

Chapter 1: How to create your first map

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Once you have your setting and purpose in mind, creating a map in AutoREALM is simple. But before designing, you must set up AutoREALM to fit your needs.

Setting your background

Before committing to designing your maps, it is important to set AutoREALM up so that the design you create matches the design you need. For example, not all games use the same grid style.

Dungeons and Dragons, for instance, uses square grids for gameplay purposes, while other games may use hexes. If you are creating a country or town map, you may not want there to be a grid layout at all.

Modifying the grid in AutoREALM uses the tools found in the Graph Paper Toolbar. To learn more about the Graph Paper Toolbar, see *“Graph paper”* on page 43.

To set your grid style

1. Locate the Graph Paper Toolbar.
2. Select the icon that depicts the background you wish to use.

The AutoREALM canvas automatically updates depending on the icon you have chosen.

AutoREALM has more options for customizing your grid layout, such as adding a secondary grid and changing the appearance of the grid lines.

To add a secondary grid

1. Select the **Secondary Grid Size** entry field.
2. Enter the size of your secondary grid.

Another grid displays on top of the existing one.

Note: You can also do this by pressing the up or down arrows to increase or decrease the grid size.

When the secondary grid appears, it will create an area based on the number entered. Grids appear as solid lines by default, but this can easily be changed to suit your purposes.

To change the appearance of the grid

1. Select the first dropdown menu in the Graph Paper Toolbar.
2. Select the appearance you want for your grid layout.

Note: The first dropdown menu changes the appearance of the primary grid, while the second changes the secondary grid.

Setting the map scale

Not all maps will be the same size. This extends beyond determining whether you will need the entire AutoREALM canvas for a world map or a small portion of it to create a dungeon.

Graphical elements like symbol and object placement will alter depending on the size you set your scale in AutoREALM.

To set your map scale

1. Select **File** in the General Toolbar.

A dropdown menu appears.

2. Select **Properties**.

The Map Settings menu appears.

3. Select **Units**.

A dropdown menu appears with many selections for unit measurement. For most tabletop games, you should select **Feet**.

4. Enter a number in field **A** to determine the distance between squares on the grid.

Note: Most tabletop games use a five-foot spacing between grid lines, but the game you are playing will decide this.

Designing a map

Map design is the core of AutoREALM; it is what the program was made for! After determining your grid style and setting your map to the appropriate scale, you can begin placing objects and drawing shapes.

Drawing is performed with the tools found in the Drawing Toolbar. To learn more about the Drawing Toolbar, see *“The Drawing Toolbar”* on page 31.

Drawing shapes

Shapes are the foundation for your maps; they exist to give your maps a sense of organization and scale. Two different types of shapes can be added to your maps:

- Basic shapes
- Precise shapes

To add basic shapes to your map

1. Select a basic shape in the Drawing Toolbar (rectangle, circle, or polygon).
When selecting a polygon, a prompt asks for the number of sides you want the shape to have.
2. Select and drag your cursor on the AutoREALM canvas to draw the chosen shape.
Note: Holding CTRL while drawing will make all sides of the shape equal in length.
3. Release the mouse button to stop drawing and create your shape.

To add precise shapes to your map

1. Select a drawing tool in the Shape Toolbar.
Note: Holding SHIFT while drawing will create straight lines for all options other than freehand.
2. Select the left mouse button and drag your cursor on the AutoREALM canvas to begin drawing.
3. Release the mouse button to stop drawing and create your shape.
Note: Shapes can be resized and moved after they are placed.

To resize or move a shape

1. Click **Select** in the General Toolbar.

Note: This tool is selected by default when you launch AutoREALM.

2. Select the shape you wish to resize or move.

A red, hatched border appears around the selected shape.

3. Position the cursor over the border.

Selecting and dragging the cursor while hovering over the border lines will move the shape, and selecting and dragging the handles on the corners of the border will resize it, as shown in Figure 1.1 “Shape with borders and handles” on page 5.

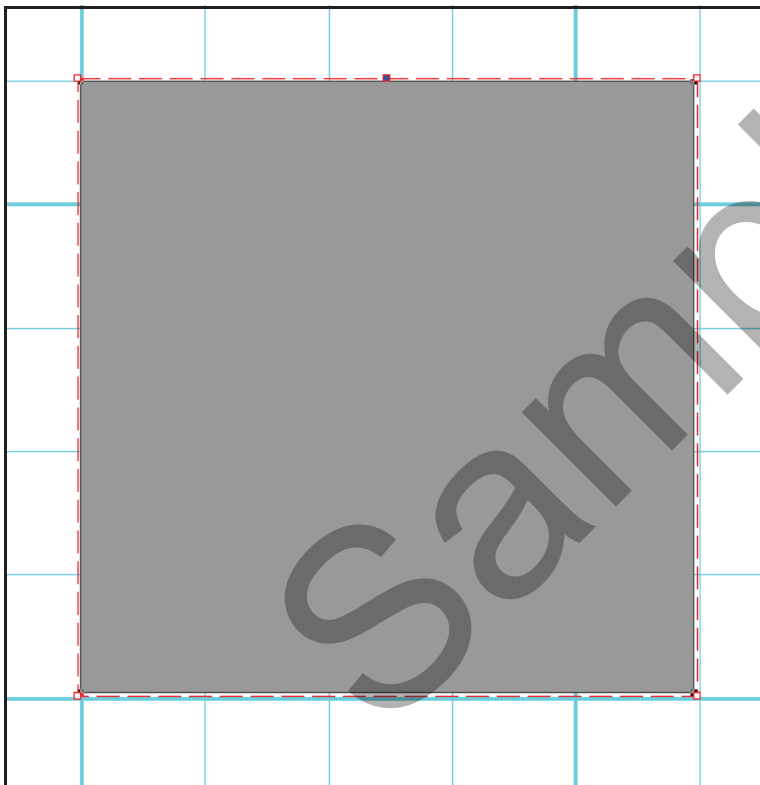


Figure 1.1: Shape with borders and handles

Note: Just like when drawing a shape, holding CTRL while resizing a shape will force the shape's sides to be equal.

Placing symbols

Symbols are another key component of map creation. Symbols are functionally similar to shapes but are small, artistic icons placed to enhance the look of your maps.

Symbols are created and modified using the Icon Toolbars. To learn more about the Icon Toolbars, see *“Icon tools” on page 33*.

To place a symbol

1. Locate the Symbol Toolbar.
2. Select the icon of the symbol you wish to place.

You can use the scroll menu on the left to select a different category of premade symbols.

3. Click on the AutoREALM canvas to place your icon.

You may place more than one icon at a time; this can be particularly useful if you add a symbol, such as a tree, which is painstakingly slow to do one at a time.

To place multiple symbols at once

1. Select the symbol you wish to place.
2. Locate the Placement Toolbar.
3. Select the type of grouping you wish to use.

The icons for each grouping type indicate how symbols will be placed when selected.

4. Select and drag your mouse in the AutoREALM display to add your grouped symbols.

A trail of red boxes will appear behind your cursor as you move it to indicate where the symbols will be placed.

For even more customization options, AutoREALM also allows you to change the size of the symbols as they are placed and how spread out they are when placed in groups.

To change the size of a symbol

1. Locate the Icon Settings Toolbar.
2. Select the **Icon Size** slider.
3. Drag the slider from left to right to decrease or increase the size of symbols as they are placed.

To change the spread of a symbol group

1. Locate the icon settings toolbar.
2. Select the **Icon Spread** slider.

Drag the slider from left to right to decrease or increase the spread of symbols as they are placed.

Loading a premade map

Creating a map from scratch can be daunting; there is no shame in getting help! AutoREALM comes with 30 premade maps created by the developers for use, as shown in Figure 1.2 “AutoREALM premade map folder” on page 7.

Whether you want to integrate these designs into your work, use them for inspiration, or use the designs as they are, the choice is yours.

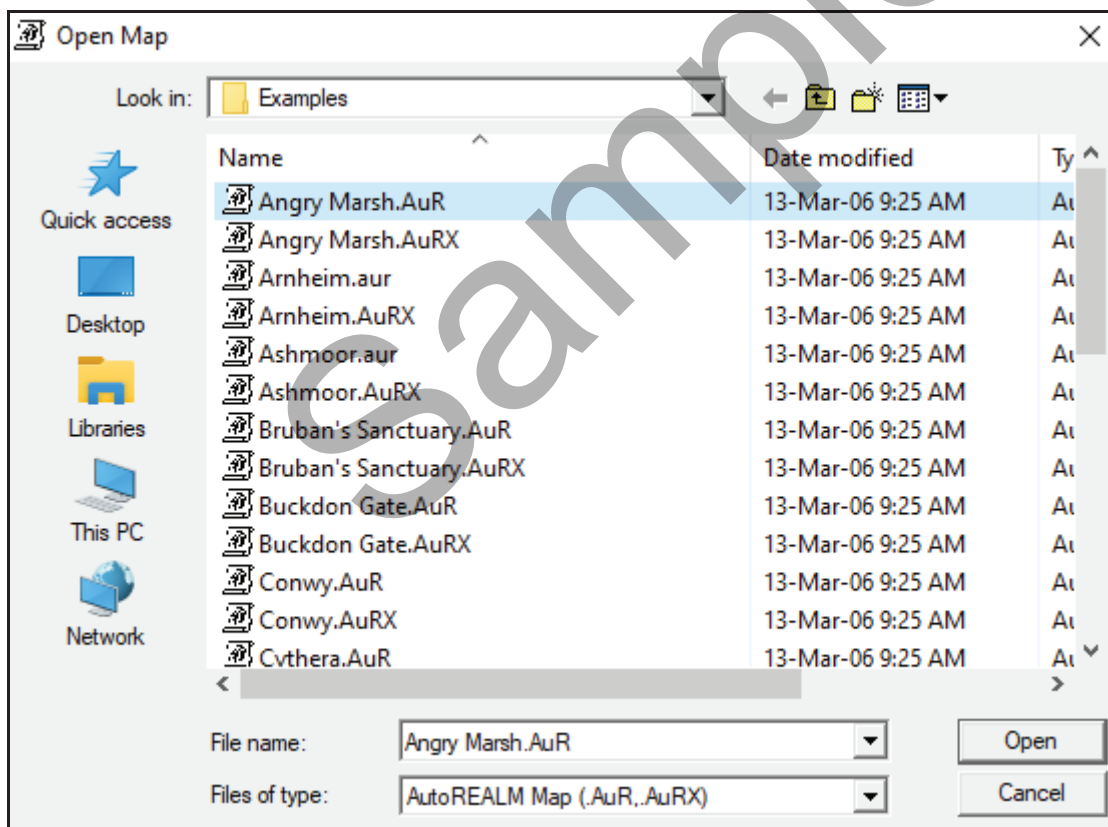


Figure 1.2: AutoREALM premade map folder

To load a premade map

1. Select **Open a Map**.

A file explorer window displays a folder containing AutoREALM's premade maps.

2. Select one of the map files to load.
3. Select **Open**.

The selected map opens in the AutoREALM canvas.

Map insertion

Loading and inserting a map sound similar, but they are functionally different. Loading a map will load a map file and display it in a new AutoREALM window, while inserting a map will add a map to the canvas.

To insert a map

1. Select **File**.

A dropdown menu appears.

2. Select **Insert**.

A file explorer window opens. From here, you can navigate to a folder that contains your saved maps or insert one of AutoREALM's premade maps.

Inserting a map can be useful if you want to take aspects from another map and add them to the one currently inside the canvas. However, there are limitations when inserting a map: only objects can be inserted.

The following do not carry over when inserting a map:

- Background colors
- Grid settings
- Overlays
- Views
- Pushpins
- Map comments