

Teaching Latitude and Longitude

The greatest difficulty that students have with latitude and longitude is understanding degrees, minutes and seconds as units of measurement.

Suggestion

Conduct this activity in conjunction with the website activity on latitude and longitude.

Objective

Students will learn how to read latitude and longitude on a map.

Materials

Large global map

Large topographic map with minutes and seconds

Activity

The teacher should use a large wall map of the country to demonstrate latitude and longitude. A few different cities should be chosen as focal points. Begin with latitude:

1. Find the equator.
2. Determine whether the city in focus is north or south of the equator.
3. Determine the two lines of latitude that the city is in between.
4. Split the area between the two lines in half.
5. Determine if the city is closer to the midpoint or to one of the two lines of latitude.
6. Estimate the degrees latitude.
7. Repeat the above steps for the longitude.

To integrate minutes and seconds, use a large topographic map that shows minutes and seconds. Follow the steps above, dividing each section in two and estimating the measurement to seconds. Explain that minutes and seconds are simply units of measurement that are more accurate than degrees.