



Map Skills (2-Day)

By: Lori McDonald
Elementary school teacher; Ed.D. in School Leadership/Administration

Social Studies
Grades 6–8



Introduction

This is a 2-day introductory unit on basic map skills. This can be expanded upon to include more advanced skills after these 2 days.

Learning Objectives

- The learner will be able to identify different kinds of maps, map tools, and directions on a map.
- The learner will recognize lines of latitude and longitude and use them to identify locations.

Materials Needed

- Different maps (amusement parks, hiking trails, favorite spots for students, etc.),
- Chart paper or board
- Projector
- Paper for sorting activity and “ticket out of class”
- Copies of United States map with clearly marked lines of latitude and longitude

Procedure

Day 1

1. Introduce Vocabulary – **political map, physical map, historical map, compass rose, cardinal directions, intermediate directions**
2. Project for students three different types of maps – political, physical, and historical, which each map labeled accordingly. Allow them time to work with a partner to determine what they think the differences in the three maps are. Give the pairs of students the opportunity to respond with what they have noticed that is unique about each map. Record the findings on a board or chart paper so students can see.
3. After all the pairs have contributed and all findings have been recorded, have students discuss the possible purpose of each map.
4. Restate these purposes that students have given you in written form for students to write in their notes.
For example:
 - **Political maps** show the boundaries of countries, states counties, cities, etc.
 - **Physical maps** show natural features of the land including landforms.

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- **Historical maps** show a place in another point in history in order for people to see how things were different, politically or physically, in the past.
5. Next, look at the following map tools: **compass rose, cardinal directions, and intermediate directions**. This will be a review for students. Discuss the purpose of each one of these tools.
 6. Partner practice – to review what each of these items is the students will work with their previous partner to sort the following terms into three boxes:
 - Three boxes - **Map Tools, Map Types, Direction**
 - Terms - **Compass Rose, Cardinal Directions, Political, Map, North, Physical Map, Southwest, Intermediate Directions, East, Historical Map, Northeast**
 7. After the students have had time to complete this activity, check it together. Have students correct their mistakes.

Day 2

Warm-Up – Discuss with students what they have already learned about maps. Divide students into small groups. Give each group an outline map of the world and the United States. Each group will look at the maps and circle familiar map features or tools that they recognize from yesterday’s lesson or previous studies. Call on each group to report their observations and record them. Students may also recognize countries, their own state, bodies of water, etc.

1. Give each student a map of the United States with clearly marked lines of latitude and longitude. Introduce the new vocabulary –
 - Latitude – imaginary lines that run in an east-west direction across Earth marked on maps
 - Longitude – imaginary lines that run in a north-south direction across Earth marked on maps
2. Give some examples of using latitude and longitude. On the projected map, find your city/town. Have students find it on their maps and mark the location. Then, show them how to find the latitude and longitude of that location.
3. Continue by showing students how to find locations by giving them latitude and longitude and asking them to name the city at that location.
4. Allow some time for guided practice by naming some cities and asking students to name the latitude and longitude and the reverse. Walk around and monitor as students work to find locations, providing guidance as needed.



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Evaluation

Have students complete the following formative assessment as an exit ticket.

- Use your map to list states in the United States that are on the same line of latitude.
- Use your map to list states in the United States that are on the same line of longitude.