

Contours

Civil Engineering

Lines of equal height, and what they say.

The spacing gives slope; the shape gives landform.

Rules they obey

A contour never splits or crosses another

It closes on itself or leaves the sheet

Close spacing means a steep slope

Wide spacing means gentle ground

Every fifth line is usually indexed

Shapes to read

A V pointing uphill is a valley

A V pointing downhill is a ridge or spur

Concentric closed rings are a hill

Rings with hachures are a hollow

Straight parallel lines mean earthworks

Educational reference. Contour interval and survey accuracy limit how much detail a plan can honestly claim.