

Your name:

The UK Linguistics Olympiad 2015



Problem 2: Georgian places

Georgia is a country in Eastern Europe (not be confused with the American state of Georgia). Its language is, of course, called Georgian, and is written in a special alphabet which contains 33 characters, and doesn't distinguish between small and capital letters.

Here are the names of some places in Georgia, written in the Georgian alphabet. Word 6 is the Georgian name for Georgia (which, incidentally, doesn't sound anything like our 'Georgia'), but the others are names of regions. Your clue to the alphabet is that the first five names are listed, in a different order, here: **Kutaisi - Gori - Rustavi - Sokhumi - Telavi**

1	ქუთაისი	
2	რუსთავი	
3	გორი	
4	თელავი	
5	სოხუმი	
6	საქართველო	
7		Samegrelo
8		Imereti
9		Kartli
10		Kakheti

Your job is to fill the gaps in the table. This is where you learn to write Georgian – just like Georgian children!

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Problem 2: Georgian places – solution (14 points)

Scoring:

#1-6 1 point for each correct name (max 6)

#7-10: 2 points for each correct name, 1 for one error. Be generous in accepting their lettering! (max 8)

1	ქუთაისი	Kutaisi
2	რუსთავი	Rustavi
3	გორი	Gori
4	თელავი	Telavi
5	სოხუმი	Sokhumi
6	საქართველო	Sakartvelo
7	სამეგრელო	Samegrelo
8	იმერეთი	Imereti
9	ქართლი	Kartli
10	ქახეთი	Kakheti

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Comments and teacher-tips

The key to this problem lies in words 1-5. Once you've paired the 'English' names (i.e. Georgian names written in our alphabet) with 'Georgian' names (written with the Georgian alphabet), you've really cracked the code. Here's one way to do 1-5:

- Start to identify specific Georgian letters by looking for repetitions – letters that occur in different words. Most obviously, the right-most letter is the same in every name: ო. When you look at the English names, you'll see that they all end in –i, so it's a safe bet that **ო = i**. This clue actually gives you another very important bit of information: Georgian writing reads **from left to right**, just like ours (not to be taken for granted).
- Where else do you find ო? Aha – it's in the middle of name 1. Now look for another English name with 'i' in the middle: *Kutaisi*. So **name 1 must be Kutaisi**.
- You can now identify all the other letters in name 1: ქუთაისი, so:
 - **ქ = k**
 - **უ = u**
 - **თ = t**
 - **ს = a**
- Now you can find other words containing these. As a general rule, vowels are more likely to be repeated across words than consonants are, so start with 'u' and 'a'.
 - Two of the English names have 'u': *Rustavi*, *Sokhumi*. But the 'u' is in different places, so you can see that **Rustavi = word 2** (where the 'u' letter is near the start) and **Sokhumi = word 5**.
 - Similarly, 'a' is in *Rustavi* and *Telavi*. We already know that *Rustavi* = word 2, so *Telavi* must be the other word containing ს, so **Telavi = word 4**
- Only one name is left, so **Gori = word 3**.
- Now you've fixed 1-5, you can go through all the Georgian words writing an English letter over each Georgian letter. The only point that needs any thought here in the name *Sokhumi*, where you'll notice that there's only a single Georgian character for the two English letters *kh*. Why? Think of our 'ch', 'th' and 'sh' – a pair of letters for a single sound. Maybe the same is true of the 'kh' used in the English spelling of Georgian? (And 'kh' is in fact a common spelling for the /x/ sound in Scottish *loch* or German *Bach*.)
- Armed with this collection of English-Georgian equivalences, you're ready to work out, from the Georgian letters that you've already found, that **word 6 = Sakartvelo**.
- And finally, the most exciting bit: writing Georgian for 7-10. Writing an unfamiliar script shows us how much we learned when learning to write legible English in primary school! But most children enjoy trying their hand at exotic scripts, even if they're not very good at it. You could also use this as an excuse for a discussion of the pros and cons of our script. For example, is it better to distinguish capital and small letters? Is our script really easier than Georgian, or is it just more familiar?