

Map Skills

Module Overview

Maps have long been a source of interest and intrigue. Early maps were largely pictorial and often inaccurate. Over the years maps have become more and more accurate, with the use of satellite imagery. Although maps are now widely available online, paper maps are still highly valued. A secure understanding of maps underpins all areas of the geography curriculum.

This six-lesson unit on map skills is designed so that one lesson will be taught in each year group from years one through six. By the end of each unit, students will have covered and developed necessary skills. The earlier lessons can be used by older pupils too, to ensure they have the baseline knowledge necessary for more advanced map reading activities. The later lessons in the sequence can also be used by younger pupils to stretch the more able.

To gain further understanding of how map skills are taught in the primary curriculum, please visit the [RGS website](#) to watch a subject knowledge animation. This animation can be used by teachers or pupils, and explains essential map skills in a visual, clear and concise way.

Lesson One: Map Skills Year one

This lesson begins with pupils looking at a variety of maps, including floor maps, globes and street maps. They should be allowed to feel and touch the maps as much as possible. The idea of four compass points is introduced, and pupils are taught to give directions. They then use photographs of the classroom to create their own 2-D plan of the classroom on paper.

Lesson Two: Map Skills Year two

This lesson extends the idea of the map beyond the classroom to the whole school. Pupils select locations to photograph within the school grounds. They pass these photos to another group who need to find where the photos were taken and pupils use compass points to give directions to each place. Finally, they create a map of the school grounds with the photo locations as key landmarks.

Lesson Three: Map Skills Year three

Lesson three starts by giving pupils a sense of where the school is located within the wider world. They use eight compass points to describe the location of UK capital cities and learn about the countries that make up the United Kingdom.

Lesson Four: Map Skills Year four

Lesson four focuses on Ordnance Survey maps and basic map reading skills. After examining a map of the local area and discussing what they can see on it, pupils are taught to read four-figure grid references. Pupils are also introduced to the geographical concept of scale, and map symbols. They learn why maps require the use of symbols and a map key. The lesson ends with a game of bingo using map symbols maps.

Lesson Five: Map Skills Year five

This lesson builds on the previous lesson, but it has a greater emphasis on physical geography. Pupils learn how hills and valleys are represented on OS maps, through the use of contour lines. Building a 3-D model from contour lines helps to develop their understanding of how physical features are represented on 2-dimensional maps.

Lesson Six: Map Skills Year six

The final lesson, lesson six, further develops pupils' use of OS maps. They learn to read six-figure grid references and practise locating the school, their house and significant buildings on a map of the local area through the use of hard-copy maps and digital maps. They will then use their acquired skills to complete a treasure map quiz. There is also an end of unit assessment.

Subject Content Areas

- **Locational knowledge:**

KS1: Use maps to name and locate the world's seven continents and five oceans, focussing on the UK. Name, locate and identify characteristics of the four countries and capital cities of the UK and its surrounding seas.

KS2: Locate the world's countries using maps, concentrating on environmental regions, key physical and human characteristics, countries, and major cities. Name and locate countries and cities of the UK, geographical regions and key human and physical characteristics.

- **Place knowledge:**

KS1: Develop knowledge of place, focussing on local area.

KS2: Understand geographical similarities and differences through studying maps of the UK. Develop contextual knowledge of the location of globally significant places.

- **Human geography:**

Use geographical vocabulary to refer to features on a map or plan (city, town, village, factory, farm, house, port, harbour, shop.)

- **Physical geography:**
Use geographical vocabulary to refer to features on a map (beach, cliff, coast, forest, hill, mountain, sea, ocean, river, soil, valley, vegetation).
- **Geographical skills and fieldwork:** Interpret a range of sources of geographical information, including maps, diagrams, globes, aerial photographs. Communicate geographical information in a variety of ways, including through maps.
KS1: Use simple compass directions (North, South, East and West) and locational and directional language [for example, near and far; left and right], to describe the location of features on a map. Devise a simple map, and use and construct basic symbols in a key.
KS2: Name and locate counties and cities of the United Kingdom. Use the eight points of a compass, four and six-figure grid references, symbols and key (including the use of Ordnance Survey maps) to build their knowledge of the United Kingdom and the wider world.