

# Where Would We Be Without... **Maps?**

**The Earth is a big place with millions of locations.**

At any one time, we can only be in one place. If we want to go somewhere else, we have to know how to get from where we are to where we want to go. Maps help us get there.

Maps come in a variety of forms. Some maps may be on paper; some may be on a computer screen. Some maps can be on display boards, and some may even be on your phone. Regardless of how a map is displayed, all of them have common characteristics. Can you identify the things all maps have in common?\*

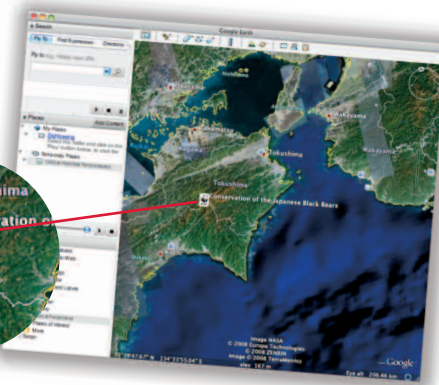
There are two main types of maps—reference maps and thematic maps. **Reference maps** use symbols to represent real-world features. Road maps and political boundary maps are two kinds of reference maps.

Not all maps show us how to get from one place to another. Instead, they try to help us understand the world around us.

**Thematic maps** focus on one topic to show how its patterns can be seen in the world—such as, amount of rainfall or population. These maps use dots, shading or different symbols to show how quantities are different. They also use shapes or colors to show differences in type—like different environmental problems.

Because maps can tell us so many things about our world, it is important to know how to use them. Here are some fun activities you can do with maps.

\* Title, Legend/Key, Direction, Grid System, Scale, Source of Information



1. Make a map that shows how you get from your house to your school. Don't forget to include landmarks.
2. Go on a treasure hunt. Hide a treasure and make a map that shows its location. Then have your friend or parent try to find your hidden treasure. Then switch roles—they hide it and you find it.
3. Get a world map and a newspaper. Try to find all the locations that are mentioned in the newspaper. To make it even more fun, time yourself and then time your friend to see who can do it faster.
4. With a friend, get a state road map. Take turns each finding a town and then telling your friend its name. See how long it takes him/her to find the town. Help him/her out by giving directional clues—go north, farther east.
5. Is there someplace you have always wanted to travel to? How would you get there—car, plane, train, boat? Get a variety of maps and plan your trip. Figure your mode of transportation, how many miles it is, and how long it might take you to get there? Then with your parents' or teacher's permission, take a virtual trip using Google Earth to view images of your home and the location you wish to travel to.
6. With permission, go to [nationalgeographic.com/earth](http://nationalgeographic.com/earth) pulse to explore a variety of thematic maps related to people and our relationship with each other and the planet.

Brought to you by this newspaper, the Missouri Press Association and the Missouri Geographic Alliance.