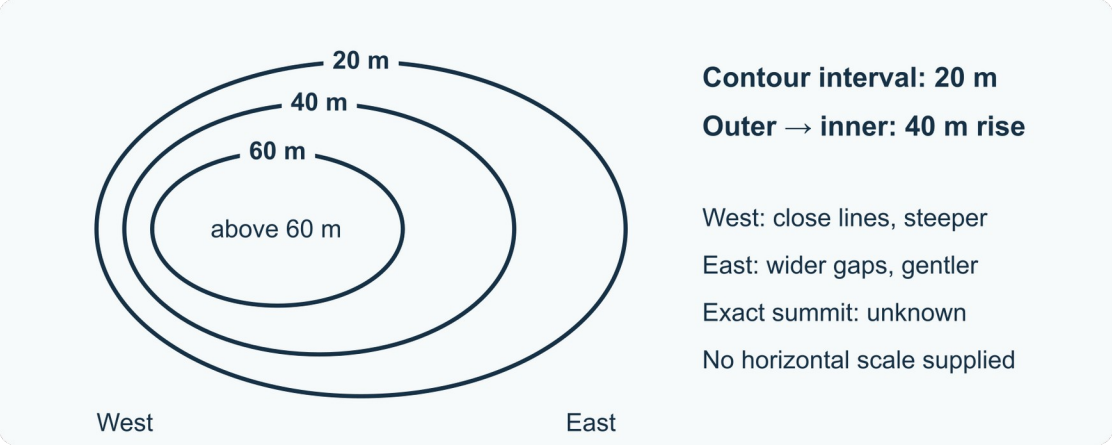
Read the shape of a drawn hill

What do contour spacing and height labels tell us about a landscape model?

Read equal-height lines on an invented hill and leave the exact summit unknown.

Investigate | 10-20 minutes, or one small comparison | Scrap paper and a pencil or pen, The supplied original model; no account, purchase or online search needed

Start here Draw three nested loops and label the outer 20 m, middle 40 m and inner 60 m.



Same rise, different spacing

1 Keep equal intervals

Each loop joins points at the same height. In this hill model, height increases inward by 20 m between neighbouring loops.

2 Compare spacing

Bring the loops close together on the west side and farther apart on the east. Keep the loops nested without crossing.

3 Read the slope

Both sides rise through the same 20 m intervals. The shorter horizontal gaps on the west indicate a steeper slope than the wider east gaps.

4 Show uncertainty

Label the inside area above 60 m, with exact summit unknown. The lines alone do not show how or when the hill formed.

Original model one imaginary hill

This schematic is a drawing to interpret, not a survey or a measured landscape.

• The outer, middle and inner loops are 20 m, 40 m and 60 m.

• From the outer to inner loop, the height rises 40 m on either side.

• Contours are closer on the west, so that side is steeper in this model. The exact summit is not labelled.

What this example can show No horizontal scale is supplied, so an exact gradient cannot be calculated. The drawing does not establish a safe real walking route.

A different way

Trace the three loops with a finger, describe a side aloud, or use the supplied labels instead of drawing.

If you want to go further

Keep the loops in place and change their labels to 10 m, 20 m and 30 m. Compare the rise without claiming a new horizontal scale.

Something to notice

Which part of my description is supported by contour values and spacing?

Read or explore more

Horizon topic Contours Height

https://launchhorizonhq.com/learn/contours-height/

Horizon topic Landform Processes

https://launchhorizonhq.com/learn/landform-processes/

Horizon topic Geography

https://launchhorizonhq.com/learn/geography/

Geoscience Australia Map Reading Guide: How to use Topographic Maps

https://www.ga.gov.au/bigobj/GA7194.pdf

Ordnance Survey Relief and contours

https://www.ordnancesurvey.co.uk/mapzone/assets/doc/map-skills/Relief-and-Contours-en.pdf