# Geography glossary

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples’ seasonal calendars

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander classifications of seasons vary and are finely tuned to location, local climates and other variables such as availability of food and other resources.

aesthetic value

A judgement of value based on the physical characteristics of an object and the emotional responses it evokes.

Asia

Geographically, the largest continent, bounded by Europe and the Pacific, Arctic and Indian oceans. It can be described in cultural, religious, historical and language boundaries or commonalities.

atmosphere

One of the interconnected systems of Earth, the atmosphere consists of a mix of gasses essential in the biosphere.

biodiversity

The number and variety of species within an environment, which have direct value as consumable or useful commodities, indirect value as support for ecosystems, and intrinsic value.

biomass productivity

The amount of organic matter made by photosynthesising organisms in an ecosystem.

biome

A major terrestrial vegetation region, such as a tropical forest, temperate grassland or desert. Similar biomes occur around the world in similar climatic zones.

biosphere

One of the interconnecting systems of Earth, the biosphere is made up of the parts of Earth that are occupied by living organisms.

BOLTSS

An acronym for the skill in creating and analysing geographical data such as maps. It stands for Border, Orientation, Legend, Title, Scale and Source.

cartographic conventions

Practices that guide the making of maps, such as border, orientation, title, scale and source.

characteristics of a place

Tangible or intangible environmental and human characteristics (such as location, topography or scenic quality) that can be described, classify or give meaning to the uniqueness of a place.

classification

A way of categorising objects or phenomena based on criteria such as similarity of properties or by relationships, for example renewable or non-renewable resources.

climate

The long-term average (minimum 30 years) of weather conditions at a place, classified into distinctive types, for example tropical, dry, temperate, polar or Mediterranean.

climate change

Changes in the long-term weather patterns and averages, such as those for temperature and precipitation.

Country

The physical environment that a particular Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples’ group has a relationship with. Referring to this territory as ‘Country’, rather than land, indicates a reciprocal and deep relationship and one where Country both owns and is owned by the People. The concept of Country includes lands, waters and sky.

cultural connectedness

Interconnections between people and their community locally and globally, which influence how people live, understand the impacts they have on each other, and make sense of their identity and belonging. This is also known as social connectedness.

custodial responsibility

The responsibility and obligation for caring for Country and Place and management of land, sea, sky and waterways based on the values and beliefs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.

data

A general term for a set of observations or measurements collected during an investigation. Primary data is collected by the person carrying out the investigation; secondary data is collected by others.

demographic

Relating to the structure of population.

digital tools

Digital hardware, software, platforms and resources used to develop and communicate learning, ideas and information.

distribution

The arrangement of geographical phenomena across Earth's surface, for example distribution of services and facilities in a settlement, population in a country, forests or water resources.

diversity

The mix of people in a group or society and differences in factors such as age, abilities, culture and religion and/or in how people identify in relation to factors such as gender and sexuality.

ecosystem

A functioning unit of the environment defined by a complex set of relationships among its living organisms and its non-living components, where all organisms and components are interdependent.

embodied carbon

The greenhouse gas emissions arising from the manufacturing, transportation, installation, maintenance and disposal of building materials.

environmental quality

Characteristics of a local environment that affect human wellbeing, such as air and water pollution, noise, access to open space, traffic volumes and aesthetic value of buildings and roads.

environmental worldview

A set of beliefs and values that give a person a sense of their behaviour towards Earth. It could be anthropocentric (human-centred), biocentric (life-centred) or ecocentric (Earth-centred).

European seasonal calendar

The classification of weeks or months of a year into 4 seasons: summer, autumn, winter and spring.

features of a place

Visible elements of a place, classified as natural (e.g. rivers), managed (e.g. parks, farms) and constructed or built (e.g. a house, a city).

fieldwork

Active and firsthand collection, examination, interpretation and analysis of materials in relation to Geographical Inquiry questions, often conducted from outside the classroom at a local scale.

food security

The existence of food supplies that are reliable and of a sufficient quality and quantity to maintain human life.

geographical concepts

Change, environment, interconnection, place, scale, space, spatial association and sustainability.

geographical diversity

The different range of environments and varied ways of living in a region, which can be influenced by a range of factors, for example climate, topography, beliefs, social structures and culture.

geographical divisions of the world

Divisions of Earth's surface based on human-defined scales (e.g., local, state or territory, national, regional and global).

geological or geophysical hazards or hazard events

Processes associated with the dynamics of plate tectonics.

geomorphological processes

Physical and chemical interactions between the Earth's surface and environmental processes (e.g. geology and climate) that produce or shape landforms.

geospatial technologies

Tools (software or hardware) that enable the collection, storage, mapping, representation and visualisation of the occurrence of geographical phenomena and issues, used for analysis of causes and effects.

global citizen

Those who understand their rights and responsibilities at a global level; that is, one’s identity transcends geography or political borders, and rights and responsibilities are derived from being human. However, these rights and responsibilities do not have the legal authority or sanctions that those given by a nation have.

hazard

A threat that arises from environmental processes or human activities that has the potential to cause loss of life, injury, property damage, socioeconomic disruption or environmental degradation.

hazard event

When a hazard is realised.

hazard prevention, preparedness, response and recovery

The 4 phases of hazard and disaster management.

highly urbanised countries

Countries where a high percentage of the population lives in urban areas.

human rights

The basic rights and freedoms to which all humans are entitled, often held to include the right to life and liberty, freedom of thought and expression, and equality before the law.

human wellbeing

A person's satisfaction and wellness or quality of life as measured using objective indicators (e.g. life expectancy, educational attainment and income) and subjective indicators (e.g. perceptions and happiness surveys).

hydrometeorological hazard

These are also known as atmospheric or climatic hazards and include droughts, floods, storms and bushfires.

hydrosphere

One of the interconnected systems of Earth, it comprises the combined mass of water found on, under, and above the surface of Earth.

internal migration

The movement of people from living in one defined area to another within the same country, for example movement from cities to non-metropolitan coastal locations, or from one state or territory to another.

international migration

The movement of people across international borders for the purpose of becoming citizens or permanent residents, for example moving from one country to another.

land and water degradation

Threats to the function of land and water resources, for example salinity, soil erosion, soil fertility decline, soil acidification, invasive plants, pollution, and loss of biodiversity and habitats.

landform

An individual surface feature of Earth identified by its shape, for example dune, plateau, canyon, beach, plain, hill, river or valley.

landscapes

The visible appearance of an area, created by a combination of geological, geomorphological, biological and cultural layers that have evolved over time, and as perceived and valued by people.

liveability

The use of criteria to assess what a place is like to live in, such as environmental quality, education and health provision, or availability of recreational facilities.

location

A position or site marked by a distinguishing feature, where a particular point or object exists.

migration

The movement of people from living in one defined area to another, for example internal migration within the same country, or international migration between different countries.

non-government organisations

Non-profit, voluntary or independent groups, organised at a local, national or international level, whose purpose is to address social or political issues such as humanitarian or environmental causes. Examples include Landcare (national) and World Vision (international).

non-renewable

Of or relating to resources developed by geological processes over time, that cannot be replenished quickly and that are finite, such as mineral deposits and fossil fuels.

pandemic

A worldwide spread of a new disease.

personal viewpoint

Subjective assessment of places and environments using criteria and taking into account lived experience and the attitudes of others.

pictorial map

A map that represents and provides a visualisation of features in a landscape, without a focus on aerial perspective, scale or other conventions.

Place

‘Place’ is significant for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples.

For Torres Strait Islander Peoples, ‘Place’ is a space mapped out that Torres Strait Islander individuals or groups occupy and regard as their own and that has varying degrees of spirituality. It includes lands, waters and sky.

For Aboriginal Peoples, ‘Place’ refers to the special places that exist within Country, the purposes of which vary significantly. They can include places of ceremony and initiation, birth and the provision of healing and health care; places of learning; and places for Sorry Business. These places vary greatly over the various landscapes and seascapes across the continent. There are some parts of Country that have landmarks that directly relate to the ancestor spirits and the creation of existence. These are especially important as culturally significant places and need to be cared for. There are also other places on Country that are important for ceremony, as mentioned above, which are also considered especially important for Aboriginal communities.

primary source

Materials collected firsthand or from fieldwork related to a geographical inquiry, for example by recording observations, completing field sketches or conducting surveys and interviews.

region/regional

An area of the world sharing common characteristics, for example a geographical region such as the Mallee region in Victoria. The term can also be used in relation to regional intergovernmental organisations such as the Association of South-East Asian Nations (ASEAN).

renewable

Of or relating to resources that can be replenished because they are naturally replaced, such as solar power, animal life and timber.

secondary source

Researched materials related to a geographical inquiry, for example published research, and data and information collected from the internet, libraries, archives, and government or non-government agency reports.

settlement

A place where people live, with types of settlements ranging in size from a single dwelling in a rural or remote area to a city.

settlement pattern

The spatial distribution of human settlement types, with smaller types typically forming patterns around larger ones. Settlement types include isolated dwellings, villages, towns, regional centres and large cities.

sketch map

Simple drawings of the landscape. They show things that are sometimes not visible in photographs or maps, for example the impacts of tourists on a landscape. Sketch maps may be shown as a bird's-eye view or as a drawing of the horizon.

social connectedness

The interconnections between people and their community, locally and globally, that influence how people live, how they make sense of their identity and belonging, and how they understand the impacts they have on each other. Also known as cultural connectedness.

spatial difference

How and why geographic phenomena differ in arrangement across the Earth's surface.

topography

The Earth's surface, including the arrangement or shape of natural and human features, for example undulating topography.

trade

The import (buying) and export (selling) of goods and services in an economy.

Traditional Owners

The people recognised as having an unbroken connection to a particular Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander Country or Place. They are often important knowledge keepers and responsible for caring for Country or Place and the people who live there.

types of resources

Resources can be categorised as natural or land (e.g. water, coal, wheat), human or labour (e.g. workers, business owners, volunteers), capital (e.g. tools, machines, technologies) and enterprise (e.g. entrepreneurial behaviours).

urban concentration

The percentage of the urban population of a country or region living in the largest city.

urbanisation

The process of economic and social change in which an increasing proportion of the population of a country or region lives in urban areas.

urban place

A developed place where people live, which has a density of human structures and often a high population density, for example towns, cities and suburbs.

values

Ideas and beliefs specific to individuals and groups.

value of places

People's recognition of, attachment to, emotional feelings about, or identification with special or significant places that contribute to a sense of belonging, identity or wellbeing.

vegetation

Plant life or plant cover arranged across the Earth's surface, for example trees, grasses or mosses.

vegetation types

Types of vegetation forest, woodland, savannah, grassland and desert.

water resource

A natural resource existing in different forms (e.g. freshwater, groundwater and precipitation), irregularly distributed and useful to people and their activities (e.g. agriculture, industry, household).

water scarcity

A lack of sufficient available water resources to meet a demand, caused by water shortage (physical), lack of money to use an adequate water source (economic) or unequal distribution of water resources.

weather

The state of the atmosphere at a particular place and time, for example windiness, temperature, atmospheric pressure, humidity, precipitation and cloudiness.