

The U.S. National Geography Standards

Element 1: The World in Spatial Terms

Geography studies the relationships between people, places and environments by mapping information about them into a spatial context. The geographically informed person knows and understands:

1. How to use maps and other geographic representations, tools, and technologies to acquire, process, and report information from a spatial perspective.
2. How to use mental maps to organize information about people, places, and environments in a spatial context.
3. How to analyze the spatial organization of people, places, and environments on Earth's surface.

Element 2: Places and Regions

The identities and lives of individuals and peoples are rooted in particular places and in those human constructs called regions. The geographically informed person knows and understands:

4. The physical and human characteristics of places.
5. That people create regions to interpret Earth's complexity.
6. How culture and experience influence people's perceptions of places and regions.

Element 3: Physical Systems

Physical processes shape Earth's surface and interact with plant and animal life to create, sustain, and modify the ecosystems. The geographically informed person knows and understands:

7. The physical processes that shape the patterns of Earth's surface.
8. The characteristics and spatial distribution of ecosystems on Earth's surface.

Element 4: Human Systems

People are central to geography in that human activities help shape Earth's surface, human settlements and structures are part of Earth's surface, and humans compete for control of Earth's surface. The geographically informed person knows and understands:

9. The characteristics, distribution, and migration of human populations on Earth's surface.
10. The characteristics, distribution, and complexity of Earth's cultural mosaics.
11. The patterns and networks of economic interdependence on Earth's surface.
12. The processes, patterns, and functions of human settlement.
13. How the forces of cooperation and conflict among people influence the division and control of Earth's surface

Element 5: Environment and Society

The physical environment is modified by human activities largely as a consequence of the ways in which human societies value and use Earth's natural resources and human activities are also influenced by Earth's physical features and processes. The geographically informed person knows and understands:

- 14. How human actions modify the physical environment.
- 15. How physical systems affect human systems.
- 16. The changes that occur in the meaning, use, distribution, and importance of resources.

Element 6: The Uses of Geography

Knowing geography enables people to understand the relationships between people, places, and environments over time. The geographically informed person knows and understands:

- 17. How to apply geography to interpret the past.
- 18. How to apply geography to interpret the present and plan for the future.