

GIS Tips and Tricks

Converting Labels to Annotation

Converting labels to annotation has both Pros and Cons.

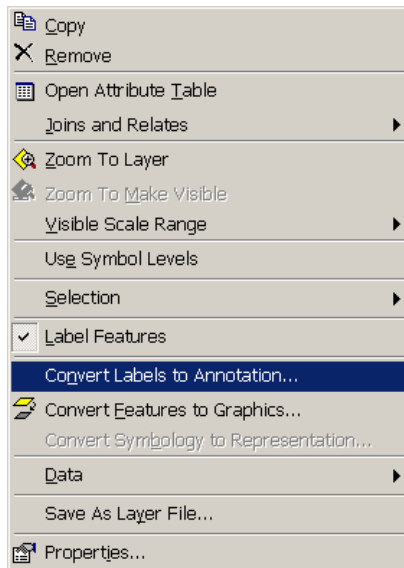
PRO:

- Complete control over exactly where a label is placed. You can click and drag each piece of text into position.

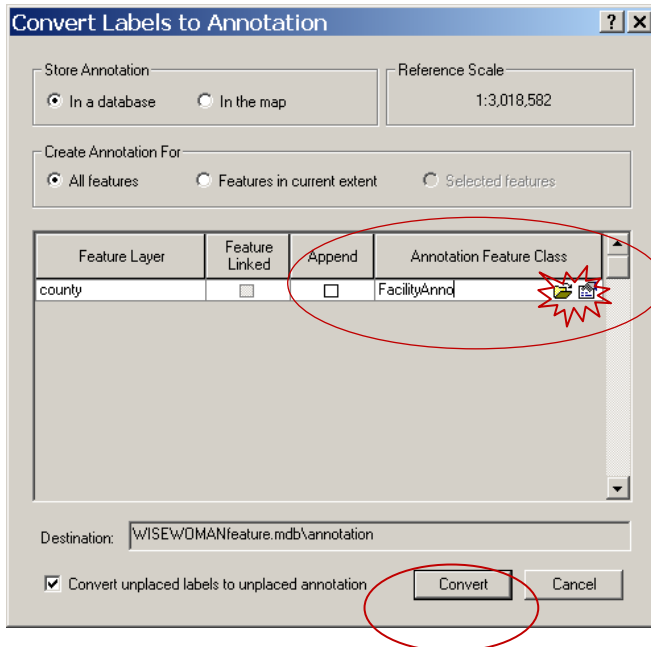
CON:

- Labels are not longer controlled by the Layer Properties Label tab and are no longer tied to the field with which they were generated.
- Moving annotation by hand can be extremely time consuming and tedious.

Once you have decided that you must have control over the placement of individual labels, it is a simple task to convert the labels to something called annotation.



Select the layer you want to convert in the Table of Contents, right-click it to activate the menu options. Select Convert Labels to Annotation, which is right below Labels Features



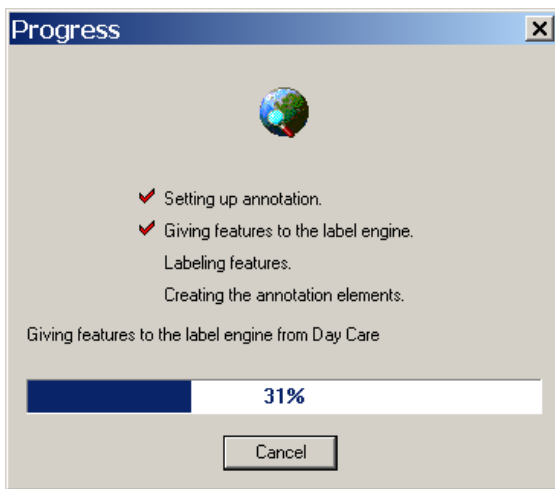
By default, annotation will be stored in a database. When you save annotation in a database, **the database must already be created prior to the conversion.**

The Annotation Feature Class is named for the layer it is generated from, with the addition of the word “Anno”. If you don’t want this as its name, click in the name, FacilityAnno in this example, and type a different name over the top.

Next to the Annotation Feature Class is a small folder icon. Click on this to confirm that the annotation is being created in the proper destination output file. **Do not assume this is going to be set correctly for you; you should check this every time you generate annotation into a geodatabase.**

Once you have confirmed your options, click Convert.

You will see a Progress dialog. Depending on how many features are in the layer, this may take a moment to finish.




The labels for this layer have been converted to annotation. The annotation will inherit the symbology from the label, making them identical in how they look on your map. However, as annotation, you can click on and move around individual pieces of text, placing them where you want them.

Editing Annotation

If you took the time to create a personal geodatabase for your annotation, any editing on the annotation must be done from within an Edit Session.



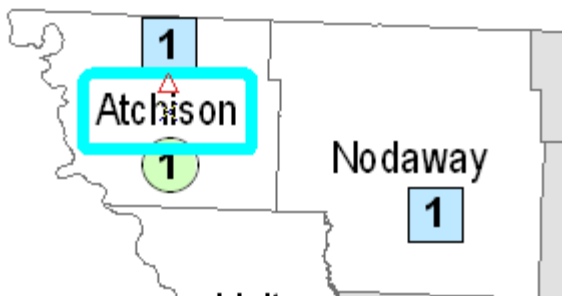
If you do not already have an Editor toolbar, select from the dropdown menu View > Toolbars > Editor. To start an edit session, select Editor from the Editor toolbar and select Start Editing.

 You can only perform edits in one directory at a time. Make sure the directory you choose contains the annotation file you want to edit.

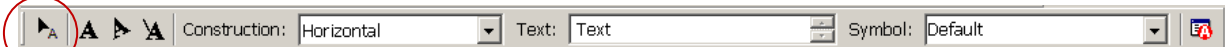
There are two options for editing Annotation. You can either use the Editor toolbar or the Annotation toolbar. If you use the editor toolbar, you can just use the Edit Tool from the Editor menu.



Select on a piece of text. The text will be highlighted with a solid blue line around it. Drag the text to where you want it.



If you choose to use the Annotation toolbar, from the dropdown menu select View > Toolbars > Annotation.



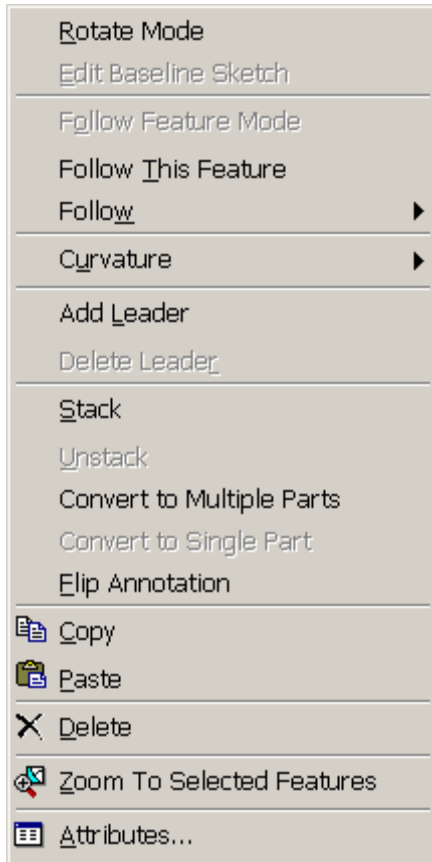
Select the text with the Edit Annotation Tool.



Using the Edit Annotation tool adds a new option for editing, the resize triangle (shown in this example as a small red triangle.) Once the annotation is highlighted, you can use this resize triangle to easily scale up or down the size of the text.

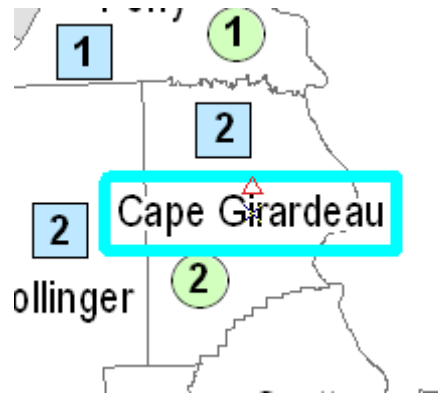
Drag “up” to size up, drag “down” to size down. Take care when you click and drag a text to move it that you don’t accidentally resize it instead.
There are several new menu options for editing Annotation when the annotation is stored in a geodatabase.

Right-click on the text to see the available menu choices.

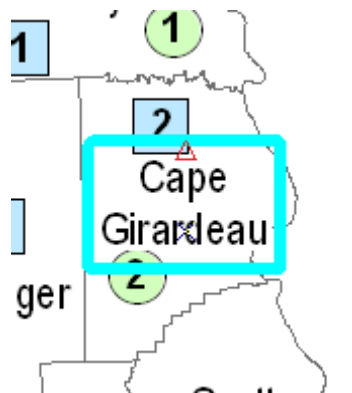


The most commonly used choices are Stack, which automatically converts one line to two lines of text (continuing to click adds additional lines) and Add Leader, which lets you add a leader line to a piece of text. Leader lines are extremely handy when your text is very clustered and you need to move the text fairly far away from the feature it is labeling.

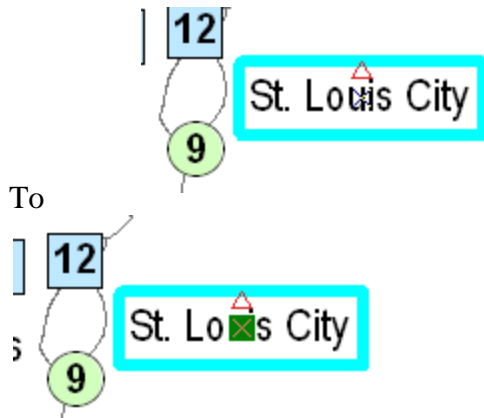
Clicking Stack will change



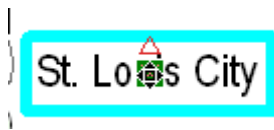
to



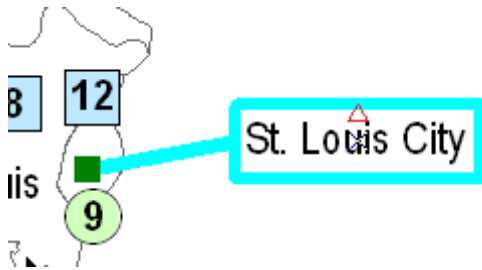
Adding a leader line will change



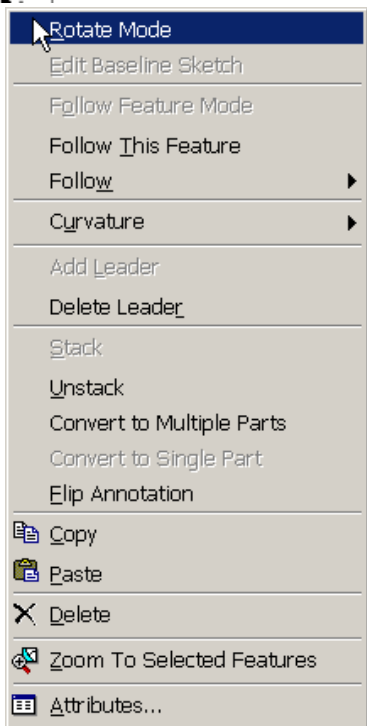
Notice the green square that appears in the middle of the text (over the “ui” in this example). This is one end of your leader line, which at this point has no length to it.



Place your cursor on the green square. Notice that the cursor symbol will change. (This is rather hard to see.) Once you see the cursor change, drag this to a point away from the text.



You have now created a leader line away from the annotation text. You will likely have to move both the text and the end of the leader line to refine the position for each.



If you do not like either the Stack or the Leader Line, there are options for each to remove each from the menu choices. Unstack will change the text back to a single line. Delete Leader will remove the leader line.

There are many other menu options not covered in this document, but these two are the most commonly used. See the Desktop Help under Editing and data compilation > Editing Annotation > An Overview of editing annotation for additional descriptions.