

Young Geographer of the Year Competition 2026

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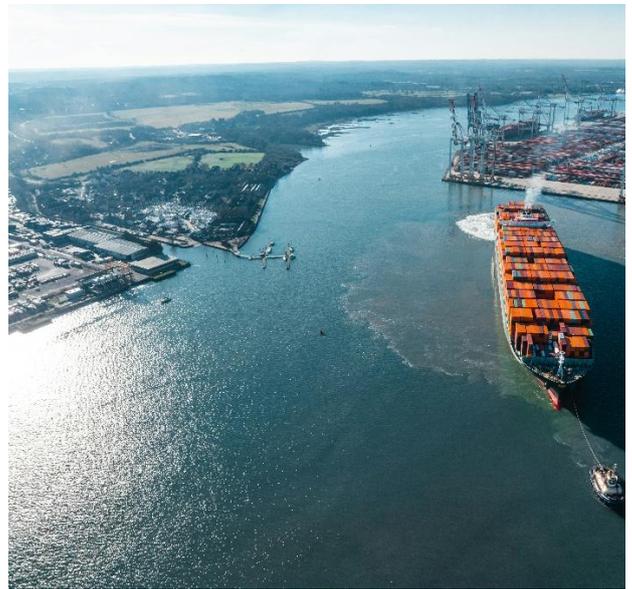
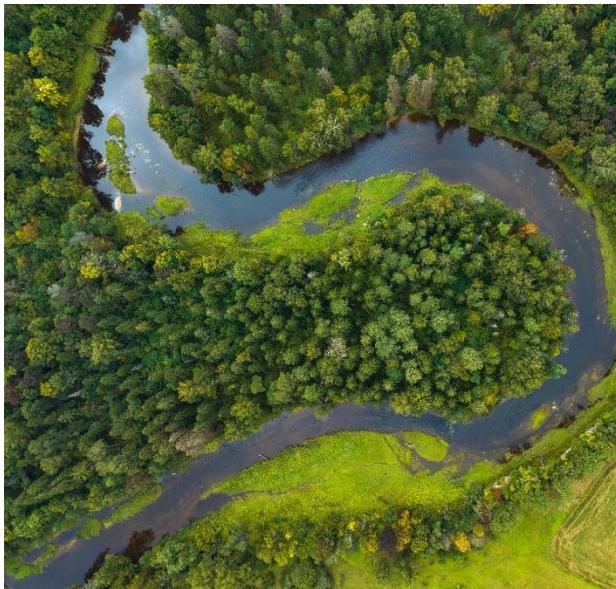
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The theme for the Young Geographer of the Year competition 2026 is:

From Source to Sea



Let's explore the world's river systems.

Rivers are the lifeblood of our planet - carrying water, nutrients and energy across vast distances. They sustain communities, support wildlife, and shape the landscapes we depend on to live. From the smallest stream to the widest river, these flowing waters connect mountains to oceans and people to nature. They remind us that a sustainable and thriving environment is not just a resource, but a responsibility that we all share. As we learn more about the world's rivers, we also understand that it is our duty to protect them for future generations.

As they transport freshwater across continents, sustaining ecosystems, wildlife, and the billions of people who rely on them for drinking water, rivers also shape our landscapes through erosion and deposition. Carving valleys, forming striking features, creating fertile floodplains ideal for farming and influencing settlement, rivers provide physical boundaries between places and have also facilitated the growth of many of the urban areas we inhabit today. Rivers play a key role in the global water cycle, carrying rainfall from source to sea and helping to regulate climate. They provide transportation opportunities, trade routes, tourism, recreation and sustain the lives of a wide range of species, supporting fish, birds, mammals, and countless aquatic organisms.

But rivers can also be a source of conflict; where water is a shared commodity 'water wars' can be common. When flood management or hydroelectric power produced by dams happens upstream, dire consequences can fall on countries located downstream. And who owns this water? Industry

and the misuse of rivers can lead to pollution and the degradation of river ecosystems, threatening both wildlife and the communities that depend on rivers to live. Flooding is a big issue, and the management of rivers to predict, mitigate and prevent the impacts of flooding is essential for protecting communities, safeguarding ecosystems, and reducing long-term environmental and economic damage.

The Society invites you to create a poster (or Esri StoryMap for KS5) that explores rivers, showcasing the processes that shape them, the features they create, and the many ways they are used by both people and nature. We are looking for eye catching, creative and informative posters and StoryMaps that delve into topics such as energy production, conflict, ecosystems, sustainability, trade and more – we want to see you demonstrate your understanding of why our rivers are so important. Your posters and StoryMaps should think about themes across human and physical geography.

Entering the competition

The competition has four categories.

- Key Stage 2 (pupils aged 7-11)
- Key Stage 3 (pupils aged 11-14)
- Key Stage 4 or GCSE (pupils aged 14-16)
- Key Stage 5 or A Level (pupils aged 16-18)

Students should enter the Key Stage category they are in on the day they submit their entry.

Entries should be created individually by students – entries created by groups of students will not be accepted.

Entries from all schools, UK and international, are being accepted. Students are welcome to submit entries either individually or via their school.

There are two submission pathways. We will be asking participants to provide details of their school type when they submit their entry, and participants will need to fill in the correct online form that matches their school type and then upload their documents into the correct file area. Entries submitted into the wrong school type folder when uploading may be discounted. We will be selecting one winner and one highly commended entry for each age category from entries from state funded schools (including home schooled students), and one winner and one highly commended entry for each age category from entries from independent and international schools. International schools that are not fee-paying should still enter via the international school route.

The deadline for receipt of all entries is **Friday 2 October 2026 at 5.00pm. Entries received after this time will not be accepted.** We recommend that you submit your entries in good time before the closing date, in case you have issues uploading the documents and need to contact us. We ask that schools run an in-house competition and only send their top 10 entries into the national competition. Due to the volume of entries the Society cannot enter into correspondence about individual entries or provide any feedback. We will contact you/your student if you/they are selected as a winner. All winners and highly commended students will be invited to an Awards Ceremony at the Society in London on Friday 27 November 2026.

All entries **must be made as an online submission via our website**

<https://www.rgs.org/schools/competitions/young-geographer-of-the-year>

Submissions can be made by individual students or teachers. Teacher and school contact details must be provided. The entry form should only be filled in and submitted when you are ready to upload your entries. You do not need to pre-register to take part in the competition.

Entries **must use the file name/type requirements** specified on the online application form, or

