

A GUIDE TO REVIEWING MAPS

AND HOW TO BUILD FOR MAP REVIEW

Version 2

[1. Introduction](#)

[2. Mapping](#)

[2.1 GPS](#)

[2.2 Map Names](#)

[2.3 Indicate purpose](#)

[3. Reviewing](#)

[3.1 Watch the GPS](#)

[3.2 How to judge scenery](#)

[3.3 CP-Placements and Cuts](#)

[3.4 Dealing with feedback](#)

[4. Conclusion](#)

1. Introduction

First let me introduce myself to those who don't know me. My name is Raveout and I've been playing Trackmania since ESWC (2006). Mapping was always the most fun and interesting part of the game for me and probably always will be. At the time of writing this, 16 years of experience didn't make me one of the best drivers in any style or on any surface, but what it did is teach me how to properly calculate and judge a map no matter the style in a fair manner. What I mean by fair is that even though I'm not a master of any style and surface I can see how a map is supposed to be played. I consider myself to be an above average player in all styles except for ice and fullspeed. My goal for this guide is to lay out a fundamental way on how to judge the basic quality of any map and how to give feedback in a way the mappers can appreciate.

2. Mapping

As a mapper there are multiple ways to increase the chances of getting constructive feedback. In this part I will try to explain what makes a map easy to understand and how to review even if it's not the favourite style of the judge, such as a GPS, specific map names and clear indication on the server what your intentions for the map are (in case it's not intended for TotD). The last point might change if Nadeo decides to add different review queues depending on the maps purpose.

2.1 GPS

GPS is Trackmanias built-in form of navigation, although built-in is a bit overstated since mappers have to implement it themselves inside the media tracker of their map. It isn't much work to do and that's why I recommend every single mapper to include a GPS on almost any map that's not specifically designed around figuring out the way or trick to use (i.e. RPG-Maps, Trial, Kacky, LoL-Maps that use specific mechanics that need to be found out).

On the review servers there is a very limited amount of time to test a map. 3 minutes to be exact, which is far from enough time to learn the map properly and understand all angles of it. That is where GPS comes in. No matter the skill-level of either mapper or player, a GPS is an essential tool for seeing how a map is intended to be driven. Even if the mapper is a beginner player, a GPS can hold many different values. When I see a GPS on a map that is driven by a beginner player I instantly know not to express my feedback in high skill level language and to approach it from a point where I try to tell the mapper to improve certain driving skills before attempting specific map styles. What I can see too is exactly what part of the map the mapper himself has a hard time driving and can give feedback on how to learn specific techniques that when applied make the map uncalculated. The same is true in reverse, if the driver is not skilled enough yet to take the right lines, keep enough speed or similar, then a GPS can tell them how to do turns or jumps they are struggling with.

** How to create a GPS: [Basic Tutorial](#) by [MattDTO](#)

2.2 Map Names

As a mapper you should carefully consider how to name your map for the review server in case it is not a finished map. **This does not apply to finished maps**

I suggest naming a map according to the specific part that needs to be tested and provided feedback for. Example:

Finished map:	Map Name
Route test:	Map Name (Route Test)
Scenery test:	Map Name (Scenery Test)
Specific test:	Map Name (Middle Jump Transition Test)

This greatly helps in getting feedback for exactly the parts you need feedback on. Almost every time I visit the review server there is someone complaining about the lack of scenery on a barebones route, or the length of a map that is far from finished. This leads to unusable feedback as well as bad votes on an otherwise great map.

Once you have finished the map and are ready for final review, remember to visit your player page (<https://players.trackmania.com/>) or in-game through “Map Review -> My submitted maps” and delete the unfinished versions from the map review section.

2.3 Indicate purpose

Another thing I see commonly happen on the review servers is that maps that are clearly not TotD maps to experienced players get mistakenly reviewed as such by non experienced players. That's why I recommend telling people what feedback you expect and even the use case of the map at the start in the review server. This way everyone knows that it might not be intended as a TotD, but just for fun or something else. I know it's a bad feeling to get your map trashed because it doesn't fit TotD, although not fitting TotD was the intention.

3. Reviewing

Reviewing maps in Trackmania is an important feature and everybody should be able to participate in it. To ensure everyone on the review server enjoys their time no matter if they are a reviewer or mapper, there are some basics you should follow. First of all, **NEVER** harass anybody for any reason. This should go without saying, but sadly there are always people looking for a fight whether it's in-game or not. Always try to give your feedback in as polite ways as possible. There is nothing more disheartening than being torn to pieces by "feedback" that's just meant to make fun of or harass the mapper. Always be respectful and call out unrespectful behaviour when you see it.

With that out of the way, let's get started learning how to review maps from an objective point of view.

You might ask yourself why objectivity is important in the first place and why you should consider voting positively on a map you personally know you wouldn't enjoy. There is a simple answer to that question: Just because you don't enjoy a map, doesn't make it a bad map. There are some basic things that you can judge even if you do not like the specific style the map is built in. I for example do not like to play fullspeed maps, because i personally have more fun on tech maps. That doesn't mean i shouldn't vote at all and certainly it doesn't mean i have to hate the map just because it's not my preferred style. But how do you judge the map then you might ask? It's quite simple:

3.1 Watch the GPS

or how to judge a route

If the way to take is not immediately clear, or you struggle to get a good run in, make the best use of the 3 minutes you have to form your opinion on the map by watching the GPS. Most of the time a GPS run is a great indicator on how the map is intended to be driven and if there is a nice flow to the map. It is hard on many maps to get the right lines in 3 minutes so that you can experience the flow of a map for yourself. From the GPS, you can gather enough information to judge if the map has a certain flow, if the author is capable of driving the map himself fast and fluidly and if there are turns that obviously don't fit.

In case you are a beginner and the GPS is driven by an experienced player, try to learn from it. See what they are doing to get as fast as possible. It should be clear from watching a good player drive a map if it's flowy or if the flow breaks at certain points. Also watching the GPS gives you a great reference to mention in your

feedback. If you see the GPS drifting a long time losing multiple gears in a single turn, for example, it's obvious that this turn might be breaking the flow as you are killing a lot of momentum in a single turn. In that case you could for example tell the mapper to consider using an "Engine Off" block or an uphill section to reduce the speed before the turn, or use multiple turns that progressively get tighter to get rid of excess speed. Try to view the map from the mapper's perspective and see if you can find out why it was built in a certain way. Maybe you missed something or the mapper did not think of something, etc.

If you are an experienced player, you should still watch the GPS first. It lets you see a full run and for an experienced player that should be enough to judge the map.

If there is no GPS, reviewing a map gets substantially harder, as fast learning is a must to properly understand a map in 3 minutes. That's why I would always recommend doing a GPS in maps even if it's just a route test.

Please refrain from downvoting a map just because there is no GPS tho, the map author might have a specific reason for not including a GPS, or maybe not even know how to do it. Instead just link them to a GPS tutorial if they are interested.

3.2 How to judge scenery

There is actually not that much to say about scenery from an "artistic" point of view. There are only 2 kinds of "artistic" scenery in Trackmania. Existing and Non-Existing. It does not matter in any way if the scenery is made in blender and features exotic worlds like "[Myth Odasyne](#)" or is just simple vanilla scenery like "[Aneke 10](#)" for example. The only fact about "artistic" scenery that matters is that maps with 0 scenery feel flat and sometimes a bit boring, and maps with scenery are a bit more exciting to play. Things to look out for in scenery are, that there aren't any parts that are too dark so you can't see the way, unnecessarily tight parts that make you feel claustrophobic and distracting objects such as moving blocks too close to the route. Take a look at the map in Cam 7 (Numpad 7) and fly around **along the route**, look at it from the driving perspective and look for areas that might have missing scenery, flickering or FPS issues. It usually is bad practice to build scenery that blocks the view of upcoming turns. If you can't see where you have to go it's usually a good thing to make the author aware of it, since mapping bias is a thing. As a mapper you built the route from ground up and therefore you know instinctively where to go and might not even realise that you built a blind turn.

3.3 CP-Placements and Cuts

I personally like to vote on maps regardless of cuts. But it is essential to make the mapper aware of any unintended cuts. If the mapper is AFK or is not responding in chat, vote 1*, if the mapper is responding, tell them where the cut is and vote on the route as it is intended. Over the years I spent mapping, I learned how to mitigate the possibility for cuts to a huge extent. Best practice is from my experience to place a checkpoint every 5-10 seconds. If in doubt just place additional CPs. It is always better to have too many, than too few CPs.

3.4 Dealing with feedback

When giving feedback, remember to always be polite and try to understand the other side. Explain in simple terms and most importantly, **NEVER BE TOXIC**. There will always be people that think they build the best maps in existence no matter what. The best you can do about that is to just ignore it. People giving criticism so harsh it gets toxic, often won't allow criticism on their own maps because they think they are the best. Just leave them be, there will always be people acting in bad faith (@Nadeo please give the option to block people, thank you).

When you see (especially beginners) giving feedback that is obviously wrong, correct them in a polite way and educate multiple persons at once in the process. In the end, most of us mappers and reviewers just want to improve in our craft. It is hard to get better when you are isolated in your own bubble without any outside help or feedback. That is exactly why I hope this guide will help you bring across the most important parts of your feedback in a way the mappers can appreciate and implement.

A great resource to read on how to critique as shared by nj: <https://howtocrit.com/>

4. Conclusion

If you read this far, you should now have a basic idea of what makes a good map. To be honest this is not the guide to the perfect map, but a passable one. I use these guidelines as a basic tool for voting and giving feedback. If a map ticks all the boxes lined out in this guide I usually vote 3-5 stars and if not 1 or 2 stars.

The most valuable thing you can give a mapper is good feedback. Without good feedback mappers have a hard time improving. Please do not join the review server and tell people to give up mapping, because they built a bad map. I have mapped for 16 years and still learn new things week by week. The perfect map / mapper will never exist. Encourage another to keep on learning new things, new styles, try out new ideas and most importantly HAVE FUN MAPPING & REVIEWING! If you don't enjoy your time on the review server for whatever reason, leave and come back another time. You never know when you will come across your new favourite map.

I sincerely hope this guide can help mappers and reviewers alike to get along well and have fun creating together. Good Luck and Have Fun!

Happy Mapping,
Rave out.

Special thanks for feedback and proof reading to:
Berzerk | Schlumpy | Neon | Scarzor | Eyebo