Creating Label Classes in ArcGIS 9.x

Label classes are a great tool to employ when you want to distinguish between features, using more than just their symbols. For example, maybe you want to display different information for oil wells and gas wells, or sold homes versus available homes.

We will guide you through how to set up your own label classes. If you would like to customize them further, you can also refer to our articles about labeling with VBA and HTML.

Setting up the Labeling Method

The first thing you need to do is go to the Labels tab of your Layer Properties window, just like you would for setting up normal labels. Pay special attention to the Method. You will need to use the drop-down menu to choose: **Define classes of features and label each class differently.** You’ll also want to make sure the box is checked next to **Label features in this layer.**
Defining Classes

Initially, you will start with a Default class. You can rename this one if you choose, by clicking the Rename button below the Class drop-down menu. For this example, I will rename my default class to Dry.

I do not want to see any labels for the dry wells, so I will turn off labels for this class, by unchecking the box next to **Label features in this class**.

However, ArcMap still does not know which features are dry, and which features NOT to show labels for. I need to create an SQL Query to determine the dry wells. To do this, click on the **SQL Query**… button. I will define the Dry class as any well with a TYPE that is DRY, AB, UNK. My expression will be: "TYPE" = 'DRY, AB, UNK'.
Now, all of my dry wells will not have any labels. But I do want my oil wells to be labeled. I will create a new class called Oil, by clicking the Add button (underneath the Class drop-down menu), and make sure the box is checked next to **Label features in this class**.

I will define a new SQL Query for this class, so it knows which wells are oil wells, and that they should be labeled. My new query will be: "TYPE" = 'OIL'.

**Building Labels for Each Class**

Now I need to tell ArcMap how I want my oil well labels to look. I can either choose from the drop-down list of fields (from my attribute table), or build an Expression. For mine, I will choose to build an expression, by clicking the **Expression…** button.
I want my oil wells to be labeled with the type, and with the FID number below it, so I will build my expression as follows: 

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"<bol>" & [TYPE] & "</bol>" & vbNewLine & "FID:" & [FID].
```

And now you can see that my dry wells are not labeled, and my oil wells are labeled with the type and the FID number.