

Getting Started with ArcMap: Saving and Importing Layer Files

Welcome to the Essential ArcGIS Task Sheet Series. This series supplements the Iowa State University GIS Geospatial Technology Training Program short course series, "Essential ArcGIS Tutorial Series." The task sheets are designed to provide quick, easy instructions for performing specific tasks in GIS.

Exporting and importing layer files allows for layer symbology to be saved and used at a later date or on another map. This allows map designs to be consistent through multiple projects and maps.

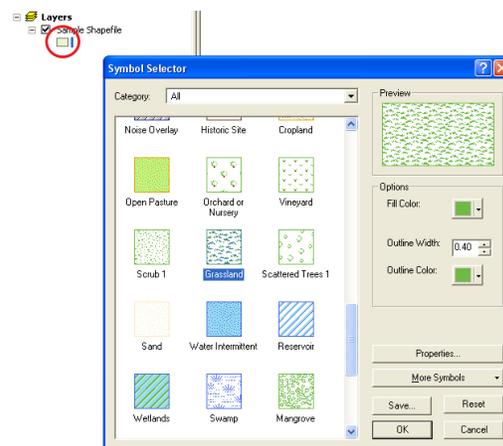
1. Open ArcMap and Add a shapefile

Add any polygon shapefile to the map.

2. Set Layer Symbology

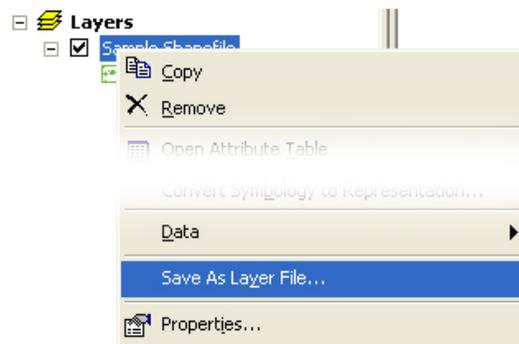
Click the **Symbol** icon in the Table of Contents to bring up the **Symbol Selector** window.

1. Select the desired symbol or create one by selecting **Properties....**
2. Click **OK**.

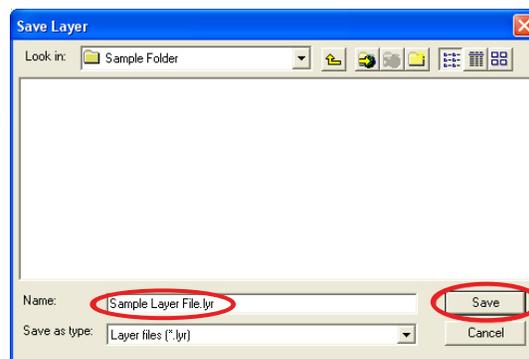


3. Saving a Layer File

1. Right click the shapefile in the **Table of Contents** and select **Save As Layer File....**



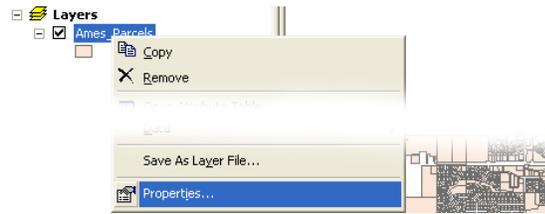
2. Browse to a desired location.
 - In the **Name:** dialog box, enter a name for the layer file.
 - Click **Save** when finished.



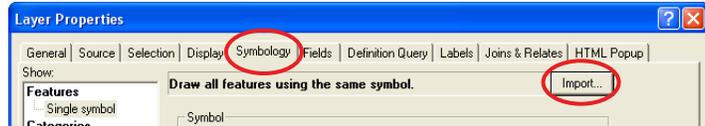
4. Importing a Layer File

Open up a new map document and add a different shapefile.

1. Right click the shapefile in the **Table of Contents** and select **Properties...**



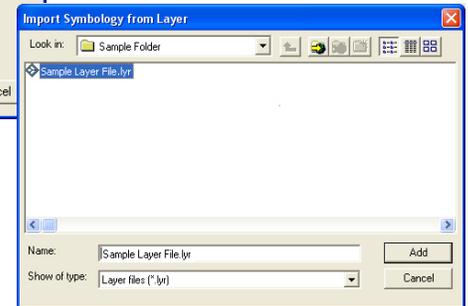
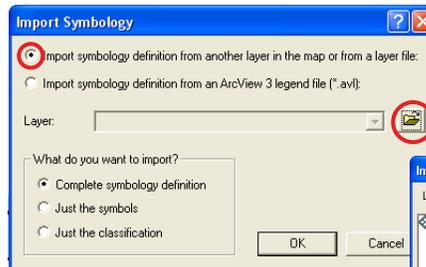
- Select the **Symbology** tab.
- Click the **Import...** near the top right corner of the window.



2. Select **Import symbology definition from another layer in the map or from a layer file** in the Import Symbology window.

3. Select the **open folder** icon.

- Browse to the layer file that was just saved and select it.
- Click **Add**.

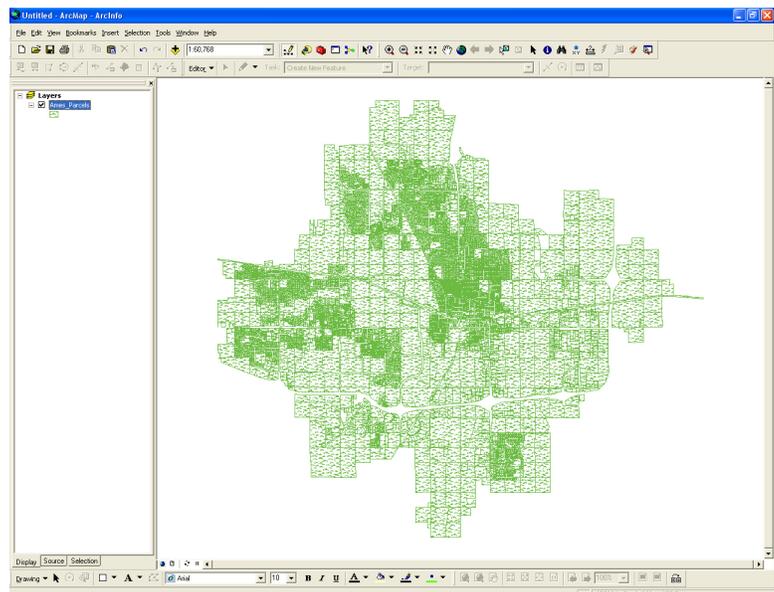


Note that the symbols or classifications of a layer file can be separately imported.

4. Click **OK** in the Import Symbology window.

5. Click **OK** in the Layer Properties window.

The symbology of the previous map will be imported into this map. This tool can be useful in workflows that require much more intricately detailed symbology that would take considerable time to recreate for each new map.



Contacts

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This task sheet and more are available for free download at www.extension.iastate.edu/gis.

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