

● What basic facts do you know about the US?

The United States of America / the US / the USA... comprises / is made up of 50 states and a federal district (District of Columbia). The US is bordered to the north by Canada and to the south by Mexico. Two states, Alaska and Hawaii, are not directly attached to the continental US. It is the third most populated country in the world, with more than 300 million inhabitants / people. The main / most widely spoken language in the United States is English, but in many areas Spanish is spoken.

● What can you tell me about the American system of government?

The US is a federal state / a union of self-governing states united by a central government. The head of each state is the governor. The federal government consists of three branches. The law-making / legislative power is concentrated in / lies with Congress which is made up of / divided into the Senate and the House of Representatives. There are 435 members in the House of Representatives and 100 senators, two from each state. The president is the head of the executive power / federal government. The Supreme Court exercises / holds judicial power.

● What do you know about American history?

The US gained its independence from Britain on 4 July, 1776. It is now celebrated as Independence Day / the Fourth of July. The American Civil War was fought from 1861–1865. Eleven Southern slave-keeping states declared their separation from the United States and formed the Confederate States of America / the Confederacy. They fought against the Northern States / the Union / the states where slavery had been abolished. After the surprise Japanese attack on the US Naval base in Pearl Harbor, Hawaii, on December 7, 1941, the US entered into the Second World War. The US suffered from a terrorist attack on September 11, 2001, during which the World Trade Towers in New York City were completely destroyed and the Pentagon in Washington, DC was severely damaged.

● Could you describe some of the geographical features of the US?

The US is a... land / country of many... diverse / different / various terrains / landscapes / natural / geographical features. The Rocky Mountains cross from the west to the centre of the country. The highest mountain in the US is Mount McKinley (6,194 m) in Alaska. The Great Lakes – Huron, Ontario, Michigan, Erie and Superior – are found on the US border with Canada. The Grand Canyon is a large canyon system in Arizona.

● Could you tell me something more specific about the individual states?

Delaware was the first state that ratified the Constitution of the United States, so it is nicknamed The First State. Alaska is the largest state and has the longest coastline in the US. The most populous state / the state with the most people... is California. Texas is the second largest state by area / size and population / number of people. Florida is nicknamed "the Sunshine State" and is known for the spacecraft launchings from Cape Canaveral.

● What are some of the most famous cities in America? What can you tell me about them?

Washington, DC is the capital city. New York City is the largest city by... population / number of people. It is an important centre of... business / finance / art / media. Los Angeles is... famed / renowned for films and the famous actors / actresses. New Orleans is known as the birthplace of jazz and as the centre of French-American culture. It was badly damaged by Hurricane Katrina in 2005. Atlanta, in Georgia, is the home of Coca Cola and CNN.

● Could you describe some typical American sports and pastimes?

Baseball is called America's favourite pastime. It is a bat-and-ball sport. A person hits a ball thrown at them and tries to run around a playing field called a diamond. American football requires players to run with an egg-shaped ball over the line of the opposition. Players wear protective padding and helmets. Another popular sport is basketball. The object / aim... of the game is to throw a ball through a hoop / basket.

● Who are some famous people from America?

One of the most famous / well-known US writers is... Ernest Hemingway, who was both an author and a journalist... F. Scott Fitzgerald, whose novel *The Great Gatsby* focuses on life after the First World War... Emily Dickinson, a 19th-century poet. America / The US is also well known for its movie industry. Some of the most famous actors and actresses are Tom Hanks, Johnny Depp, Marilyn Monroe and Meryl Streep. A very famous artist is Andy Warhol, a leading figure in the visual art movement known as pop art.

● Would you like to go to the US? Why? Why not?

Absolutely / sure / yes, I love American... culture / style / humour. It must be a very interesting place. The American landscape is beautiful. The US is the wealthiest nation / country in the world. It would be a good opportunity to make money. No / no way / absolutely not... because American people are superficial / materialistic. There is a lot of crime. It doesn't have such an interesting history.