

# COVID-19 testing sites to childcare: Google's self-made maps get huge boost during crisis

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Google's "MyMaps," which offers self-generated directions, has been rediscovered in a big way during the COVID-19 crisis.

A sub unit of Google's popular Maps program since 2007, MyMaps allows users to create their own personalized maps, share them with friends and on the Web.

Google says it has seen a "surge" in usage to MyMaps, with nearly a billion more creations, edits and views compared to the same time last year, with nearly 3 billion—up from 2 billion.

"What's most impressive is how communities are using MyMaps in ways we never imagined," says Chris Herwig, a Google program manager. People are using the self-serve program "to help individuals find ways to be forces for good and coordinate relief efforts."

Herwig cites as examples everything from COVID-19 testing sites and [food banks](#), to places where first responders can access childcare facilities.

With MyMaps ([www.google.com/mymaps](http://www.google.com/mymaps)) [users](#)

start by naming their map, searching for an address or business, say, the TCL Chinese Theater in Hollywood, and then adding locations to the tab. They can also add placemarks, draw lines and shapes, and embed text, photos and videos.

Once the map is saved, it can be shared via a URL, embedded on websites, which you can't easily do with Google Maps or just sent via e-mail, or social media.

"A map can be helpful in ways that a simple list of text is not," says Herwig. "It helps us instantly see information in the context of where we are, with the locations of the resources we might need."

Google touted the creation of a map by a user in Brooklyn of where to find pictures of rainbows in front windows. The map has gone viral, and expanded beyond Brooklyn to neighboring states Connecticut and New Jersey, and as far away as Virginia and Maryland.

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