Get the most from a Garmin GPS

Recommended Software

Before starting you should download and install three different pieces of software. All the software is free and easy to use.

Garmin Communicator Plugin

Garmin Communicator Plugin is a free Internet browser plugin used to transfer data between your Garmin GPS device and a computer. It can add maps to your device, check for map updates, transfer locations between Internet maps, and more. Additional information can be found at the Communicator FAQ page: http://www8.garmin.com/products/communicator/faq.jsp
The FAQ page also contains links to download the PC or Mac versions of the plugin.

Garmin Express

Garmin developed a new program called *Garmin Express*. It performs the following functions - update maps and firmware; back up, restore and transfer favourites; install free voices and vehicles; and download manuals easily. However, *Garmin Express* does not transfer locations from Internet maps. The software, along with a more detailed description is located at:
http://software.garmin.com/en-GB/express.html

To keep your Garmin GPS running smoothly, download and install the software. If you would like to control the location of the Express files, click on the Options button during setup and define the location. Otherwise the files are installed to the default location – C:\Program Files (x86).
When installation is complete plug the supplied USB cable into your computer and GPS unit.
Run *Garmin Express*, it should automatically find your unit.
If you haven't registered the GPS unit, do it now.
Garmin Express will indicate if updates to your maps or firmware are available. It will also display new or updated voices and vehicles.
Update the firmware and maps as required.
You can use the backup function to backup all the files in the unit. Please be aware the backup function clones the unit by copying everything including system files to the computer. This is significantly different than manually copying files

Extra POI Editor

Extra POI Editor is free software allowing you to edit or create Point Of Interest gpx files. It is superior to using *Garmin Communicator* for transferring locations from Internet maps to your GPS unit. Garmin will create points of interest in the favourite section of your unit from either a .csv or .gpx file when the file is saved to the GPX folder in the unit. The files are similar containing a name, longitude, latitude and a description of the location. Where they differ is a GPX file can contain more information and the format is more complex than the CSV file. However, *Extra POI Editor* is as easy to use as an Internet map and the software translates the data to GPX format seamlessly.

The website for *Extra POI Editor* is located at: http://turboccc.wikispaces.com/Extra_POI_Editor .
The page also contains screen shots and information on how *Extra POI Editor* works. This is a handy

reference tool to help you with the software.

A software download link is located lower on the page at:

http://turboccc.wikispaces.com/Extra_POI_Editor#Extra_POI_Editor-Download

You should download and install both the Current Version and the Latest Help File as per the instructions on the page. Ensure you run the installer as Administrator.

A guide to using *Extra POI Editor* is available at the Bits & Bytes website:

http://www.bitsbytes.ca/show_tell.htm

Get the most from a Garmin GPS unit

Download and install the Garmin Communicator and Garmin Express software. When the software is installed

1. Register your unit as per instructions.

2. Update the firmware with **Garmin Express**.

3. Update the maps using **Garmin Express**

Update Firmware

Firmware is software embedded in your GPS. The frequency of firmware releases for a particular model varies according to the manufacturer; some provide ongoing support better than others. Firmware updates can fix system problems and make your GPS operate smoother. Some firmware updates might add new features and capabilities.

Update Maps

If you buy one of the better brands of GPS, you'll be offered the opportunity to update maps. These updates are typically rolled out several times a year. If you live in a rapidly developing area, this may be worth the expense, which usually runs anywhere from $40 to $100 an issue. Lifetime map upgrades can also be purchased for around the same price as a single upgrade. Garmin lifetime upgrades are transferable between registered owners. In addition to being available from the manufacturer, some brands' updates may be purchased at a discount through various online retailers. Better still purchase a unit with Lifetime maps, the cost is generally less than one upgrade and only adds a small increase to the overall price.

Even though you just purchased a new GPS system, you should upgrade the maps and the firmware after initializing the unit.

Speed up Satellite Lock

Ever wonder why your GPS receiver sometimes takes longer to be ready to navigate after being turned on? It's because it must load some basic information in addition to capturing GPS satellite signals. You may encounter a slow start if your GPS has not been used for an extended period, or been transported a significant distance while turned off. In these cases, the GPS must update its almanac and ephemeris data and store it in memory.

The GPS almanac is a set of data that every GPS satellite transmits, and it includes information about the state (health) of the entire GPS satellite constellation, and course data (ephemeris data) on every satellite's orbit. When a GPS receiver has current almanac data in memory, it can acquire satellite signals and

determine initial position faster. Having almanac information on your unit speeds satellite lock, also known as time-to-first-fix (TTFF).

To download this information efficiently, leave your GPS powered on and under an open sky, motionless, for 20 minutes. Ideally, you should do this the first time you turn the unit on, but it can be performed any time after as well. It's an especially good first step to take if you notice satellite acquisition taking longer than normal.

Delete Excess Information

Most GPS units come preloaded with a variety of files. Voices, vehicles, photos, etc. The original files should be copied to a safe location on your computer. Another copy should be edited where excess information is removed. For example, Garmin provides a variety of Dashboards, Keyboards, Pictures, Themes, Vehicles and Voices, where individual files can easily be removed. If you make an error, the original file can always be re-instated. Copying and editing can be accomplished when the unit is connected to a computer by the USB cable.

Deleting excess information provides more room for maps that get bigger with each new edition.

Which is better Shorter Distance vs. Faster Time?

How to decide whether you should use the "*SHORTER DISTANCE*" or "*FASTER TIME*" method. Using a limited access highway (the 400 series in Ontario) that takes you 10 miles out of your way may net a 10-20 second faster overall time on paper and a GPS's limited "brain" calculates it as a faster route. Conversely, major highways wind their way through established areas, and a GPS's limited "brain" calculates that as additional mileage. Therefore experience suggests using the following methods to use choice when planning a route.

For *LOCAL TRIPS* around town, select the "*SHORTER DISTANCE*" method. This avoids the GPS sending you 5-10 miles out of your way to use a high speed road that will only net a 10 second difference when using the "faster time" method.

For *LONG TRIPS* selected the "*FASTER TIME*" method. This avoids the GPS guiding you off the major highway and into urban traffic just to save a half a mile of highway.

Newer GPS units have the ability to learn a route that you prefer. If you prefer to use a high speed highway through town, after a few trips, the GPS will use that route.

Transfer an address book from one Garmin nüvi to another nüvi.

Connect the old nüvi to your computer with the USB cable, copy the **/Garmin/Gpx/Current.gpx file** from the GPS containing your favorites to the desktop. Connect the target nüvi GPS to the computer and copy the Current.gpx file from the desktop into the same directory **(/Garmin/Gpx)** in the target GPS. If a Current.gpx file exists, overwrite it, all the old favorites will be loaded into the new GPS unit.

Finding food (or gas, etc.)

Here is a useful technique to use when you are driving down the road, thinking of food, and looking for a restaurant, or some other category.

From main menu: tap **'Where to?'** ➤ **Food-Lodging** ➤ **Food** ➤ (you can select any from the menu, but for now ...) **All Food.**

Now don't touch the setting. As you drive, the menu reflects the closest establishments to your current location. As you drive further the menu keeps changing advising you of what is close at hand. While

driving the text compass directions (N, S, NE, etc.) change to pointing arrows, and change back to text when you stop driving.

You can use this same technique to find fuel, lodging, shopping, parking, etc. You will have an accurate distance and direction to what is close by

Straight line distance or Road distance

When you select a location the GPS displays the straight line distance (as the crow flies). If you want to find the road distance – in the **Navigation screen**, turn **GPS Simulator ON**. Select the waypoint and tap **Go**!. Please note the distance. After the route is calculated, tap the bar at the very top of the Map Screen (this opens the Turn List Page). At the top of the page an accurate road distance and time to the waypoint should be listed.

If you tap a turn listing, the GPS unit displays a map with the turn along with a time and distance to the turn.

U-Turns

You might be better off *NOT SELECTING* Avoiding U-Turns. It's suggested if Avoiding U-Turns is selected your Garmin might interpret some sharp turns in a road as a U-Turns and attempt to keep you from making them when you really should make them, taking you far out of your way. I have kept Avoiding U-Turns OFF and have not had any trouble. At least try it if you have been having direction difficulties.

Hot and Cold

Garmin recommends an operating temperature range between 0º C – 50º C (32º F – 122º F). You don't want to leave your unit in the car if temperatures exceed those parameters. Try to remove the unit from the windshield mount and place in the trunk, both for temperature and to deter thieves. You might want to purchase an insulated camera bag to store the unit in the trunk. Better still take the unit with you. Find a small camera bag to clip on your belt to carry it around. Newer models are not bulky or heavy. You can also use the GPS to find your car in the parking lot.

Home Address

Consider using an address down the street from your home (e.g. 26 Main Street rather than 46 Main Street). You know where your house is and the address will get you close by. If your GPS unit is lost or stolen, thieves will not know your exact address.

Finally... Don't trust it

Any GPS will occasionally provide incorrect information, so be safe – trust but verify. Before heading to an unknown location, check the route preview map or list of turns to see if it looks right. And never turn onto a gravel road on public lands that you weren't planning to take.