

# Let's Do Geography!

**G**eography is the study of Planet Earth. When we study geography we look at where things are (places) and their natural surroundings (settings). Geography covers such things as climate, plants, animals, and natural resources (physical characteristics) that affect the Earth, as well as how people affect it. Geographers ask and answer such questions as "Where is something? Why is it there? How does it relate to other things?"

Here are some geography questions you can discuss with your child:

- Where are we? Teach your child your address. Look at maps together to see where you live and where the school is. How close or far are you from the school?
  - What makes a place special? List some things about where you live. What is the climate like? What kinds of plants and animals live in your part of the country?
  - What impact have people had on where you live? Decide whether you live in a city, the suburbs, a town, or the country. Are there many wild animals where you live?
  - How do things--people, goods, information--move from place to place where you live? List all the places your food comes from. If you looked at the whole earth, how would you divide it up to study--by location on the map, by languages spoken, by type of weather, or by type of plants and animals? Think of other places in the country and the world that are like where you live.
  - What does it mean to live in a global society? Make a chart of the things that are happening in other parts of the world that affect you.
  - Where is it? When you talk with your child, use words that indicate direction: "We are going north to New York to visit Grandma," or "The school is three blocks west of our apartment building."
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## Geography Activities

### Everything in Its Place

*for pre-schoolers*

1. When you talk with your children, use words like "above" and "below" to let them know where things are.

2. When picking up toys, say, "Please put your doll in the basket on the right." or, "The frog goes on the left side of the shelf."
3. When talking about things, describe the color, size, and shape. These words are used in geography, too.

### **Build a Block**

*for young children (K--3rd grade)*

Make a three-dimensional map of your home or neighborhood using milk cartons, small boxes, and toilet paper or paper towel rolls for buildings. You can do it this way:

1. Draw a map of the block on a large piece of paper, a cut open paper bag, or a piece of cardboard.
2. Cut up the milk cartons or other boxes and place them on the block where the buildings are.
3. Use bottle tops, pieces of fabric, paper, or yarn to show other things on your block such as fences, sidewalks, trees, cars, trucks, or mailboxes.

### **What's the Weather Like?**

*for older children (4th-6th grade)*

1. Watch the weather forecast on television or read the weather map in the newspaper.
2. Write down the forecasts for a week or more or save the maps.
3. Look for the changes in the weather over time.
4. Compare the weather in your town to the weather in other parts of the country.
5. How will the weather in another part of the country affect what is happening in your area?

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**Resources:** Information based on *Helping Your Child Learn Geography*; *Geography for Life: National Geography Standards, 1994*; *Outstanding Practices in Geography and History Education*. For more information, please contact the National Library of Education, 555 New Jersey Avenue, NW, Washington, DC, 20208, telephone 1-800-424-1616. Other materials from the Family Involvement Partnership for Learning--for families, schools, employers, and community groups -- can be obtained by calling 1-800-USA-LEARN.

**Possible Sources of Maps:** *Local Chambers of Commerce, Newspapers, Public Transportation Headquarters, & Telephone Books*