

Fieldcraft Skills

Land Navigation



Declination

North on a map is aligned to True North and for use on the ground, it must be converted to Magnetic North. Conversely, Magnetic North must be converted to True North for use on a map.

Declination is the difference between true north - a geographic point on the map, and magnetic north.

NOAA's National Centers for Environmental Information has an online calculator which will find the estimated magnetic declination value for any given location.

Accounting for Declination

- In 2015 Seattle had a declination of 16° E and Boston a declination of 15° W
- Below is a map of United States with declination lines shown (USGS 2014)



Lines indicate 2° intervals of change in declination. (NOAA, 2015)

- Map to field (True to Magnetic): add W declination or subtract E declination, then set the compass direction line.
- Field to map (Magnetic to True): add E declination or subtract W declination, then plot the true bearing.