "Null" label attribute values will be labeled as "-NULL-". If unchecked, these features will not be labeled. The default is unchecked.

export labels as a separate KML layer (optional for point features only)

If checked, point feature labels will be exported as a separate KML layer (or "folder"), meaning the labels are independent of the features and can be turned on and off. The default is checked.

select an attribute for naming the features

An attribute in the GIS layer that will be used to name the features in the output KML. By default, the same attribute used to symbolize the layer in ArcMap will be used to create the feature names (or the label attribute if no categorical symbology is being applied to the output KML). The KML features will be sorted on the feature name attribute in ascending order. This is also the text that will be displayed in bold at the top of the feature description.

Export to KML Extension Version 2.5 documentation

force labels and information points to fall inside polygons

If checked, polygon labels and "information points" will be forced to fall within the boundary of polygon features (instead of the weighted center, which may be outside the polygon). Note that checking this option may slow processing time considerably. May not function properly with old version of ArcGIS (9.0 & 9.1).

feature snippet **new!**

The feature snippet is a short description of the feature that appears under the feature name in Google Earth. In theory, you can make this as long as you want, but in practice you should keep it to 1 or 2 lines. *HTML is not supported in snippets.*

The feature snippets can include attribute values. Double-click the attribute name in the "layer attributes" box to add an attribute value to the description. The "Add ALL Attributes" button will add all of the feature attributes to the description. *Attribute names must be surrounded by brackets.*

feature description

The feature description option allows users to build a "description expression" that will be used to describe each of the output KML features. The description appears in Google Earth when either a) a feature name is clicked in the "Places" pane, b) the feature's "information point" is clicked (assuming they were created), or c) the feature is clicked while holding down the CTRL key.

The feature descriptions can include attribute values, HTML markup, and hyperlinks. Each of these items is described briefly below:

- › attribute values in the description – double-click the attribute name in the "layer attributes" box to add an attribute value to the description. The "Add ALL Attributes" button will add all of the feature attributes to the description. *Attribute names must be surrounded by brackets.*
- › using HTML tags – HTML is fully supported.

Export to KML Extension Version 2.5 documentation

- › adding hyperlinks – hyperlinks can be added to the description without tags; any valid URL string is automatically converted to a hyperlink to that URL (e.g. <http://www.google.com>).

“Save” will save the current feature description out to a “KML feature description” HTML file. The description can be imported from the HTML file using the “Import” button.

Create an “information point” for each feature

Creates points in the output KML that sit on top of each feature. These points can be selected (“clicked”) in Google Earth to display the feature description. The points make it easier, especially in complex 3D datasets, to select and display the feature description.

3D options

altitude mode

Determines the KML altitude mode if specifying feature heights:

- › “*Relative to ground*” sets the altitude of the element feature to the actual ground elevation of particular location. If, for example, a feature with a height of 9 meters is set over a location where the ground elevation is 10 meters above sea level, the elevation of the feature is 19 meters. Only available if a height is being assigned to features.
- › “*Absolute*” sets the altitude of the element exactly above sea level, regardless of the actual elevation of the terrain beneath the feature. For example, if the height of a feature is 10 meters, and the terrain below is 5 meters above sea level, the feature will appear elevated above the terrain by 5 meters. Only available if a height is being assigned to features.
- › “*Clamped to ground*” drapes all elements on the Google Earth surface (either a flat plane or the surface if terrain is being displayed). This is the default altitude mode if features are not being assigned a height.

surface offset attribute

If heights are being assigned to features, a surface offset can be specified. Note that the offset will still be extruded if the extrusion option is selected.

Export to KML Extension Version 2.5 documentation

surface offset constant value for features

If heights are being assigned to features, a surface constant surface offset can be specified. The surface offset will be added to the values of the surface offset attribute if one has been specified. Note that the offset will still be extruded if the extrusion option is selected.

surface offset constant value for labels

If features are being labeled, a constant surface offset for the labels can be specified.

surface offset constant value for features

If "information points" are being created, a constant surface offset for the points can be specified. There will be a "leader" line from the information point to the surface.

time options

select an attribute that represents the "start time" of each feature

You can specify an attribute to use for setting the start – or "begin" – time of each feature. Adding start and/or end times will enable the "time slider" in Google Earth, allowing you to do time series animations.

select an attribute that represents the "end time" of each feature

You can specify an attribute to use for setting the end time of each feature. Adding start and/or end times will enable the "time slider" in Google Earth, allowing you to do time series animations.

format all dates and times to the Google Earth XML standard

Converts all date and time attributes to the XML standard time (YYYY-MM-DD HH:MM:SS) format required by Google Earth. For more information on Google Earth time/date formats, refer to the online KML documentation. This option is enabled by default and should only be disabled if you have a specific reason to override the formatting.

Export to KML Extension Version 2.5 documentation

database options

export GIS database "schema" to google earth kml file

You can include the GIS database "schema" – or attribute item definitions and values – in the output Google Earth KML file. This is important if you want users to be able to import the KML back into GIS. Any attributes used in the "feature description" will be added to the output KML schema. If no "feature description" is specified in the "Labeling and Description Options", the schema attributes will be used as the feature description.

about "export to kml"

check for updates

Opens the ArcScripts homepage for "Export to KML". The latest version of the script can be downloaded and installed from here. I recommend that users check the website regularly (once every month or so, more often when a new version is first released).

known issues

- › There is an upper limit of features that you can export. All the information about the features you are exporting is temporarily stored in memory, rather than writing it out to a temporary file on the hard drive, so the number of features you are able to export is limited by the amount of RAM available.
- › joined table attributes are not currently available to the extension; this issue will be addressed in a future version. To access joined table fields, you will need to export the data to a shapefile before exporting.
- › there are some issues with converting GIS data that is in certain projections that causes the resulting KML to display incorrectly in Google Earth. This is a glitch with ArcObjects "on-the-fly" reprojection functionality. If you are having issues, reproject your data manually (in ArcToolbox) to the Google Earth coordinate system before exporting. Google Earth uses latitude/longitude coordinates based on the WGS84 datum (in ArcGIS, this is known as "geographic coordinate system", or GCS).

Export to KML Extension Version 2.5 documentation

- › an error occurs with some types of SDE data. If you run into this error, export the SDE data to a shapefile before exporting.
- › "GIS server" layers are not currently supported. If server layers are in your mxd, the "Export to KML" extension will work, though very slowly.
- › "multipoint" features are not currently supported.
- › proportional symbols are not currently supported.
- › the "force all label and information points to fall inside polygons" may cause errors in older versions of ArcGIS (9.1 & 9.0). Use 9.2 with the latest service packs.
- › NASA World Wind 1.4 users will need to manually modify all output KMLs by opening the KML in a text editor and changing "2.2" in the second line to "2.0", then saving it. World Wind only works with KML version 2.0. It does not support KML versions 2.1 and 2.2.

bug fixes

version 2.5

date	summary	description
5/28/2009	Crashed if a layer had the same name as a group layer it was in	Modified code to test for "featurelayers" when selecting by layer name
5/14/2009	Fixed issue with exporting layers created from selected sets	No longer exports the entire layer
7/29/08	Fixed minor issue with date/time formatting	Modified code to allow for "T" designation within date/time fields
6/11/08	"True curve" polyline features were not exported	Modified code to "densify" true curves into segments before exporting

Export to KML Extension Version 2.5 documentation

6/11/08	When exporting data with a different coordinate system, output features were not correctly registered	Added support for coordinate system transformations
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version 2.4

date	summary	description
2/6/08	Modified function to handle special characters in KML "styles"	Exported KML would not open if non-alphanumeric characters were used in the layer symbology (e.g., ">", "&")
1/4/08	Fixed issue with info points and multi-part geometries	With multi-part geometries, the info points were being assigned to the wrong features in some cases
11/20/07	Fixed minor issue with class breaks value inconsistency	There was a slight inconsistency between class break values converted from strings and their numeric counterparts; it's fixed

version 2.3

date	summary	description
5/10/07	Circles and curves not exporting from geodatabases	"Densified" true circles and Bezier curves into individual segments for export to KML
3/27/07	Output KMLs not displaying correctly in Google Maps API	Removed unnecessary leading commas before line and polygon coordinates
9/7/06	<i>Major</i> error introduced at version 2.3.2 was corrected – extruded height values were bogus	Apologies to everyone who had to deal with the confusion this one caused; fixed error in code to correctly extrude features
8/14/06	"information points" all describe the last feature exported	Fixed error in code to correctly export individual feature descriptions

Export to KML Extension Version 2.5 documentation

8/8/06	export failure with topologically-incorrect polygons	Modified code to clean polygon topology on export using IPolygon4.SimplifyEx
8/8/06	European operating systems 3D issue	modified code to correctly extrude 3D features on European (comma-based) operating systems

Export to KML Extension Version 2.5 documentation

disclaimers

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contact

Please feel free to contact me to report bugs or bug fixes, request additional functionality, suggest improvements, or with any other questions. The download includes all of the original VB source code. Please keep me in the loop on any improvements or fixes you make. Enjoy!

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