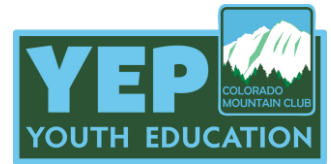


# Topography Play-Doh – Contour Lines



**Purpose:** This lesson plan and activity, accompany a video which conveys to students how topography (the study of natural and unnatural physical features of an area) and contour lines (2d representation of 3d features of an area, when in reference to topography) are used by map makers. The overall purpose of this lesson is to teach one of the basic skills of map reading and navigation.

**Ages:** Grades 1<sup>st</sup>-5<sup>th</sup>

**Experience:** No experience required

**Materials Needed:**

- Play-Doh
- 2 feet of fishing line or thin wire
- Writing utensil
- Paper

**Learning Objectives:**

- New terminology
  - Contour Lines
  - Topography
- Understand how a 2- dimensional topographic map (flat item) represents a 3- dimensional landscape.
- Foundational map reading skill

**Activity:**

In this activity participants will explore how the contour lines on topographic maps represent a natural feature on a map. Sometimes it can be challenging to understand how the height of a mountain can be translated to flat paper.

Participants will shape a ball of Play-Doh into a mountain. Next, participants will pull fishing line (or wire) horizontally through the “mountain” making multiple cross sections, starting at the peak, and working down to the base. Once 5-6 cross sections have been cut and set aside, gently place the base or largest cross section on your paper and trace. Remove and repeat for each piece of the mountain, going in order from largest to smallest (the peak!). Don’t forget to name your mountain! Repeat as much as you would like, and participants should be encouraged to create their own map once they understand topography and contour lines.