

RECOMMENDED GRADES: K-2



TIME NEEDED: 45 MINUTES

Description

Explore the geography of the South American continent, including numerous and diverse mountains, rivers, waterfalls, and other features. Learn how to read basic map symbols.

Learning Objectives

Students will:

- locate basic physical and political features of South America

Materials

- Cones for the Andes (8, yellow)
- Cones for islands (2, red)
- Arrows (5)
- Large hoops for cities (2)
- Chain for the Amazon River (1, blue)
- Nylon strap for the Equator (1, red)
- Nylon strap for the Tropic of Capricorn (1, yellow)
- Lanyards (40 total, 10 of each color: red, blue, yellow, and green) (optional)

Preparation

15 minutes

- Read and familiarize yourself with the locations of the places used in the introduction and the content of each of the four walkabout activities.

Tips/Modifications

Modification

- Substitute materials (color, size, type) for materials you have available. Have students create arrows using cardboard or construction paper.

Rules



Have students remove shoes before walking on the map.

DIRECTIONS

1. Give students a few minutes to explore the map before beginning the activity.
2. Use the following script to introduce them to the continent of South America:

Welcome to South America, the world's fourth largest continent! In South America, you will soon find the world's largest river by volume, the Amazon, and the world's longest above-ocean mountain range, the Andes. South America is also home to the world's largest rain forest and the world's highest waterfall, Angel Falls. The world's driest desert, the Atacama, is here as well. The Pacific Ocean lies to the west of South America and the Atlantic Ocean lies to the east. And many other wonderful places like the Galápagos Islands are waiting for those who visit or study South America. Let's find out more about this amazing continent!

3. Take a few minutes to show students the highlights of South America. Have individual students join you on the map and stand, sit, or lie on the following locations.
 - **Amazon River & Rain Forest:** Have several students lie down on the river in Brazil. Explain that the rain forest covers an area the size of the 48 contiguous United States.
 - **Andes Mountains:** Have several students lie down in a line along the mountains near the coast in Colombia, Peru, and Chile. Tell them the chain is about 7,000 kilometers (4,300 miles) long, which is 1,500 miles farther than the distance from California to New York.
 - **Angel Falls:** Have a student stand on its location near the border of Venezuela and Guyana and tell them the waterfall is 979 meters (3,212 feet high). That's more than a half-mile high!
 - **Atacama Desert:** Have a student sit on its location in northern Chile and tell them that parts of this desert can go ten years without rain. That's dry!
 - **Lake Titicaca:** Have a student stand on the lake shared by Bolivia and Peru and tell them the lake sits at over 3,600 meters (11,811 feet, or 2.2 miles) above sea level.
 - **Cape Horn:** Have a student sit on the very southern tip of South America and face south. Tell them that Cape Horn is only 800 kilometers (500 miles) north of Antarctica.
4. Have all the students join you on the map, and continue to introduce the map and its features with the following activities. You can use one of the map keys to help if you wish.
 - Show and have students:
 - Stand on a coast.
 - Stand on a border between countries.
 - Stand in a country.
 - Stand on a capital city.
 - Stand on a road or highway.
 - Stand on a river or lake.
 - Stand on mountains.

5. Show students the compass rose in each corner of the map. Then have them turn and face each of the four cardinal directions: east toward the Atlantic Ocean, west toward the Pacific Ocean, south toward Antarctica, and north toward the Caribbean Sea. For fun, have four students make a human compass rose in the middle of the map.
6. Divide the class into four groups—yellow, blue, red, and green—and instruct each group to gather around their “Base Camp” (the colored circles in the corners of the map). Make the groups as even as possible (6–8 students). Give each student a lanyard corresponding to the color of their team. Tell students that they will all do a short walkabout on the map one group at a time.
 - **Walkabout #1:** (Yellow Group) Start on the Isthmus of Panama and follow the Andes Mountains to the southern tip of the continent through the countries of Colombia, Ecuador, Peru, Bolivia, Chile, and Argentina. Make specific stops at the Equator, Lake Titicaca, and Cape Horn. Give each student in the group a yellow cone to place along the world’s longest mountain chain, the Andes. Help students space them out and leave them on the map. Make sure students understand that Colombia is the first country in South America and that Panama is considered part of North America.
 - **Walkabout #2:** (Blue Group) Start in the Atlantic Ocean near the mouth of the Amazon River and follow it through the countries of Brazil and Peru to its source high in the Andes Mountains. Make specific stops on the river in Manaus, Brazil (largest port), and Iquitos, Peru (last major port for oceangoing ships). Give your students a length of blue plastic chain and have them place it along the entire course of the Amazon River from source to mouth. To do this, turn south just past Iquitos and follow the Ucayali River to a point past the famous city of Cusco and west of Lake Titicaca. Make sure students understand which way the river flows and that it starts in the mountains and empties into the Atlantic Ocean. Have five students place the five arrows along the river showing the correct direction of its flow.
 - **Walkabout #3:** (Red Group) Start in Uruguay and continue north, recognizing the countries of Paraguay, Suriname, Guyana, and Venezuela. Make specific stops along the way at the Tropic of Capricorn, the cities of São Paulo and Rio de Janeiro (just to the east on the coast of Brazil), and the Equator. Give two students hoops to identify the largest city in South America (São Paulo) and the 2016 Summer Olympic Games host city (Rio de Janeiro). Then give two different students a yellow strap to mark the Tropic of Capricorn. Make sure all students understand that the weather and climate below the Tropic of Capricorn is more temperate (mild) than in the warmer tropics.
 - **Walkabout #4:** (Green Group) Start at the Strait of Magellan (Estrecho de Magallanes) and split the students into two groups that will travel up both the east and west coasts of South America to the Caribbean Sea along the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans. Make specific stops in both the Falkland Islands and the Galápagos Islands. Give two students one red cone each to mark the location of each island group. Have both groups stop on the Equator, then give two students the red strap to mark the location of the Equator. Make sure all students understand that the Equator is located halfway between the North and South Poles. You might use extra students to stand in the Caribbean Sea and the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans.