



Frequently
Asked
Questions

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What is what3words?

what3words is a really simple way to talk about location. It has divided the world into 3m squares, each with a unique combination of 3 words - allowing people to share and find precise locations easily.

It means that now everyone, everywhere can refer to any precise location – from a specific building entrance to a point on a hiking trail or a remote spot in a field – using just three words. what3words is available as a free mobile app for iOS and Android and works offline. It is also available at map.what3words.com.

what3words is global. It is available in 51 different languages, with more in development. Now over 5 billion people can enter a 3-word address in their native tongue and navigate accurately to anywhere in the world.

How does the app work?

what3words uses GPS signal to convert GPS coordinates to 3-word addresses.

To find your 3-word address or one of a location near you:

- Open the what3words app or what3words.com and tap the 'current location' arrow.
- Enable location services if prompted.
- The 3-word address will appear:
 - In the what3words app: at the top of the screen.
 - In the what3words website: on the left of the screen.

To find the 3-word address for another location:

- Enter its street address into the search bar.
- A 3-word address will appear at the top of the screen in the app, and on the left of the screen on the online map.
- To improve accuracy, zoom and move the map to reposition the square.
- To identify the 3-word address of an exact location, switching to satellite view is recommended.
- The 3-word address will update as you reposition the map. Once you have selected the exact location, note down or save the 3-word address.

For more instructions on using the app, check out our ['How to' guides](#).

How was what3words founded?

what3words founded 2013 by Chris Sheldrick, Mohan Ganesalingam and Jack Waley-Cohen.

Chris Sheldrick, what3words Co-Founder and CEO, previously worked in the music industry organising live music events around the world. When bands and equipment constantly got lost trying to find venues and festival locations, it became clear to him that poor addressing was a universal problem.

He tried using GPS coordinates to help people get to the right places, but these proved hard for people to enter into their cars and devices, and near impossible to communicate correctly over the phone.

Mistakes were easily made and were hard to pick up on until it was too late.

Determined to find a universal solution that was concise, human friendly and easy to communicate, Chris turned to his mathematician friend, Mohan Ganesalingam. Together they devised a way to turn accurate GPS coordinates into user-friendly word combinations. Before long, the first 3-word address algorithm was born.

Who uses what3words?

People, businesses and organisations in over 170 countries use what3words to easily communicate precise locations.

For example, breakdown providers such as the AA accept what3words to pinpoint customer's locations. Evri, DHL parcel and DPD deliver parcels more precisely with what3words, sports stadiums and events use what3words to tell visitors exactly which entrance to arrive at and you can now use what3words in cars such as Mercedes-Benz, Jaguar, Land Rover, Ford as well as others.

How does what3words make money?

what3words is free and will always be free for individuals to use. For businesses, we sell licences for our products including our API and SDKs, as well as the large-scale conversion of 3-word addresses to GPS coordinates, or vice versa. We enable qualifying NGOs and Emergency Services to use our technology for free.

How does what3words handle buildings of more than one floor?

Most postal or address systems are designed to work in 2D. For example, ZIP codes or postal codes in the UK, or GPS coordinates, on which what3words is based. These systems always need additional information to specify height. For example, Flat 6, 5th floor, 12 Lonsdale Road, NW7 1PR. With a 3 word address, we recommend a similar approach: Flat 6, 5th floor, 12 Lonsdale Road, NW7 1PR ///table.lamp.chair

How many words are there?

It takes approximately 40,000 words to assign 3-word addresses to each of the 57 trillion 3m x 3m squares in the world.

What happens if words are spelled or said incorrectly or in the wrong order?

what3words Autosuggest detects errors in 3-word address entry by voice and text and intelligently suggests relevant 3-word addresses.

Can you type a 3-word address into Google maps?

While a 3-word address cannot yet be typed straight into Google Maps, it is easy to find a 3-word address in the what3words app and then navigate to that destination via Google Maps or your preferred navigation app.

Why is what3words more effective than traditional addressing systems?

what3words does not aim to replace street addressing. Rather, it is a useful addition when street addresses are not accurate enough, and an instant, scalable solution where addresses do not exist.

- Compared to current street addressing systems, 3-word addresses are far more accurate, as they refer to a specific 3m x 3m area. As the entire what3words grid is fixed, the 3-word address for a particular location will never change – even if buildings or streets are redeveloped.
- 3-word addresses are unique, unlike street names which are often duplicated, and they are easier to communicate and share with others.
- what3words is much faster to set up and more cost-efficient than any regular street addressing system, as every 3-word address has already been pre-assigned, providing an instant, scalable solution.
- what3words is the only addressing system optimised for voice, making it the ideal location system for the voice-enabled solutions of the future.
- what3words Autosuggest prompts intelligent suggestions based on the user's location, making it a truly human friendly solution.