

Maps and map skills

Directions: Read the informational (expository text) below and highlight key terms or phrases about each major type of map.

There are many different types of maps that someone can use to find information on a location or topic they are looking at. However, the 3 main divisions of maps are the following: political, physical, and thematic maps. Let's take a small look at each of these maps below.

Political maps are probably the types of maps that people most often think of when they hear the word map. They typically show various countries and the border lines that separate those countries from one another. In order to distinguish the countries from one another, they are usually different colors so they stand out. Political maps usually also show major cities of each country such as each country's capital. Sometimes, maps can change as countries cease to exist or new countries are added. For example, less than 30 years ago, the Soviet Union was a major country in the world. However, it is no longer a country. South Sudan did not exist 10 years ago, but now does as a country in Africa.

Physical maps are types of maps that show the natural landscape of an area. They can depict various landforms such as major mountains, rivers, lakes, etc. of an area. They let people know what the terrain of an area is like. Shading can be used to show the elevation of that country. Typically, more brown colors on these maps = a higher elevation while more green colors = a lower elevation. Many times, physical maps can be portrayed in a 3-D like manner.

Finally, thematic maps are the third major type of map. They are also known as special purpose maps. These are completely different from the first 2 types of maps in what they show. As their name states, they are focused on specific themes. They might show the climate of a certain region or compare how wealthy countries around the world are. They can demonstrate information such as what % of people in particular countries are literate (can read and write). They might display information such as how many people voted in a country for a certain political candidate. A major feature of thematic maps are their legends or map keys. The key unlocks the map for people to understand what is being shown and how to interpret it.

Major map tools:

Directions: Use the Word Bank below to fill in the proper term that fits each definition.

1. **Compass rose**- map tool that gives the cardinal directions of north, south, east, and west. Also shows intermediate directions- (northwest, southwest, etc)
2. **Scale** - map tool that shows what a certain distance on the map stands for. For example, 1 inch can equal 3,000 miles or more.
3. **Legend**- the box on the map that uses symbols to show what different items mean. It is also known as the **key**.
4. **Longitude**- imaginary lines that run north to south around the globe and are used to locate a certain place.
5. **Latitude**- imaginary lines that run east to west around the globe and are used to locate a certain place.

Word bank

Latitude legend key longitude scale compass rose