

Year 8 Geography

Geography continues to develop students' understanding of the world by building on the geographical knowledge and skills established in Year 7. In Year 8, students explore increasingly complex interactions between physical and human processes through the study of rivers and cities, development and food resources. They investigate how rivers shape landscapes and influence settlements, why cities grow and differ around the world, how development varies between countries, and how food production and security are affected by physical, economic and environmental factors. Students apply map, data, graphical and numerical skills to a wider range of places and issues, including the UK, Bangladesh and Nigeria, while developing their ability to compare locations, explain geographical relationships and evaluate strategies for managing challenges. By the end of Year 8, students are increasingly able to connect physical and human geography, use evidence to support explanations and recognise how processes operating at local, national and global scales shape places and people.

Terms 1 & 2: Rivers and Cities

Learning Objectives

- What are rivers and why are they important?
- What are drainage basins and how are they linked to the water cycle?
- What is the long profile of the river?
- What landforms are found in the upper course of a river and how are waterfalls created?
- What landforms are found in the middle course of a river and how are meanders created?
- What are the causes and impacts of flooding?
- What are the impacts of flooding in an Advanced Country (UK)?
- What are the impacts of flooding in a Low-Income Country (Bangladesh)?
- Why are many of the world's major cities built along rivers?
- Why is the River Thames so important to London?
- What is urbanisation?
- How is urbanisation different around the world?

What previous knowledge is required?

Students build on Year 7 knowledge of the water cycle, precipitation and the movement of water through the environment. Their Year 7 work on place, population density and distribution provides a foundation for understanding why settlements develop in particular locations and why cities grow. Map, atlas and graphical skills developed in Year 7 are revisited when locating river basins, interpreting long profiles and comparing flood events. Students also draw on their understanding of the UK and London from Our Geography when examining the importance of the River Thames. The topic therefore moves students from describing places and basic physical processes towards explaining how physical and human systems interact.

How will this term's content help with future learning?

This topic provides essential physical geography foundations for Year 9 Water Resources, where students examine water scarcity, future water availability and strategies to increase supply. Understanding urbanisation prepares students for Year 8 Development and later Year 9 Globalisation, where the growth of cities is connected to economic change, migration, trade and TNCs. The contrasting UK and Bangladesh flood examples develop students' ability to compare how levels of development influence vulnerability, impacts and responses, a skill revisited in Year 9 Natural Hazards. Knowledge of drainage basins, river processes and flooding supports future GCSE study of distinctive landscapes, river processes, flood risk and management. Students also develop the ability to interpret maps, hydrographs, photographs and numerical data, preparing them for increasingly complex geographical figures at GCSE. The London and Thames content reinforces the idea that physical geography can influence settlement location, economic activity and urban growth. Overall, students progress from understanding individual river processes to analysing interactions between physical systems, people and places.

Common Misconceptions

- Rivers are simply channels of water; in reality, they are part of wider drainage-basin systems with stores, inputs, transfers and outputs.
- All rivers begin as large channels and start in the sea; most begin as small streams or sources and increase in volume downstream and always end at the sea.
- Waterfalls are man-made features that do not change; in reality they are physical features that retreat over time.
- Meanders are fixed features that do not change; actually erosion and deposition cause them to migrate across the floodplain over time.
- Flooding is always caused by heavy rainfall alone; whereas geology, soil saturation, relief, land use and urbanisation can also increase flood risk.

- Flooding always has greater impacts in advanced (richer) countries because more property is valuable; but vulnerability, preparedness and capacity to respond strongly influence severity of impacts.
- Urbanisation means that a country has a large urban population; it specifically refers to an increasing proportion of people living in towns and cities (urban areas).

National Curriculum / Specification

- Understand key processes in physical geography relating to hydrology.
- Understand key processes in human geography relating to population and urbanisation.
- Understand how human and physical processes interact to influence and change landscapes and environments.
- Use detailed place-based exemplars at a variety of scales to understand physical and human geographical processes.
- Build on knowledge of globes, maps and atlases and apply and develop this knowledge routinely.
- Interpret topographical and thematic mapping and use geographical data to analyse patterns and draw conclusions.

Terms 3 & 4: Development

Learning Objectives

- What is development?
- How do we measure development?
- What is the Human Development Index (HDI)?
- How can we compare development across countries?
- What are the physical (natural) factors that impact development?
- What are the historical factors that impact development?
- What are the economic factors that impact development?
- Where is Nigeria and why is it an EDC?
- What factors make Nigeria an EDC?
- How does Rostow's model of development relate to Nigeria?
- What are the successes and challenges in Nigeria?
- What are the top-down and bottom-up approaches used in Nigeria?

What previous knowledge is required?

Students build on Year 7 Population & India, particularly population change, migration, uneven population distribution and the idea of India as an emerging country. Their earlier place knowledge allows them to locate countries accurately and recognise that countries contain varied physical and human characteristics. Year 7 work on tropical environments and deforestation provides prior understanding of how physical resources and human activity can create both opportunities and challenges. Students also use graphical, numerical and map skills developed throughout Year 7 and the Rivers and Cities topic to interpret development indicators and compare countries. The unit explicitly revisits the idea that countries and regions cannot be understood through a single stereotype or one measure alone but uses social, economic, environmental and political lens to view development.

How will this term's content help with future learning?

Development provides a major conceptual foundation for the remainder of KS3 Geography. Students revisit levels of development in Year 9 Natural Hazards when comparing why earthquakes and tropical cyclones can produce contrasting impacts and responses in ACs and LDCs. Knowledge of emerging economies prepares students for Year 9 Superpowers, where China, India and the BRICS are examined as countries with growing economic and geopolitical influence. The role of trade, investment and economic change links directly to Year 9 Globalisation and the study of TNCs, outsourcing, offshoring and multiplier effects. Nigeria also provides students with detailed place knowledge of Africa before the Year 9 Africa unit, where they examine population, climates, tourism, conflict and underdevelopment across the continent. Evaluating top-down and bottom-up development strategies develops the judgement skills needed for GCSE questions about development and resource management. Students will increasingly be expected to use multiple indicators and place-specific evidence rather than making simple developed/developing country comparisons.

Common Misconceptions

- Development only means becoming richer; development also includes improvements in health, education, living standards and quality of life.
- GDP or GNI alone tells us how developed a country is; a range of economic and social indicators is needed.
- A high national income means everyone in a country is wealthy; averages can hide significant inequalities.
- HDI measures only income; it combines health, education and income dimensions.
- All African countries are poor or underdeveloped; Africa contains countries and regions with very different economies, resources and levels of development.

- Development follows exactly the same pathway in every country; models such as Rostow simplify complex and varied development experiences.
- Top-down approaches are always better than bottom-up approaches, or vice versa; their success depends on scale, context, participation, cost and long-term sustainability.

National Curriculum / Specification

- Extend locational knowledge and deepen spatial awareness of the world's countries, with a focus on Africa and its environmental regions, countries and major cities.
- Understand geographical similarities, differences and links between places through the study of the human and physical geography of a region within Africa.
- Understand key processes in human geography relating to international development and economic activity.
- Use detailed place-based exemplars at a variety of scales to understand human and physical geographical processes.
- Understand how human and physical processes interact to influence and change environments.
- Interpret maps, numerical and quantitative data and multiple sources of geographical information to analyse development patterns and draw conclusions.

Terms 5 & 6: Food Glorious Food

Learning Objectives

- Why is food a resource?
- Where does our food come from?
- What are the different types of farming in the UK?
- How does farming differ around the world?
- What is food security and food insecurity?
- What are the causes and impacts of food insecurity?
- What are the theories about food supply and population?
- How can food supply increase sustainably?
- What is fair trade and is it successful?
- What are the small-scale methods to increase food production?
- What are the large-scale methods to increase food production?
- How will climate change impact food production?

What previous knowledge is required?

Students build on Year 7 knowledge of climate, ecosystems and tropical rainforests to understand how temperature, precipitation, soils and ecosystems influence agricultural production. Population learning from Year 7 provides the basis for considering changing food demand, population growth and pressure on resources. The Development unit provides immediate prior knowledge of inequality, poverty and contrasting levels of development, which helps students explain why food insecurity is unevenly distributed. Students can also retrieve knowledge of physical and human factors from the Rivers and Cities and Development topics when considering water availability, transport, markets and environmental risk. Map, graph and numerical skills are applied to patterns of food production, imports, food insecurity and changing supply.

How will this term's content help with future learning?

The topic provides a direct bridge to Year 9 Water Resources because agriculture is a major user of freshwater and food security is closely connected to water availability. It also prepares students for Year 9 Globalisation by introducing international food supply chains, trade, Fairtrade and the connections between producers and consumers in different countries. Climate impacts on agriculture are revisited in Year 9 Weather & Climate when students examine climate change, extreme weather and global environmental change. The relationship between resources, population and economic power also supports Year 9 Superpowers, where access to strategic resources and global influence become increasingly important. At GCSE, students will draw on these concepts when studying resource reliance, sustainable management, development and the impacts of climate change. Comparing small-scale and large-scale solutions develops students' ability to evaluate strategies using economic, social and environmental criteria. The unit therefore moves students from seeing food simply as a product to understanding it as part of an interconnected global resource system.

Common Misconceptions

- Food security simply means producing enough food nationally; it also depends on reliable access, affordability and stability.
- Food insecurity only occurs because there is not enough food in the world; poverty, conflict, distribution, waste and access are also important.
- All farming is the same; farming systems vary greatly in scale, intensity, inputs, outputs and purpose.

- Commercial farming is always large-scale and subsistence farming is always small and inefficient; real farming systems are more varied.
- Increasing food production automatically solves hunger; people may still be unable to afford or access food.
- Fairtrade guarantees that every farmer becomes wealthy; it aims to improve trading conditions but cannot remove all market and development challenges.
- Large-scale technological solutions are always more sustainable than small-scale approaches; sustainability depends on environmental impact, affordability and local suitability.

National Curriculum / Specification

- Understand key processes in human geography relating to economic activity and the use of natural resources.
- Understand key processes in physical geography relating to weather and climate and how these influence human activity.
- Understand how human activity relies on the effective functioning of natural systems.
- Understand how human and physical processes interact to influence and change environments and climate.
- Use detailed place-based exemplars at a variety of scales to understand geographical processes.
- Use maps, numerical and quantitative skills and geographical data to analyse patterns, make comparisons and draw conclusions.