
I N S I G H T S

FOR FAMILIES

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Helping children understand and use maps

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❖ **INSIGHTS FOR FAMILIES** is provided by your child's school in recognition of your role as a partner in education. Adapted by Judy McDaniel, communications consultant, from an article published on <http://about.com>.

Put your child's natural curiosity to work. Even small children can learn to read simple maps of their school, neighborhood, and community. Here are some simple map activities you can do with your children.

- ❖ Go on a walk and collect natural materials such as acorns and leaves to use for an art project. Map the location where you find those items.
- ❖ Create a treasure map for children to find hidden treats in the yard or inside your home. This is a fun idea for birthday parties. Also, encourage children to play this game with one another by hiding the "treasure" and drawing the map. On some rainy day, suggest they draw imaginary treasure maps just for fun.
- ❖ See if you can find your street on a local area map. Point out where your relatives or your children's best friends live.
- ❖ Find the nearest park, lake, mountain, or other cultural or physical feature on a map. Then talk about how these features affect your children's lives. Living near the ocean may make your climate moderate and bring tourists to the area. Mountains may block some weather fronts and offer recreational opportunities, such as camping and hiking.
- ❖ Point out different kinds of maps to your children, such as a state highway map, a city or town map, a bus route map or shopping mall map, and discuss their different uses.
- ❖ Before taking a trip, show your children a map of where you are going and how you plan to get there. Look for other routes you could take and talk about why you chose the one you did. Maybe they can follow the map as you travel; for example, when you get to one town, ask them to tell you the next town.
- ❖ Encourage your children to make their own maps using legends (keys to what the pictures or symbols in a map mean). They can draw fanciful maps of places or journeys they have read about. Older children might draw a layout of their neighborhood.
- ❖ Keep a globe or a world map near the television and use it to locate places talked about on television programs, or use a U.S. map to follow the travels of your favorite sports team.
- ❖ Look at a map of your state. Look at the numbers at the bottom and the letters at the right and imagine lines extended that divide the map into a grid. Ask children to locate a town in a certain part of the grid.
- ❖ On a globe or world map, ask your child to point with a finger to the North Pole, South Pole, and the Equator. Ask which is the Western Hemisphere, the Eastern Hemisphere. Find the lines running from the North Pole to the South Pole and identify them as lines of longitude. Find the lines that run parallel to the Equator which are the lines of latitude. Try to figure out roughly the degrees of longitude and latitude for where you live in order to discover your global address.