

Answer Key

Free US Geography Worksheets: answers and teacher notes

This file gives the answer to every question on the five worksheets, with a short explanation. Each worksheet starts on its own page and uses the same ID as the worksheet.

Accepted answers

1. A state may be written as its name or its two-letter postal code (for example Florida or FL). Spelling that is a little off is fine if the state is clear.
2. Capitals need the correct city. Accept Saint Paul or St. Paul, and Washington is never an answer for the state of Washington. A capital written in capital letters or without a capital first letter is correct.
3. In multiple-choice questions, accept the letter or the full answer.
4. Route questions (GW-05, Part D) have one correct state. If a student names every state they crossed, that is the same answer.
5. Region answers follow the U.S. Census Bureau. If your class uses another region system, mark with your own guide.

Definitions used

These worksheets use the four regions of the U.S. Census Bureau: Northeast, Midwest, South and West. Other books and maps group the states differently (some, for example, split the South into a Southeast and a Southwest), so a state can belong to a different group there. If your class uses another system, follow your own guide; the answers here follow the Census Bureau.

Washington, DC is not one of the 50 states. The Census Bureau counts it in the South region, but it does not appear on these worksheets.

Borders: two states border each other when their boundary is a line they share. States that meet only at a corner point (Arizona and Colorado, and New Mexico and Utah, at the Four Corners) or only across a lake or bay are not counted as bordering, and no question depends on them.

Directions: "A is north of B" means all of A is north of all of B, on the map and on the real globe.

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GW-01 Find the State

Answer key · Reading a labeled map

Objective: Recognize a state from geographic clues: the water it touches, the countries and states it borders.

Teacher note: Every clue has exactly one answer among the 50 states. The map page tells students where Alaska and Hawaii are (they sit in boxes, not in their true places). For a quicker version, do the first eight.

1. **Florida (FL)**
It has a coastline on the Atlantic Ocean. It has a coastline on the Gulf of Mexico.
2. **Hawaii (HI)**
It does not touch any other state. It does not border Canada.
3. **Alaska (AK)**
It does not touch any other state. It shares a border with Canada.
4. **Texas (TX)**
It has a coastline on the Gulf of Mexico. It shares a border with Mexico.
5. **Maine (ME)**
It borders exactly 1 other state.
6. **New York (NY)**
It has a coastline on the Atlantic Ocean. It touches at least one of the Great Lakes.
7. **Washington (WA)**
It has a coastline on the Pacific Ocean. It shares a border with Canada. It borders Idaho.
8. **California (CA)**
It has a coastline on the Pacific Ocean. It borders Oregon, Nevada and Arizona.
9. **Michigan (MI)**
It borders Wisconsin, Indiana and Ohio.
10. **Colorado (CO)**
It borders Nebraska and New Mexico.
11. **Alabama (AL)**
It has a coastline on the Gulf of Mexico. It borders Tennessee and Georgia.
12. **Montana (MT)**
It shares a border with Canada. It borders North Dakota and Idaho.

GW-02 Regions of America

Answer key · Grouping states into regions

Objective: Understand that geographers group the 50 states into regions, and place each state in its region using the U.S. Census Bureau system.

Teacher note: These worksheets use the four regions of the U.S. Census Bureau: Northeast, Midwest, South and West. Other books and maps group the states differently (some, for example, split the South into a Southeast and a Southwest), so a state can belong to a different group there. If your class uses another system, follow your own guide; the answers here follow the Census Bureau. Washington, DC is not one of the 50 states. The Census Bureau counts it in the South region, but it does not appear on these worksheets. Part D works with the guide open; for a harder round, cover the guide first.

Region Guide (Census Bureau)

Northeast

9 states

Connecticut, Maine, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New York, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, Vermont

Midwest

12 states

Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Kansas, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, Nebraska, North Dakota, Ohio, South Dakota, Wisconsin

South

16 states

Alabama, Arkansas, Delaware, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Louisiana, Maryland, Mississippi, North Carolina, Oklahoma, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas, Virginia, West Virginia

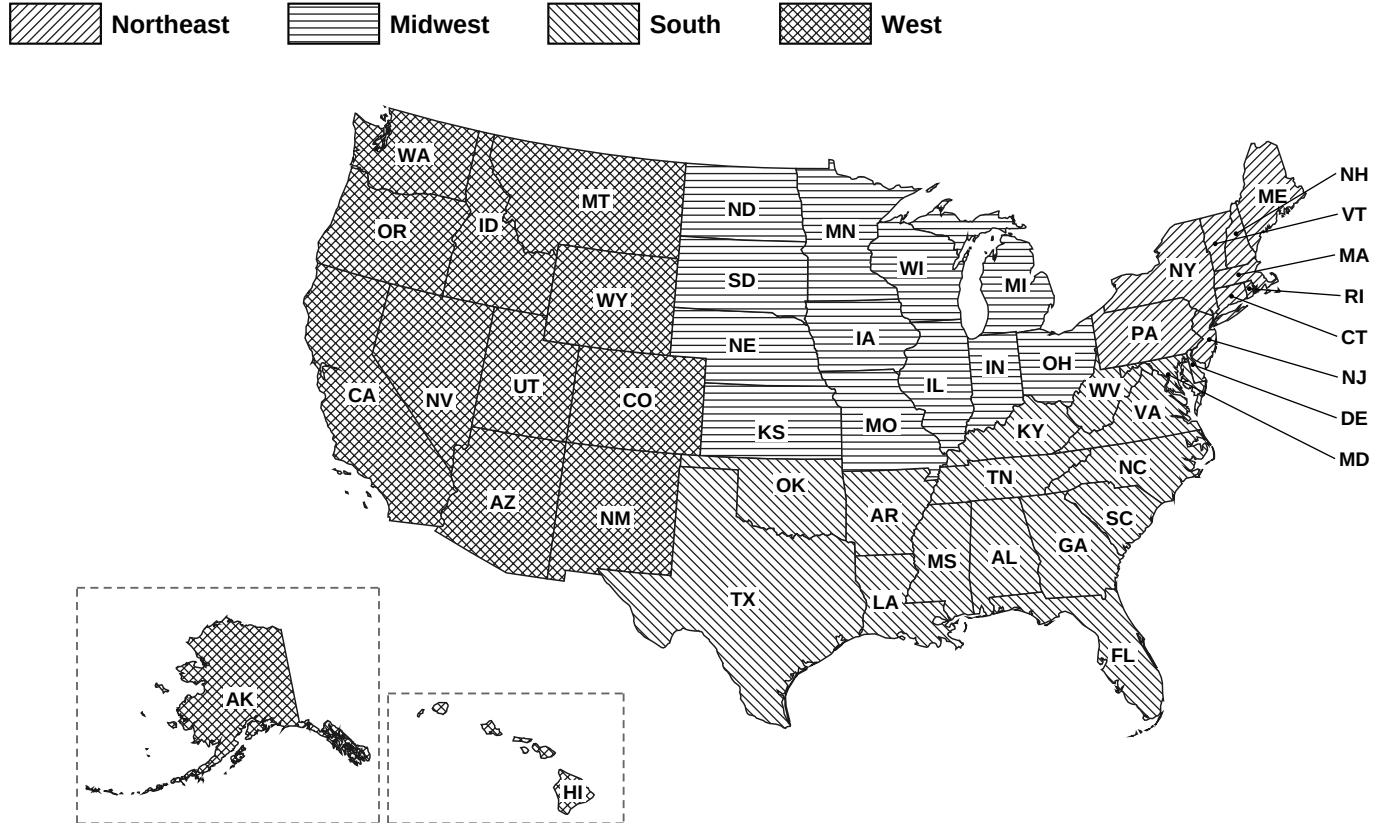
West

13 states

Alaska, Arizona, California, Colorado, Hawaii, Idaho, Montana, Nevada, New Mexico, Oregon, Utah, Washington, Wyoming

GW-02 Regions of America

Answer key · Part A, the shaded map



Every state is shaded with the pattern of its region. Alaska and Hawaii are in the West. Washington, DC is not a state and is not on the map.

Part B: Count and compare

Counts: Northeast 9, Midwest 12, South 16, West 13. Total: 50 states.

1. Northeast and South

The Atlantic coast runs from Maine (Northeast) down to Florida (South).

2. South

Texas, Louisiana, Mississippi, Alabama and Florida are all in the South.

3. West

Washington, Oregon, California, Alaska and Hawaii are all in the West.

4. Midwest

The Midwest states touch the Great Lakes and rivers, but none touch an ocean or the Gulf.

5. Northeast

The Northeast has 9 states, fewer than the other three regions.

Part C: Sort the states

Northeast: New Jersey, Vermont, Pennsylvania.

Midwest: Ohio, Iowa, Nebraska.

South: Kentucky, Georgia, Oklahoma.

West: Nevada, Colorado, Oregon.

GW-03 States and Capitals Challenge

Answer key · Linking states and their capitals

Objective: Link states to their capital cities in both directions, and tell a capital from a famous city.

Teacher note: This worksheet is deliberately different from a matching list. Round 1 asks for the capital from scrambled letters, Round 2 goes from capital to state with look-alike choices, Round 3 separates capitals from bigger, more famous cities. For the full 50-capital test, use the 50 states map quiz. Where a state has two common spellings of its capital (Saint Paul / St. Paul), accept both.

Round 1: Capital scramble

- 1. Denver (Colorado)**
The mixed-up letters spell DENVER.
- 2. Phoenix (Arizona)**
The mixed-up letters spell PHOENIX.
- 3. Boston (Massachusetts)**
The mixed-up letters spell BOSTON.
- 4. Hartford (Connecticut)**
The mixed-up letters spell HARTFORD.
- 5. Nashville (Tennessee)**
The mixed-up letters spell NASHVILLE.
- 6. Columbus (Ohio)**
The mixed-up letters spell COLUMBUS.
- 7. Atlanta (Georgia)**
The mixed-up letters spell ATLANTA.
- 8. Lansing (Michigan)**
The mixed-up letters spell LANSING.
- 9. Austin (Texas)**
The mixed-up letters spell AUSTIN.
- 10. Madison (Wisconsin)**
The mixed-up letters spell MADISON.

Round 2: Whose capital?

- 1. Idaho (b)**
Boise is the capital of Idaho.
- 2. Oregon (a)**
Salem is the capital of Oregon.
- 3. South Dakota (b)**
Pierre is the capital of South Dakota.
- 4. Vermont (a)**
Montpelier is the capital of Vermont.
- 5. New Mexico (a)**
Santa Fe is the capital of New Mexico.
- 6. Missouri (c)**
Jefferson City is the capital of Missouri.

Round 3: Capital or famous city?

GW-03 States and Capitals Challenge

Answer key · Linking states and their capitals (continued)

1. Albany

Albany is the capital of New York. New York City is a famous city there, but it is not the capital.

2. Sacramento

Sacramento is the capital of California. Los Angeles is a famous city there, but it is not the capital.

3. Springfield

Springfield is the capital of Illinois. Chicago is a famous city there, but it is not the capital.

4. Olympia

Olympia is the capital of Washington. Seattle is a famous city there, but it is not the capital.

5. Austin

Austin is the capital of Texas. Houston is a famous city there, but it is not the capital.

6. Harrisburg

Harrisburg is the capital of Pennsylvania. Philadelphia is a famous city there, but it is not the capital.

GW-04 Geography Detective

Answer key · Eliminating suspects with evidence

Objective: Identify a state by combining several clues and ruling out the other suspects, using only the evidence on the page.

Teacher note: Each case has exactly one answer, even among all 50 states, and every clue is needed. Students can solve a case from its fact file alone. Encourage them to name the clue that clears each suspect.

GW-04-01 The Pacific Postcard (Level 1)

Answer: Oregon

1. It has a coastline on the Pacific Ocean.
2. It borders Idaho.
3. Its capital's name starts with S.

How each other suspect is cleared:

- Utah has no coastline on the Pacific Ocean. (clue 1)
- Hawaii does not border Idaho. (clue 2)
- California does not border Idaho. (clue 2)
- Alaska does not border Idaho. (clue 2)
- Washington's capital, Olympia, starts with O. (clue 3)

Oregon is the only suspect that fits every clue. Salem is its capital.

GW-04-02 The Lakeshore Letter (Level 1)

Answer: Ohio

1. It does not touch an ocean or the Gulf of Mexico.
2. It touches at least one of the Great Lakes.
3. It borders Pennsylvania.

How each other suspect is cleared:

- Illinois does not border Pennsylvania. (clue 3)
- New York touches the Atlantic Ocean. (clue 1)
- Indiana does not border Pennsylvania. (clue 3)
- West Virginia does not touch the Great Lakes. (clue 2)
- Michigan does not border Pennsylvania. (clue 3)

Ohio is the only suspect that fits every clue. Columbus is its capital.

GW-04-03 The Mountain Memo (Level 2)

Answer: Wyoming

1. It is in the West region.
2. It borders Nebraska.
3. It does not border Kansas.

How each other suspect is cleared:

- Iowa is in the Midwest region. (clue 1)
- Arizona does not border Nebraska. (clue 2)
- California does not border Nebraska. (clue 2)
- Alaska does not border Nebraska. (clue 2)
- Colorado borders Kansas. (clue 3)

GW-04 Geography Detective

Answer key · Eliminating suspects with evidence (continued)

Wyoming is the only suspect that fits every clue. Cheyenne is its capital.

GW-04-04 The Prairie Telegram (Level 2)

Answer: Nebraska

1. It is in the Midwest region.
2. It borders Missouri.
3. Its capital's name starts with L.

How each other suspect is cleared:

- Iowa's capital, Des Moines, starts with D. (clue 3)
- Illinois's capital, Springfield, starts with S. (clue 3)
- Michigan does not border Missouri. (clue 2)
- Arkansas is in the South region. (clue 1)
- Kansas's capital, Topeka, starts with T. (clue 3)

Nebraska is the only suspect that fits every clue. Lincoln is its capital.

GW-04-05 The River Riddle (Level 3)

Answer: Tennessee

1. It is in the South region.
2. It does not touch an ocean or the Gulf of Mexico.
3. It borders Arkansas.
4. It does not border Texas.

How each other suspect is cleared:

- Kentucky does not border Arkansas. (clue 3)
- Missouri is in the Midwest region. (clue 1)
- Mississippi touches the Gulf of Mexico. (clue 2)
- Oklahoma borders Texas. (clue 4)
- Texas touches the Gulf of Mexico. (clue 2)

Tennessee is the only suspect that fits every clue. Nashville is its capital.

GW-05 Map Skills Mission

Answer key · Using directions, a grid and borders

Objective: Read a map: use a compass rose, directions, a letter-and-number grid and shared borders to describe where states are.

Teacher note: Direction questions mean the whole of one state is north, south, east or west of the whole of the other, which is true on the printed map and on the globe. Grid squares are read as column then row. A grid label is "in" a square when its centre is. Route questions have one correct state because the two end states have exactly one neighbor in common.

Part A: Map parts

1. compass rose

A compass rose shows the directions. Most maps put north at the top.

2. Alaska and Hawaii

Alaska and Hawaii are drawn in boxes, called insets.

3. They are far from the other 48 states, so the map shows them in boxes to save space.

Both are states. Alaska is not an island, and Hawaii is a chain of islands. The boxes are a map-makers' choice that saves space.

4. Alaska and Hawaii are drawn smaller than they really are, so one scale would be wrong for the whole map.

Alaska and Hawaii are shown at a reduced size and not in their true places, so no single scale bar fits the whole map.

Part B: Directions

1. north

All of Montana is north of all of Texas.

2. south

All of Florida is south of all of Ohio.

3. east

All of Maine is east of all of Minnesota.

4. west

All of California is west of all of Missouri.

5. south

All of Kansas is south of all of North Dakota.

6. west

All of New Mexico is west of all of Georgia.

Part C: The grid

1. D2

The label KS (Kansas) is in square D2.

2. F1

The label ME (Maine) is in square F1.

3. Montana

Square C1 holds only the label MT, for Montana.

4. New Mexico

Square C3 holds only the label NM, for New Mexico.

GW-05 Map Skills Mission

Answer key · Using directions, a grid and borders

Part D: Border hopping

1. Idaho

Washington and Wyoming do not touch. Idaho touches both, and no other state does, so it is the only state you must cross.

2. South Dakota

North Dakota and Nebraska do not touch. South Dakota touches both, and no other state does, so it is the only state you must cross.

3. Oklahoma

Texas and Kansas do not touch. Oklahoma touches both, and no other state does, so it is the only state you must cross.

4. New Hampshire

Maine and Massachusetts do not touch. New Hampshire touches both, and no other state does, so it is the only state you must cross.