# Geography A Level

## Recommended Reading Materials:

**A Level Geography Textbook suggestions:**
Frost, L., et al, Edexcel AS/A Level Geography Book 1, Pearson 2016
Dunn, C., Student Guide 1: Edexcel Geography – Tectonic processes and hazards, Landscape systems, process and change
Dunn, C., Student Guide 2: Edexcel Geography – Globalisation & shaping places

**Pre-course Wider Reading Suggestions for Geography A Level:**
Prisoners of Geography, Tim Marshall
Any of these 5 books from Hodder's A- Level Geography Topic Master Series:
Changing Places
Coastal Landscapes
Glaciated Landscapes
Global Governance
Global Systems
The Water and Carbon Cycles

## Documentaries/TV

Any of the Life & Planet Earth Series Box Sets - David Attenborough

Any of Iain Stewart's documentaries – especially:
Earth: The Power of the Planet (2007)
How Earth Made Us (2010)
Rise of the Continents (2013)

An Inconvenient Truth (2006)
Al Gore's ground-breaking climate change documentary.

## Films

The Impossible (2012)
Harrowing movie about the 2004 Boxing Day tsunami which killed over 200,000 people

Slumdog Millionaire (2008)
Life in the slums of Mumbai

Brassed off (1996)
Comedy set during the decline of the UK coal industry in the 1990s

Supervolcano (2008)
Docu-drama set during a possible future VEI 8 eruption of the Yellowstone volcano in the USA

Flood (2007)
Disaster movie - Possible future storm surge overwhelms the Thames Barrier and floods London

## Websites:

Have a look around the Royal Geographical Society (https://www.rgs.org) and the Geographical Association (www.geography.org.uk) websites. Virtual fieldwork to get you thinking about geographical skills – https://www.geography-fieldwork.org/

## Optional tasks to complete:

**Task 1: Read through the specification for the Pearson's Edexcel Geography A level**
https://qualifications.pearson.com/content/dam/pdf/A%20Level/Geography/2016/specification-and-sample-assessments/Pearson-Edexcel-GCE-A-level-Geography-specification-issue-5-FINAL.pdf

**Task 2: The 15 specialised geographical concepts**

There are 15 specialist geographical concepts that keep appearing throughout the Edexcel A Level Geography specification. These concepts are often complex and difficult to define. Try to research what some of these 15 specialised concepts mean

| Specialist Geographical Concept | Physical or Human Geography? |
|---|---|
| Causality | Systems theory concepts<br>Disaster management concepts<br>**Physical & Human Geography Concepts** |
| Systems | |
| Feedback | |
| Equilibrium | |
| Thresholds | |
| Risk | |
| Resilience | |
| Mitigation and adaptation | |
| Sustainability | |
| Interdependence | |
| Globalisation | These ideas come from the Concept of Place<br>**Human Geography Concepts** |
| Inequality | |
| Representation | |
| Identity | |

**Task 3: Research the geography of the coronavirus.**
The spread of the virus is a dramatic example of how interdependent the World has become because of increasing globalisation. The pattern and speed of the spread out of China has been quickest to major global hubs like London and New York which have lots of connections with the rest of the world. Can you find any other examples of human, animal or plant diseases which have been rapidly spread round the World due to our increasing globalisation.

**Task 4: Check your basic map skills**
The details are on the next page – this is definitely worth a look if you have not done a GCSE Geography qualification.

**Task 5: Check your place knowledge**
Do you know where the continents, oceans, major countries of the World are on the World map? If your basic place knowledge is a bit shaky – have a go at the "Where in the World" task towards the end of this document.

Bring any work you do to your first geography lesson at college

we look forward to meeting you in September.

Geography Department, Hereford Sixth Form College

# Basic Map Skills

The following is adapted from the BBC Bitesize GCSE revision website. If you have taken a Geography GCSE you should already have the necessary basic maps skills. However, if you did not take geography at GCSE and your map skills have not been utilized since Year 9 or earlier you should have a look at the following.

To read a map you need to understand compass directions, grid references and the map's key and scale. You need to be able to find features when given a map reference. You also need to be able to describe a feature's location on a map by giving a map reference.

## Introduction

Maps are representations of the world created by people called **cartographers** to help other people navigate the world. Maps contain information tailored to a specific purpose.

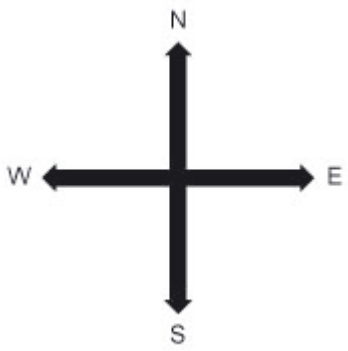
- A **road map**, for example, contains information that helps the reader get from one place to another using a vehicle.
- The maps found in a **geographical atlas** will contain information of less interest to a road user, such as how the land in a place is used, the population density and the political boundaries that exist between regions, states and nations.

There are five fundamental things you need to be familiar with to read a map successfully:

- compass directions
- grid references
- map's key
- title
- scale

## Compass directions

Compass directions are vital for finding your way around a map. There are many ways to remember where each direction goes. You probably learnt a rhyme or a phrase to help you remember - if not, here's one now. Starting at the top and moving clockwise the directions on a compass or map are:




Points of a compass

1. North - Naughty
2. East - Elephants

3. South - Squirt
4. West - Water

# Grid references

OS maps are divided into **numbered squares**. These squares can be used to give a place a four or six-figure grid reference. It is important that you know both **four-figure** and **six-figure** grid references.

## Eastings

Eastings are lines that run up and down the map. They increase in number the further you move east (or right). You can use them to measure how far to travel east.

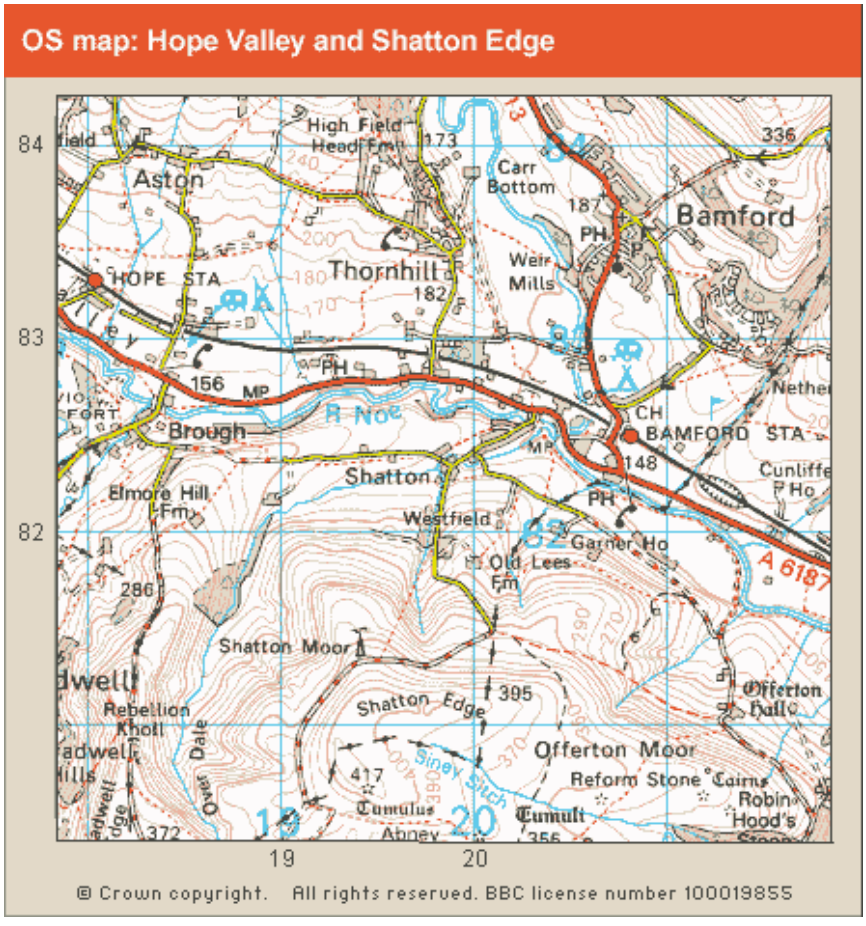
## Northings

Northings are lines that run across the map horizontally. They increase in number the further you move north (or up the map). You can use them to measure how far to travel north.

Remember:

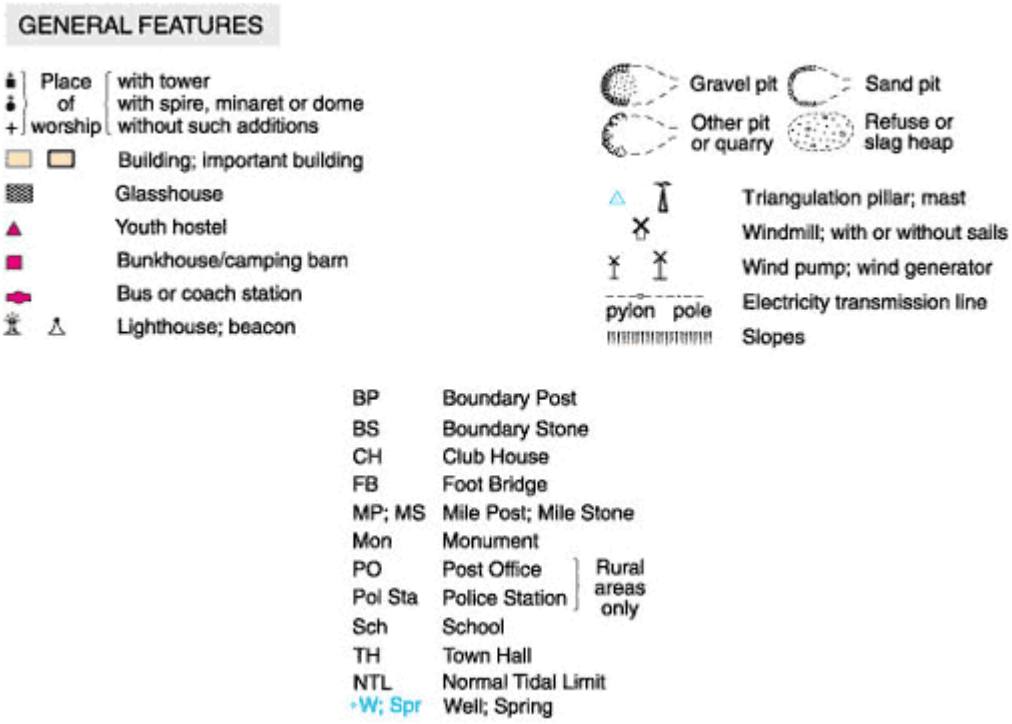
- numbers along the bottom of the map come first and the numbers up the side of the map come second
- the four-figure reference **2083** refers to the square to the **east** of Easting line 20 and **north** of Northing line 83
- the six-figure reference **207834** will give you the exact point in the square **2083** - 7/10s of the way across and 4/10s of the way up

The six-figure reference on the map below shows a **church** in **Bamford**.



# Key

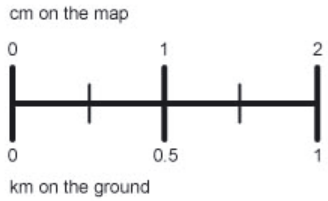
Just like a key to a door, **the key on a map helps you to unlock the information stored in the colours and symbols** on a map. You must understand how the key relates to the map before you can unlock the information it contains. The key will help you to identify types of boundaries, roads, buildings, agriculture, industry, places of interest and geographical features.




# Title

Make sure you **read the title** of a map before you start to use it. This will give you a general idea about the information it stores. While it may appear a straightforward thing to do, under exam conditions, it is easy to confuse different maps or not use the one that is most useful.

# Scale




# Map scale

The scale of a map allows a reader to calculate the **size, height and dimensions of the features** shown on the map, as well as distances between different points. The scale on a map is the ratio between real life sizes and how many times it has been shrunk to fit it on the map.

The scale below is for a 1:50,000 scale map. At this scale, 1 cm on the map represents 50,000 cm on the ground (= 500 m or 0.5 km).

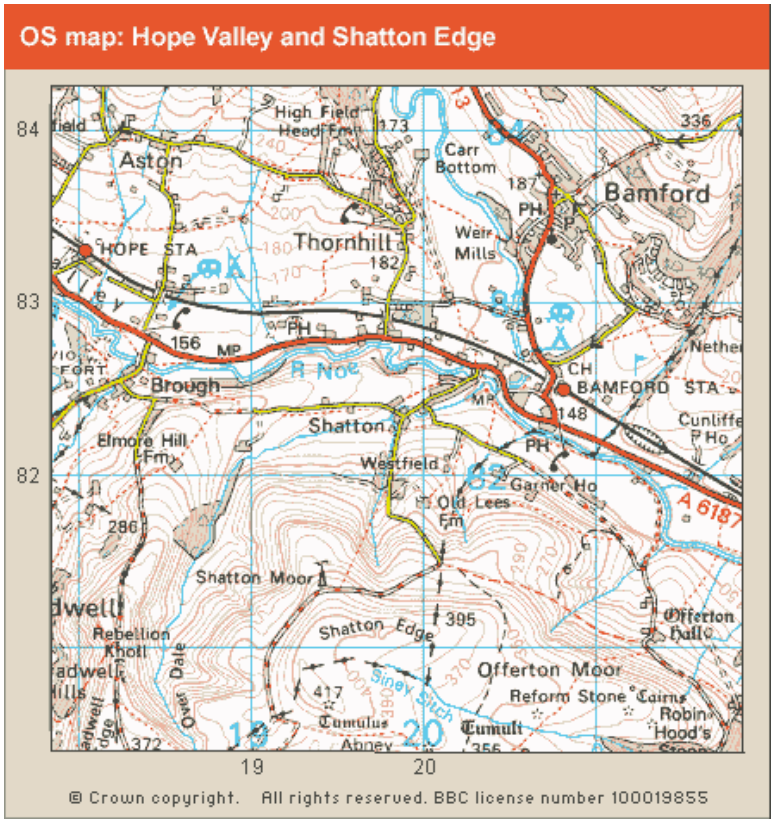
**Ordnance Survey** maps, the most common type of map in the UK, come in several scales.

- Travel maps have a scale of 1:125,000. This means 1 cm on the map represents 125,000 in the real world or 1 cm = 1.25 km. These are used by drivers going long distances.
- Landranger maps are 1:50,000 (1 cm = 500 m). These are useful for drivers going shorter distances.
- Explorer maps are 1:25,000 (1 cm = 250 m). These are useful for walking and other outdoor pursuits.
- Landplan maps are 1:10,000 (1 cm = 100 m). These show individual streets clearly and might be used by town planners.

# Ordnance Survey maps

You will be asked to interpret maps to find out specific information. Being able to distinguish between different types of land use on an Ordnance Survey (OS) map will help you interpret maps during your exams. Here are some things you should brush up on:

- Make sure you can tell the difference between urban and rural land use. Start by looking at the key. Are the features in the key related to the countryside or to towns?
- Look out for features of the urban landscape that are represented in symbols on the OS map. Start by looking at modes of transport (eg junctions of main roads, railways, ports and airports).
- Look for rural features. Study the key carefully to see what different areas of shading on the map represent. For example, different types of farmland will be shaded differently.
- Study the relief of the land on your OS map by looking for the contour lines. Contours will show you where the hills (elevations) and valleys (depressions) are on the map. Contours will often show changes in height of 5 or 10 metres. The closer the contours are together the steeper the slope is. If the contours are far apart, you might be looking at a flat flood plain. On the map below the contours in square **1981** are quite close together - indicating a fairly steep gradient.



# Where in the World is ….. ?

It is clearly impossible and unnecessary (if you have access to an atlas) to know where every place on the earth's surface is located, its population size and chief industries - although many older people believe this is what studying geography is all about, (see the box below: What are geographer's good for?). However, some place knowledge is both useful in everyday life and essential for A level geographers. Examiners take a very dim view of students whose essays discuss "a Third World country like Africa."

The aim of this exercise is to highlight the ***minimum level of place knowledge required***. This information is not taught on the course as it is assumed that you already have this basic level of place knowledge. It is vital as it provides you with a locational framework in which other places you will learn about on the course can be set. Without this basic general geographical knowledge it is impossible to understand material in a geography lesson. If for instance the teacher tells you a certain volcano occurred in Eastern Africa this is meaningless if you have no idea where Africa is!

## Essential Place Knowledge

Make sure you know where the following places are located. Use the two outline maps on the last pages of this document and label all the places.

### PHYSICAL GEOGRAPHY

1) OCEANS
   Three quarters of the earth's surface is covered by salt water. Conventionally this is divided up into 99 separate seas, oceans, gulfs, straits and bays.

   You are not expected to know all of these but you should be able to locate on a world map the 4 main oceans: **a) Pacific Ocean b) Atlantic Ocean c) Indian Ocean d) Arctic Ocean**
   You should also be able to locate some of the seas on the fringe of our own continent of Europe: **e) Irish Sea, f) North Sea, g) Baltic Sea, h) Mediterranean Sea, i) Black Sea, j) Caspian Sea**

2) MOUNTAIN RANGES
   Hereford is quite low lying around 50-80m above sea level, but upland areas like the Black Mountains (800m) are visible from parts of the city.

   There are numerous mountain ranges in the world. You are not expected to know them all, but you should be able to locate and label the three largest mountain ranges on earth: **a). Himalaya, b). Andes, c). Rocky Mountains**.

   Everest (8,848m), Aconcagua 6,960m, and McKinley, 6,194m are the highest points in each of the world's the 3 greatest mountain ranges.

   You should also be able to locate the largest mountain range in western Europe (**Alps**) and two mountain ranges that mark the border of Europe and Asia (**Caucasus, Ural Mountains**).

   The highest point in each is El'brus, 5,642m, Mont Blanc, 4,807m and Naradnaya, 1,894m.

3) CONTINENTS

The word continent is derived from the Latin “terra continens” (continuous land mass). You should be able to locate on a map all 7 continents: **a) North America, b) South America c) Africa d) Europe, e) Asia, f) Australia, g) Antarctica**

## HUMAN GEOGRAPHY

Continents, although traditional, are not a very useful way to divide up the world for Human Geographers. Practically no lives in Antarctica and relatively few in Australia. A more helpful system is to split the world into 12 regions each consisting of countries which share similar cultures.

TWELVE MAJOR HUMAN GEOGRAPHY REGIONS

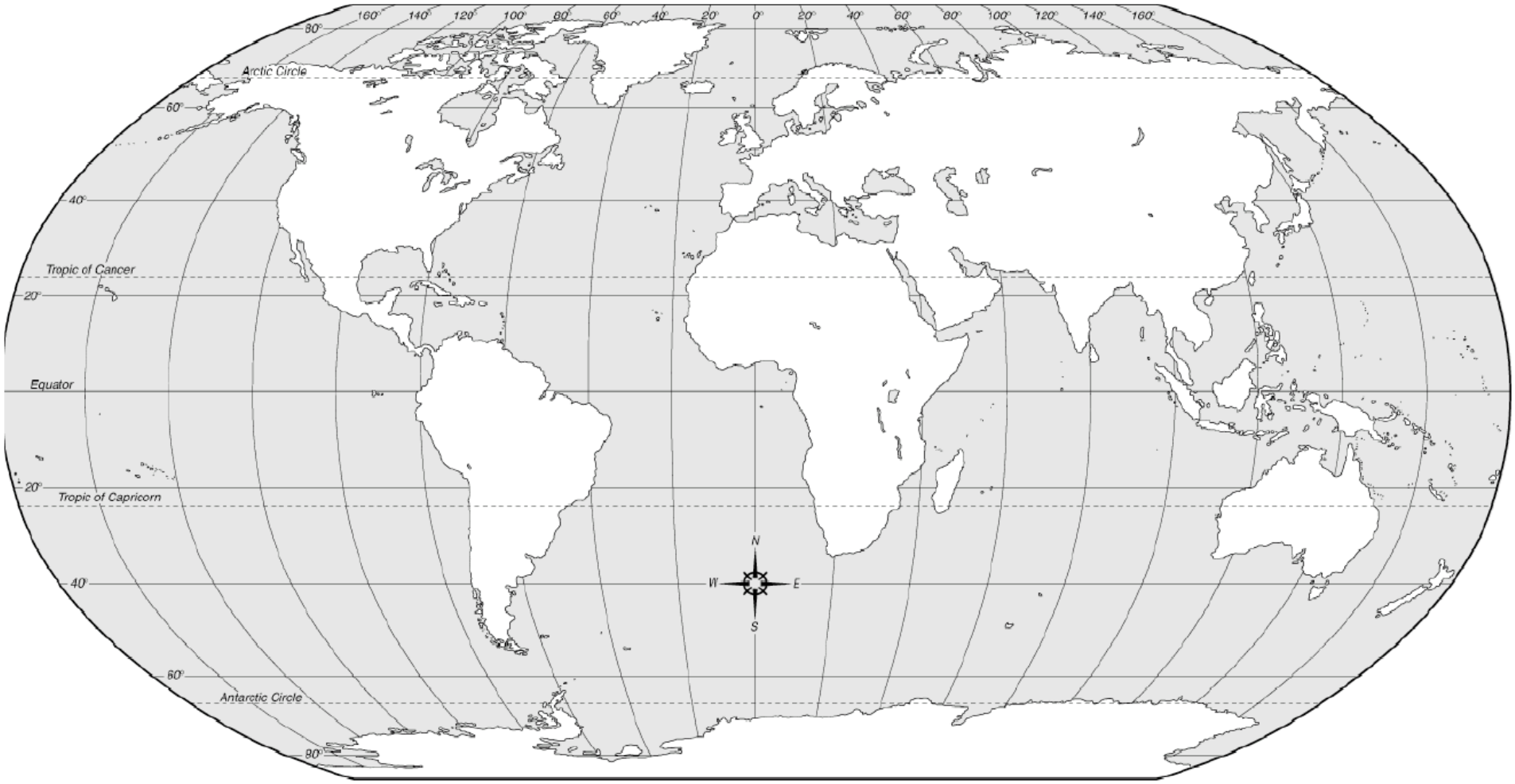
1) North America (USA, Canada & Greenland only)
2) Central America (Mexico to Panama & the Caribbean Islands)
3) South America
4) Europe (Eastern boundary with Asia is marked by the Ural Mountains and the Caucasus).
5) Sub-Sahara Africa (Africa south of the Sahara Desert, all African countries that do not have a coastline on the Mediterranean Sea)
6) Middle East (The Islamic World, North Africa & SW Asia. Turkey and Iran to Morocco)
7) South Asia (the Indian sub continent: India, Bangladesh, Pakistan, Afghanistan and the tiny Himalayan states.
8) South East Asia (except China, Japan & South Korea)
9) China (including Hong Kong & Taiwan)
10) Japan & South Korea
11) Oceania (Australia, New Zealand & Papua New Guinea)
12) Former USSR (former Soviet Union, Mongolia & North Korea)

You should be able to roughly locate these regions on a world map.

COUNTRIES

The most important geopolitical subdivision of the World is the nation state or country. There are almost 200 countries in the world and you are not expected to be able to locate them all, but as an A Level geography student you should be able to locate the 10 largest countries in the world

**Use the CIA World Factbook website or Wikipedia to do a country comparison by population and find the largest 10 countries in the world in terms of their total population.**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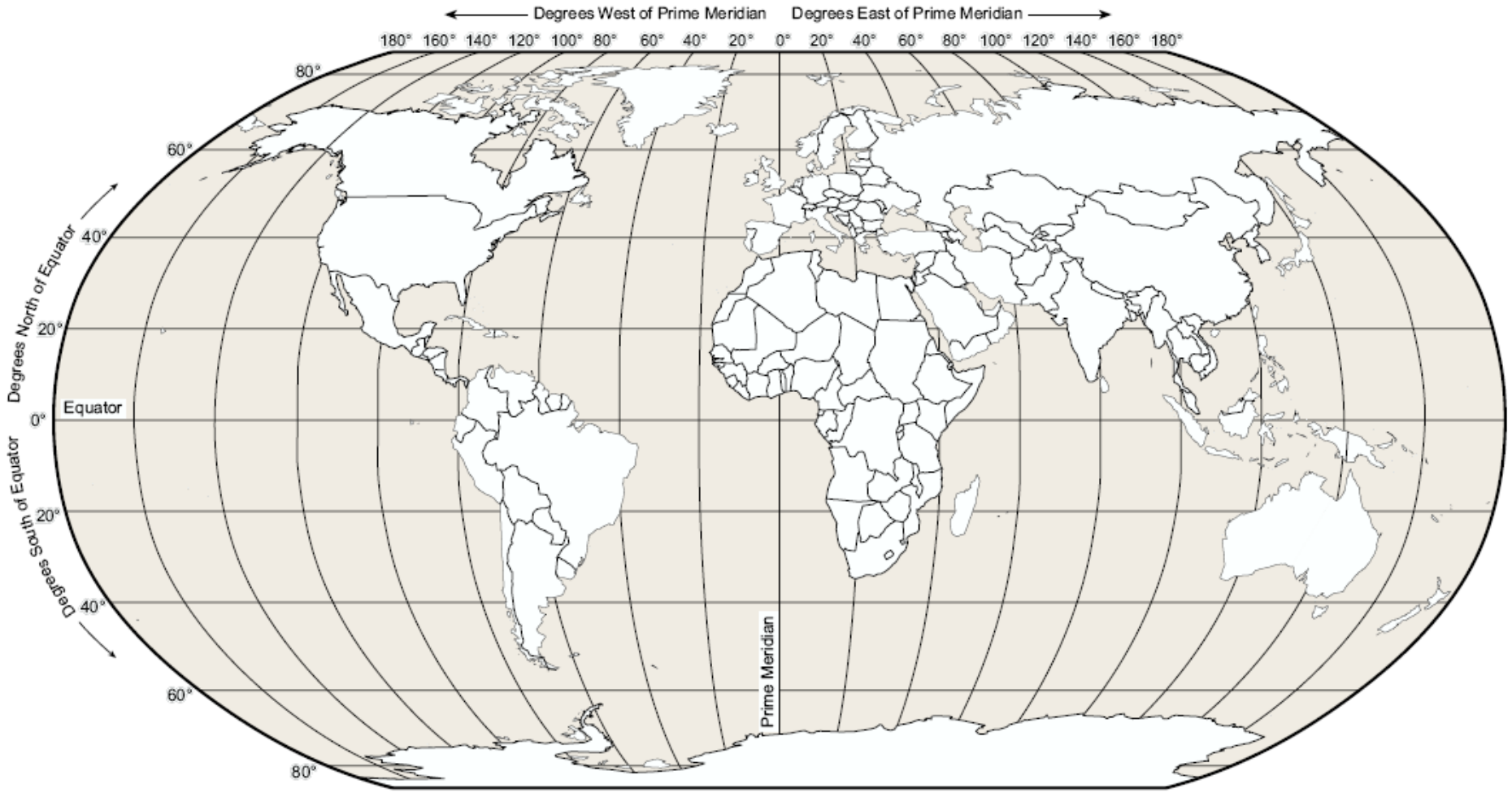
Degrees West of Prime Meridian
Degrees East of Prime Meridian
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Degrees North of Equator
Degrees South of Equator
Prime Meridian