



WHY GEOGRAPHY?

Amidst a changing age of transportation and technology, the world as we know it is more interconnected and globalized than ever before. With no funding at the federal level, education in the United States does not emphasize, and in many cases entirely lacks, a geography curriculum. According to a National Geographic survey from 2006:

- 50% of recent high school graduates think China is the world's leading exporter by dollar value
- 70% of recent high school graduates are not able to find North Korea on a map
- 75% believe the world's most widely spoken language is English

Americans' ignorance of the world around them is the result of a failure to invest in their education. Young Americans are unable to make effective decisions, understand geospatial issues, or even recognize their impacts as global citizens. They lack the skills needed for achieving sustainability, economic competitiveness, international cooperation, and national security.

- ***Geography is the only*** core academic subject that has never had a dedicated federal program for research or innovation.
- 70% of 4th, 8th, and 12th graders scored below grade level on a 2010 geography proficiency assessment.
- Without change, over the next decade ***nearly 500,000 geo-technology jobs will go unfilled or over seas.***

The very basis of developing the skills and knowledge essential for interaction in a changing world lies within a well-rounded geography education. (Sources [here](#).)

GEOGRAPHY AWARENESS WEEK

National Geographic created Geography Awareness Week to raise awareness about this deficiency in American education and to excite people about geography both as a discipline and as a part of everyday life. This annual public awareness program (celebrated every third week of November) encourages citizens young and old to think and learn about the significance of place and how we affect and are affected by it.

So what is Geography really and how can I help?

Geography is formally described as the study of places and the relationships between people and their environments, but we've included a few ideas for what that means in real life, and how you can start to learn more.

1 | It's what you eat.

Ever explored the world with a fork and a spoon—or with chopsticks? Explore your food with these [fun "missions."](#)

2 | It's what you buy.

Everything comes from somewhere. A walk through a mall or a grocery store can be a journey around the world. What's in your closet? Your kitchen? Your living room? What are you wearing right now? Check the labels. [Find out](#) where things come from.

3 | It's academic.

When you get to pick your classes, choose ones that have *geography* in their title or focus on learning about the world. Choose [research topics](#) that let you learn about exotic places and geographic issues such as cultural differences and environmental challenges. If you can, sign up for the [AP® Human Geography](#) class.

4 | It's your future.

Geography can take you anywhere and everywhere. One of the hottest fields now is [geographic information systems](#) (GIS). And it's about understanding and tackling challenges—globally and close to home. Check out this [Geography Career Guide](#) for more. When applying to colleges, make sure to consider ones that offer geography courses and a major. [Here's a list](#) of where you can study geography and resources for finding out more about what that's like.

5 | It's important.

You know how important geography is. Now make sure your kids, students, teachers, caregivers, and friends aren't out of the loop. Point them toward [GeographyAwarenessWeek.org](#) for more ideas like these so they can get into geography, too!