



Geography glossary

Key term	Definition
Biome	A large community of plants and animals found in areas of the world with similar soils and climates, such as the tropical rainforest.
Climate zone	This is a large area with a similar climate. The day-to-day weather patterns are averaged over a long period of time (many years) to arrive at the climate. There are three major climate zones: the tropical climate is hot; the polar climate is cold; and the temperate climate is neither very hot nor very cold.
Fieldwork	All work beyond the immediate classroom environment, from the school corridor, school grounds and immediate surroundings to further afield.
Geographical Information System (GIS)	A way of representing digital data that enables layers of information to be added to a simple base map.
Geographical skills	Map work, using atlases and globes, visual communication using images and a focus on enquiry questions, are some of the skills that are central to good primary practice.
Human geography	The study of the different features of the Earth's surface created by people. Such features include buildings, cities, transport routes, trade and countries.
Latitude and longitude	<p>These are imaginary lines used to show position on the Earth's surface.</p> <p>Lines of latitude are parallel to the Equator – they never meet. They are numbered from 0° at the Equator going north or south to 90° at the Poles. The key lines of latitude are the Equator, which divides the world into two hemispheres – north and south; the Tropic of Cancer at 23.5° north of the Equator; the Tropic of Capricorn at 23.5° south of the Equator; the Arctic Circle 66.5° north; the Antarctic Circle 66.5° south.</p> <p>Lines of longitude are of equal length and go from Pole to Pole. They are numbered from 0° at the Prime Meridian (which goes through Greenwich, in London) east or west until they meet at 180° on the International Date Line, which runs through the Pacific Ocean.</p>
Local area	A small area that often loosely corresponds with the school catchment area.
Locational awareness	The ability to recognise and locate different places around the world, such as countries, cities, rivers and mountains.
Physical geography	The study of the physical and natural components on or at the Earth's surface including rocks, soils, natural resources, oceans, mountains, rivers, climate, vegetation and animals apart from human beings.
Plan perspectives	Plans are usually drawn from above and represent smaller areas than maps.
Processes.	Physical processes occur in the natural environment such as erosion or the wearing away of a riverbank by a river. Human processes occur in the human environment as a result of people's actions, e.g. migration – the movement of people from one place to another; trade – the movement of goods from one place to another.
Quantitative skills	Ways of representing and interpreting data in tables, charts, diagrams and other interpretative methods.
Region	Regions vary in size but are viewed in curriculum terms as larger than the local area, but smaller than a country (e.g. the Alps).
Settlement	A place where people live. These vary in size – from hamlet to village, town, city – and function, e.g. a seaside town, an industrial town.
Spatial variations	Differences between places such as landscape, climate, housing and settlement patterns.