

GEOGRAPHY AWARENESS WEEK

Geography Awareness Week is an annual celebration of geography and the important role that subject plays in our lives. Founded in 1987 by presidential proclamation, Geography Awareness Week is observed during the third week of November each year.

The word **geography** means “graph (write about, or describe) the earth”. It is the study of places and the relationships between people and their environments. People who study geography are called **geographers**, and they are interested in the effects humans are having on our planet. Geographers try to understand where things are found, why they are there, and how they change over time. **Place** for a geographer means both the physical and human characteristics of a location.



Geography helps us make sense of our world. It's more than just memorizing the names of capitals, river systems and mountain ranges. If we don't know where places are, then we can't understand those places, societies and environments or how and why they are changing. The need for geographical understanding is greater than ever before.

There are two branches of geography. The two overlap, and there are many specialty areas within each branch. We've listed just a few of those specialties here and explained what they focus on:

- **Physical geography** - the natural environment (climate, soil, atmosphere, rivers, landforms, oceans) and how humans have changed it
 - **biogeography** - the impact of the environment on plants and animals
 - **climatology** – the Earth's climate system
 - **geomorphology** - landforms and the processes that shape them
 - **hydrology** – the Earth's water systems
- **Human geography** - people and cultures (including their political, social, and economic systems)
 - **cultural** - relationships between culture (values, practices, artifacts, etc.) and place
 - **economic** - physical and economic conditions, including the production and distribution of goods, materials, and resources
 - **historical** - geographic patterns and processes from the past
 - **medical** - location and spread of diseases
 - **political** - political issues and how they affect interactions and conflicts between people and their environment
 - **urban** - patterns and changes in cities and urban areas





Hurricane



Beach ecosystem with palm trees



Urban landscape of Paris

Geography and maps fit together nicely to provide a framework for organizing and communicating geographic knowledge. Map makers are called **cartographers**. Maps can be created from all kinds of data (roads, cities, countries, rainfall, population changes, diseases, etc.), allowing us to better visualize the information being shown.

Geographic literacy, or **geo-literacy** is an important skill for helping us understand our world and everything that lives in it. According to the National Geographic Society, **geo-literacy** as “the ability to reason about Earth systems and interconnections to make far-reaching decisions.” It means being able to understand the complex nature of our world and how our decisions affect others. Without geo-literacy, it's hard to see how local and global issues affect all of us -- why drought in California can raise tomato prices in Kansas or how climate change makes hurricanes more powerful, dangerous, and destructive for people living near the Gulf of Mexico.

To improve your geo-literacy, check out [Google Earth](#), a computer program that creates a 3D representation of Earth from satellite imagery. There are some terrific geography modules to play around with. Here are some of our favorites:

[Quiz: Lakes of the World](#) - Test your knowledge of water bodies around the globe.

[This is Home](#) - Visit traditional homes around the globe and discover how the definition of “home” can both change and remain the same.

[Voyager](#) - Explore interactive guided tours, quizzes, and layers here about our world. To get started, click on the ship's wheel icon found on Google Earth. Then you can navigate the globe using stars, track hurricanes and tropical storms in real time, and lots more. Try these suggestions to get you started with Voyager:

- ★ [National Parks of the United States](#) - Explore stunning landscapes and learn about the plants and animals that live in our national parks.
- ★ [The Day the Dinosaurs Died](#) - Explore the evidence from around the world that finally explained the disappearance of these giant reptiles.

[Where on Google Earth is Carmen Sandiego](#) - Track Carmen around the world and see if you can recover the stolen loot.



We encourage you and your family to enjoy all of these fun activities and boost those geo-literacy skills as we celebrate Geography Awareness Week. Don't forget to keep exploring all through the rest of the year to show your love for geography!

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Books available from the Washoe County Library System

[*Geography*](#) by Dan Gutman

[*Geography: A Visual Encyclopedia*](#) by John Woodward

[*Geography Crafts For Kids: 50 Cool Projects & Activities For Exploring The World*](#) by Joe Rhatigan and Heather Smith

[*Geography I Need to Know: Maps and Globes*](#) [DVD videorecording], Wonderscape Entertainment

[*Got Geography: Poems*](#) selected by Lee Bennett Hopkins

[*Social Studies Kids: Communities and geography*](#) [DVD videorecording], Wonderscape Entertainment

[*State Capitals*](#) [DVD videorecording], JWM Productions, LLC

More topics to explore:

- Armchair travel (authors like Bill Bryson, Bruce Chatwin, William Least Heat-Moon, Michael Palin, Paul Theroux)
- Foreign language instruction books (companies like Barron's, Little Pim, Pimsleur, Standard Deviants)
- Maps and atlases (organizations like DeLorme, National Geographic, Rand McNally)
- Science writing (authors like Jared Diamond, Elizabeth Kolbert, John McPhee, David Quammen, Dava Sobel)
- Travel and guidebooks (series like Fodor's, Frommer's, Lonely Planet, Rough Guides)

Other resources available from the Washoe County Library System

[Online databases](#) for geography research (ABC-CLIO, Explora, Online Nevada Encyclopedia, United States Geography, World Book Online, World Geography, and more)

[Libby](#) for downloadable full-color, interactive magazines, free with your library card (*Australian Geographic*, *Asian Geographic*, *National Geographic*, *National Geographic Kids*, *National Geographic Traveler*, *Smithsonian*, and more)

Videos

Canadian Geographic, "What is Geography?" <https://youtu.be/tOqmtWQa-JQ>



National Geographic, Resource Library, "What Can You Do With Geography?"

<https://www.nationalgeographic.org/media/what-you-can-do-geography/>

National Geographic, Resource Library, "What is Geo-literacy?"

<https://www.nationalgeographic.org/media/what-is-geo-literacy/>

Websites

Geography, The Science of Our World <https://www.geography.com/>

Google Earth, Explore Earth https://www.google.com/intl/en_us/earth/education/explore-earth/

National Geographic Kids, Geography <https://www.natgeokids.com/uk/category/discover/geography/>

National Geographic Society, Geography Awareness Week: Igniting The Spirit Of Exploration

<https://www.nationalgeographic.org/education/programs/geography-awareness-week/>

National Geographic Society, Resource Library, Celebrate Geography Awareness Week

<https://www.nationalgeographic.org/idea/celebrate-geography-awareness-week/>

