

UNPACKING THE K-10 SYLLABUS: Geographical inquiry skills & tools

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Glossary

Geographical data – quantitative or qualitative information about people, places and environments

Primary data – original materials collected by someone eg field notes, measurements, responses to a survey

Secondary information sources – sources of information collected, processed, interpreted and published by others eg census, newspaper articles and images or information in a published report.

Ethical protocols – the application of fundamental ethical principles when undertaking research and collecting information eg confidentiality, informed consent, citation and integrity of data.

NSW Syllabus for the Australian Curriculum Geography K-10 (BOSTES)

GEOGRAPHICAL INQUIRY SKILLS

In the NSW syllabus K-10 **Geographical Inquiry Skills** refers to the processes of acquiring, processing and communication geographical information.

ACQUIRE INFORMATION

- Identify a focus for inquiry
- Develop geographical questions
- Collect primary geographical data (e.g. fieldwork, interviews, questionnaires)
- Gather geographical information from secondary sources (e.g. internet, journals, newspapers)
- Record information

PROCESS INFORMATION

- Evaluate data and information for bias and reliability
- Interpret data and information gathered
- Represent information in appropriate forms such as maps, graphs, statistics, spatial technologies and visual representation
- Analyse findings and results
- Draw conclusions

COMMUNICATE INFORMATION

- Communicate results using a variety of strategies and tools
- Reflect on findings
- Propose individual or collective actions
- Predict expected outcomes
- Where appropriate, take action.

Figure 1: Geographical Inquiry skills. Adapted from NSW Syllabus for the Australian Curriculum Geography K-10 (BOSTES)

Throughout their studies Geography students will use elements of geographical inquiry such as studying a map or photograph in class, developing a question to investigate, taking photographs during fieldwork and using ICT to create a presentation.

Geographical inquiry is NOT A LINEAR PROCESS but a set of interconnected components. Inquiry can start with any of the activities in the Geographical Inquiry Skills

framework. As students progress from K-10 they will build their inquiry skills to the point where they can undertake an independent inquiry activity drawing on all components of the inquiry process.

Figure 2 was developed to assist teachers to unpack the different components of Geographical Inquiry and see relevant interconnections.

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A process for geographical inquiry

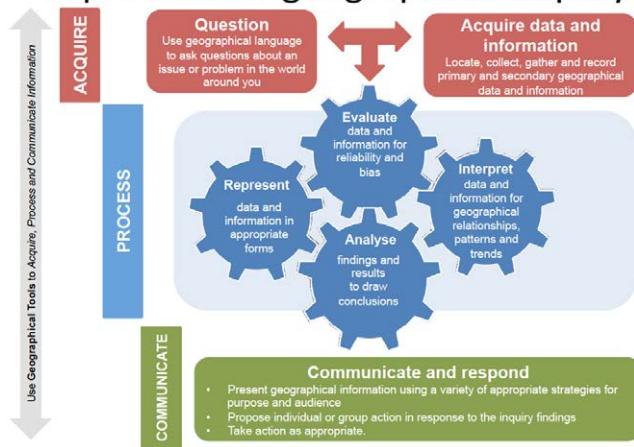


Figure 2: A process for geographical inquiry

Source: Human Society and Its Environment Geography K-10 Teaching and Learning Framework, NSW Department of Education. (Page 2) www.hsiensw.com/geography-k-10.html

GEOGRAPHICAL TOOLS

Geographical Tools are used during geographical inquiry to acquire, process and communicate information – they include maps, fieldwork, graphs & statistics, visual representations and spatial technologies. Tools should be used to show geographical information at a range of scales.

Explicit teaching of the **rules, protocols and conventions** (previously referred to as skills) is essential for students to correctly use geographical tools, for example, stating latitude readings before longitude when locating places on a map and using ethical principles when collecting personal information during fieldwork.

The K-10 **Geographical Tools Continuum** provides examples of tools students **may use** in each stage of learning. Students are to be provided with opportunities to engage with each of the geographical tools in each stage. Teachers make decisions about the tools appropriate for the intended learning.

It is expected that by the end of stage 5 students will be familiar with a range of tools in each category of the skills continuum. It is also intended that students progressively move from using tools to acquire geographical data and information in the earlier stages of learning, to using tools for representing, synthesising and communicating the findings of geographical inquiry in later stages.

To avoid confusion about different tools and types of geographical information refer to the **Glossary** at the end of the Geography K-10 Syllabus.

TEACHING IN CONTEXT

Geographical inquiry skills and tools should be used to enhance student's geographical knowledge and understanding of syllabus content. For example:

- Using photographs to examine the characteristics of places (K-10)
- Examining topographic maps to study Earth's Environment (Stage 2) or landforms and water catchments (Stage 4)
- Identifying trends in global food production (Stage 5) using graphs, statistics and tables
- Creating flow diagrams and maps to represent connections between places (Stages 2 and 4)
- The use of synoptic charts to investigate hydrologic or atmospheric hazards such as cyclones and floods (Stage 4) or to explain environmental change such as the impact of east coast lows on coastal environments (Stage 5).

See Figure 12 for examples from each stage.

FIELDWORK

Fieldwork is **mandatory** tool in all stages of geographical inquiry. Students work outside the classroom to observe, measure, collect and record their own geographical information and represent that information. Information obtained in this way is known as **Primary data**. As students progress from Stage 1 to Stage 5 they will also move from guided fieldwork activities to independent inquiry



Figure 3: Students undertaking fieldwork
Source Macmillan: Keys to fieldwork. Essential tools and skills

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Figure 4: The value of fieldwork Source: www.sln.org.uk/geography/images/Cartoon%203.jpg

Fieldwork activities should

- be planned
- link to outcomes and content
- have a purpose eg a key inquiry question and post fieldwork task
- contain structured activities
- be identified in teaching program and scope and sequence documents
- involve students in actively gathering geographical data

Fieldwork activities may

- take place in a range of locations determined by the content. Sites can include school grounds; a local street or shopping centre or a distant place eg national park, coast, city
- be run by a classroom teacher or an environmental education or fieldwork provider such as Department of Education and Communities Environmental Education Centres, museums and zoos.

Fieldwork should be fun, engaging and productive. The findings from a fieldwork activity should be used to create something that will communicate a student's acquired knowledge and understanding – a map, model, story, report such as an explanation, or digital presentation.

Fieldwork equipment: High tech or low tech

Fieldwork equipment can be simple, for example laminated cloud identification charts, or more sophisticated such as



Figure 4: Solocator app.
Source: L Chaffer

chemical water testing kit and apps on a smart phone or tablet device such as Solocator (iPhone app that adds location, direction and altitude to a photograph), Skitch (for annotating photographs) and Decibel (for determining noise levels). Fieldwork activities should be designed to allow students to collect data relevant to an inquiry.

Examples of simple fieldwork activities

- Use a compass to determine the direction of places
- Use a GPS to determine latitude, longitude and altitude of places on a walk
- Measure distance travelled using a pedometer, trundle wheel or GPS
- Collect samples eg plants
- Measure air temperature using thermometers
- Observe cloud cover and cloud type using a simple grid and a cloud chart
- Observe and sketch features of places
- Look and listen for evidence of wildlife eg footprints
- Observe and record landuse along a street
- Construct a transect to show change in an environment over a distance
- Complete a field sketch or annotated digital photograph of a place and its features
- Conduct a tally eg cars on a local street
- Undertake surveys or interviews

SPATIAL TECHNOLOGIES

Spatial technologies are geographical tools, to be used along with maps, graphs and statistics, fieldwork and visual representations to acquire, process and communicate geographical information. The "Continuum of Tools" in the syllabus provides examples of spatial technologies that could be used at each stage of study.

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Stage	Spatial Technologies
ES1	Virtual maps
S1	Virtual maps Satellite images
S2 & S3	Virtual maps Satellite images Global positioning systems (GPS)
S4	Virtual maps Satellite images Global positioning systems (GPS) Geographic information systems (GIS)
S5	Virtual maps Satellite images Global positioning systems (GPS) Geographic information systems (GIS) Remote sensing data Augmented reality

Figure 5: Tools continuum for spatial technologies

Source: <http://syllabus.bos.nsw.edu.au/hsie/geography-k10/continuum-of-tools/>

GPS and GIS

A car GPS (Geographic Positioning System) used to get people to places and a phone used to find the nearest toilet block or to track a pizza are GPS and GIS applications. A GPS device locates places via satellite. The device can also collect data about a place eg latitude, longitude, altitude eg Garmin Sports app. The GPS device in a car or phone collects spatial data and plots it on a base map. Many mobile and tablet apps use existing GPS data to show the location of places on maps eg toilets. The Track my pizza app is a good example of a GIS application in action.



Figure 6: Track your dominoes pizza Source: www.smh.com.au/digital-life/digital-life-news/dominos-drivertracking-lets-you-follow-a-pizza-from-the-oven-to-your-door-20150507-ggw857.html

WHAT A RELIEF

The app uses the smart phone's GPS to help you locate the nearest publicly accessible toilet(s)

- Once the nearest toilet is located, the app will provide you the shortest route, via GPS, to the exact location

- App will enable users to write a review on existing facilities available at the toilets



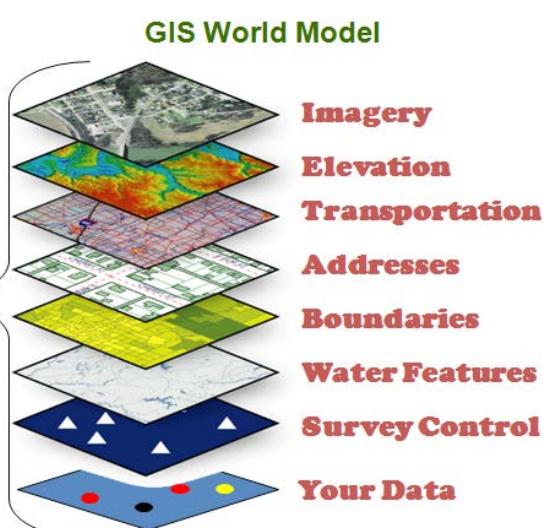
Figure 7: Find me a toilet app. Source: www.thehindu.com/news/cities/Delhi/app-to-locate-nearest-public-toilet/article8329300.ece

The digital mapping of spatial data is known as a GIS (Geographic Information System). Layers of information are placed over base maps such as a street map or aerial photo to create a visual image. Sophisticated GIS maps can have many layers of information created using computer hardware and software that captures, stores, organises, analyses and communicates spatial or geographical data. This data comes from remote sensing satellites.

The Real World



Figure 8: Multilayered GIS Source: <http://henrico.us/it/gis/>



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There are many GIS based phone and tablet apps suited to classroom use, for example Shipfinder or Planefinder (different versions for iPhone and android). Planefinder is excellent for showing interconnections between places at a range of scales – local to global.

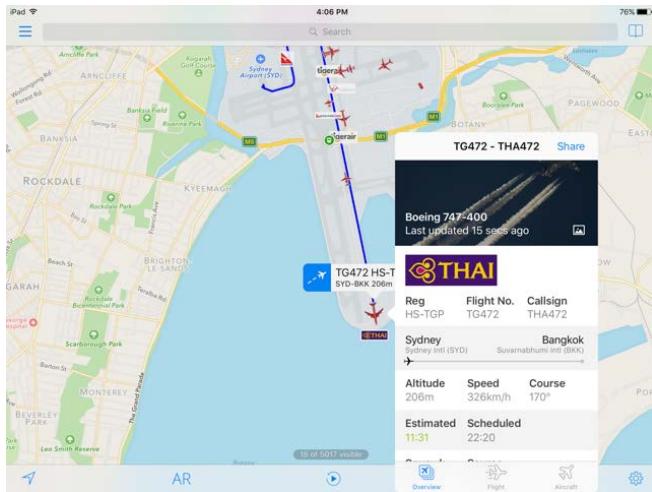


Figure 9: Planefinder app is an interactive GIS application Source: L Chaffer

GIS and fieldwork

Geography students can plot data collected at different **fieldwork** locations to create a simple GIS map. Google maps, Google Earth, National Geographic Mapmaker and Scribble Maps can be used to create a GIS to show geographical information.

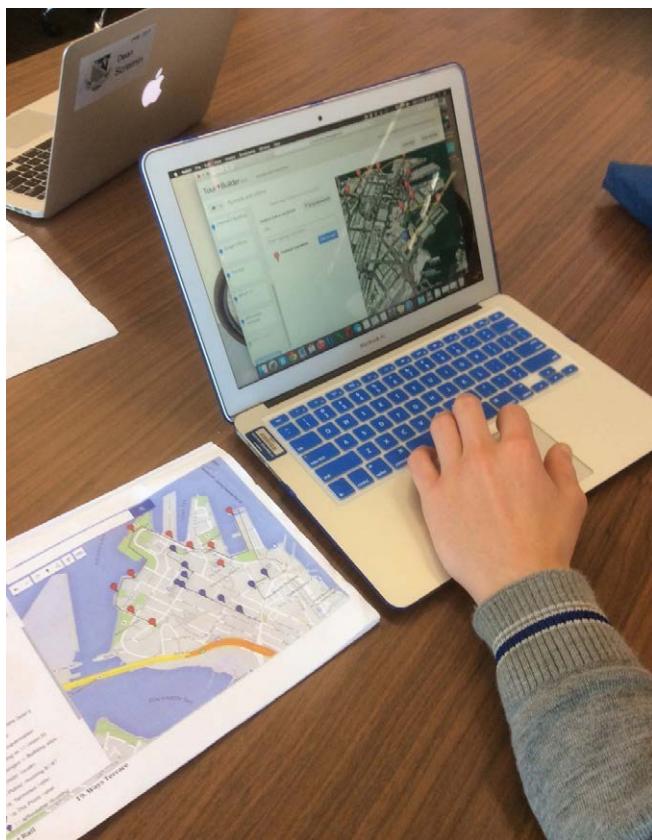


Figure 10: Student creating a Google Tour using fieldwork locations and data. Source: L Chaffer

The importance of spatial technologies in Geography

Spatial technologies are

- Sources of geographical information
- Ways of presenting geographical data
- Applicable to environmental management and disaster relief
- Provide career option for students – spatial technologies are a recognised growth area in employment

Applications of GPS and GIS in the geography classroom

- Collecting data about a location using a GPS device
- Geocaching – treasure hunts using GPS devices
- Creating maps to show the location of places and spatial distributions eg forests
- Plotting fieldwork data on a map to create a tour
- Showing changing spatial patterns using fieldwork data eg declining water quality along a river

Figure 11 can be used to evaluate teacher confidence in using and teaching about the range of geographical tools identified in the NSW K-10 Geography syllabus. The resulting analysis can be used to undertake professional learning in identified areas of weakness.

Resources

NSW Syllabus for the Australian Curriculum Geography K-10 (BOSTES) – <http://syllabus.bostes.nsw.edu.au/hsie/geography-k10/>

NSW Department of Education: Human Society and Its Environment Geography K-10 Teaching and Learning Framework (Page 2) – www.hsiensw.com/geography-k-10.html

Environmental Education Centres in NSW – [www.curriculumsupport.education.nsw.gov.au/env_ed/centres/](http://curriculumsupport.education.nsw.gov.au/env_ed/centres/)

What is GIS? –

www.youtube.com/watch?v=oMUGp0rGf7I
www.youtube.com/watch?v=kEaMzPo1Q7Q

GIS and GPS careers – www.youtube.com/watch?v=M7tK9CjRmlo

Track your Dominoes pizza – www.youtube.com/watch?v=uotknd6hlxk

Contour Education YouTube channel – www.contoureducation.com/links

Books

Keys to Geography: Essential tools and skills. Revised Edition

Keys to Fieldwork: Essential skills and tools

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TEACHER SELF-ASSESSMENT: Using geographical tools to acquire, process and communicate

TOOLS	NOT CONFIDENT	DEVELOPING	CONFIDENT
Maps			
Pictorial maps			
Using a globe			
Large-scale maps			
Small-scale maps			
Sketch maps			
Précis maps (S)			
Political maps			
Flowline maps			
Synoptic charts (S)			
Latitude & longitude. Degrees and minutes (S)			
Direction (cardinal)			
Direction (bearings) (S)			
Measure distances using scale			
Calculate area (S)			
Use map references to locate places			
Use grid and area references (S)			
Describe spatial distributions and /or patterns			
Visual representations			
Photographs, photo / field sketches			
Aerial photographs			
Flow diagrams			
Annotated diagrams			
Cartoons			
Mind maps (S)			
Multimedia			
Web tools			
Graphs & Statistics			
Tally charts			
Pictographs			
Line graphs			
Column graphs			
Pie graphs			
Scatter graphs			
Weather data			
Climate graphs			
Multiple tables / graphs on a geographical theme			
Statistics to find patterns and trends			
Population profiles (S)			
Fieldwork			
Observing, measuring, collecting and recording			
Conducting surveys and / or interviews			
Fieldwork instruments – eg. measuring devices, compasses, photographs, identification charts, GPS, GIS			
Spatial Technologies			
Virtual maps			
Satellite images			
Global positioning systems (GPS)			
Geographic Information Systems (GIS)			

Figure 11 Geographical tools from the K-1 Geography syllabus ((S = Suggestions for secondary only

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Figure 12: Examples from each stage

SOME IDEAS for Integrating Tools and skills into teaching & learning activities for K-6

STAGE	GEOGRAPHICAL TOOLS					GEOGRAPHICAL INQUIRY SKILLS			
	Maps	Fieldwork	Graphs & Statistics	Spatial Technologies	Visual Representations	Acquiring	Representing	Communicating	
ES1	Types of maps Pictorial maps	Activities Observing and recording data	Tally cards <u>Types of graphs</u> Pictographs	Virtual maps	Photographs Illustrations Story books Multimedia	Use a story book with illustrations to examine places where people live Undertake fieldwork to observe and record data on the features of a special place	Represent features identified in a place using a pictograph Draw conclusions about how places can be represented using maps e.g. virtual maps Develop a pictorial map representing the classroom	Label the special features of a place on photographs . Discuss why a place portrayed in a story book or photograph should be looked after.	
1	Types of maps Pictorial maps Large scale maps World map Globe	Activities Observing, collecting and recording data Conducting surveys	Tally cards <u>Types of graphs</u> Pictographs Column graphs	Virtual maps Data tables Weather data <u>Types of graphs</u> Pictographs Column graphs	Photographs Illustrations Diagrams Story books Multimedia Web tools	Use story books and multimedia to examine list of the natural and human features of different places Use a fieldwork activity to collect and record weather data at a local place Observe the features of a place using satellite images	Create a large scale map to show the location of local places Use a web tool to create a word cloud summarising the natural and human features of a place Draw a column graph to show seasonal variations in rainfall at different places in Australia using climate data tables .	Features of places	A student describes a place they visit and give a reason for visiting that place using a map , a photograph , an illustration or an item in a show and tell lesson .

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STAGE	GEOGRAPHICAL TOOLS					GEOGRAPHICAL INQUIRY SKILLS			
	Maps	Fieldwork	Graphs & Statistics	Spatial Technologies	Visual Representations	Acquiring	Processing	Communicating	
2	Types of maps Large scale maps World map Globe Sketch maps Maps to identify location, direction, distance, map references, spatial distributions and patterns	Activities Observing, measuring, collecting and recording data Conducting surveys or interviews <u>Fieldwork instruments</u> measuring devices, maps, photographs	Tally cards Data tables Simple statistics <u>Types of graphs</u> Pictographs Column graphs	Virtual maps Satellite images GPS Story books Multimedia Web tools	Photographs Illustrations Diagrams Use a world map to identify and list Australia's neighbouring countries in Asia and the Pacific Examine satellite images and a world map to compare urban settlement patterns in Australia and Asia – record location, distances and the distribution of settlements	Places are similar and different Use the True Size web tool to compare the size of different countries and draw conclusions about the size of Australia Use photographs, simple statistics, column graphs and maps to draw conclusions about similarities and differences in Australia and its neighbours	Create a diagram or data table to summarise key differences between Australia and a neighbouring country or a city in each place. Create a two-sided story book using illustrations or photographs to compare the daily life of people in two places. Use books e.g. <i>Mirror</i> by Jeannie Baker to stimulate ideas		
3	Types of maps Large scale small Scale maps Sketch maps Political maps, Topographic maps Flowline maps Maps to identify location, direction, distance, map references, spatial distributions and patterns	Activities Observing, measuring, collecting and recording data, conducting surveys or interviews <u>Fieldwork instruments</u> measuring devices, maps, photographs	Data tables <u>Types of graphs</u> Pictographs Column graphs Line graphs Climate graphs Multiple graphs on a geographical theme	Virtual maps Satellite images GPS Flow diagrams Annotated diagrams Story books Multimedia Web tools	Photographs Aerial photographs Illustrations Flow diagrams Annotated diagrams Statistics to find patterns	The earth's environment Undertake fieldwork to observe, measure and record data physical features of a local environment. Use a geocaching activity and GPS device to collect information about natural features of an environment	Identify distributions of different type of vegetation using world virtual maps Create a diagram to represent the connections between natural features of an environment	Student groups develop a simple multimedia presentation or web tool to describe an environmental issue and outline a proposal for better management of the related environment.	
								Factors that shape places Use media reports, maps and photographs to record data about the causes and effects of one contemporary bushfire disaster in Australia. Undertake fieldwork to observe, measure and record data showing a recent change to a local environment	
								Analyse climate graphs to draw conclusions about human activities in different locations Interpret a topographic map to determine links between landforms and settlement Graphs statistics from data tables of bushfires in Australia	
								A diverse and connected world Interview class members to record family and cultural connections to people and places overseas Examine data tables and multiple graphs on the theme of trade to identify countries of destination for Australian products.	
								Create a simple flow map using immigration statistics for African countries to Australia and describe the patterns shown Curate a collection of photographs to illustrate the benefits of intercultural understanding.	

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SOME IDEAS for integrating tools and skills into teaching & learning activities for 7 - 10

STAGE	GEOGRAPHICAL TOOLS				GEOGRAPHICAL INQUIRY SKILLS			
	Maps	Fieldwork	Graphs & Statistics	Spatial Technologies	Acquiring	Processing	Communicating	
4	<p>Types of maps Sketch maps, Relief maps, Political maps, Topographic maps Flowline maps, Choropleth maps, Isoline maps, Précis maps, Cartograms, Synoptic charts</p> <p>Maps to identify direction, scales and distance, area and grid references, latitude and longitude, altitude, area, contour lines, gradient, local relief</p>	<p>Activities Observing, measuring, collecting and recording data Developing and conducting surveys and interviews Fieldwork instruments Weather instruments, vegetation identification charts, compasses, GPS, GIS</p>	<p>Data tables Types of graphs Pie Graphs Column graphs Compound column graphs Line graphs Climate graphs Population profiles</p> <p>Multiple tables and graphs on a geographical theme Statistics to find patterns and trends</p>	<p>Virtual maps Satellite images GPS GIS</p>	<p>Photographs Aerial photographs Illustrations Flow charts Annotated diagrams</p> <p>Multimedia sources Field sketches Cartoons Web tools</p>	<p>Use topographic maps to identify distinctive landscape features in a place or environment Take photographs and make observations & measurements of a local landform as a fieldwork activity</p> <p>Collect photographs of places that illustrate differences in liveability Develop a set of criteria as a fieldwork instrument to assess the liveability of a place</p> <p>Use isoline maps, choropleth maps and multiple tables and graphs to describe the spatial distribution of water resources in Australia and other countries Use fieldwork instruments to measure water quality in a local water source</p>	<p>Create field sketches to record features of distinctive landforms Examine climate graphs to explain the distribution of landscapes Analyse vulnerability to geomorphic hazards e.g. landslides using photographs, climate graphs and relief maps.</p> <p>Draw conclusions about the liveability of places for different age groups by analysing population profiles</p> <p>Analyse satellite images, GIS and topographic maps to draw conclusions about how water connects people and places in a catchment Interpret synoptic charts to explain a contemporary atmospheric or hydrologic hazard.</p>	<p>Use annotated diagrams to explain the formation of distinctive landforms (geomorphic processes)</p> <p>Create a Google Tour GIS to show the global distribution of one type of geomorphic hazard and its consequences</p> <p>Create a multimedia presentation to describe and explain how liveability could be enhanced in a local place. A sketch map, annotated diagram and photograph should be included.</p> <p>Using a web tool such as Weebly or Glogster to present a proposal for addressing water scarcity in one place or country</p> <p>Create a flow chart illustrating the consequences of unsustainable water use</p> <p>Examine graphs to determine trends in trade connections between places over time</p> <p>Analyse photographs, satellite images or multimedia resources to draw conclusions about the impacts of tourism on a place</p> <p>Create a flowline map from data tables to illustrate the flows of people or a manufactured good between places at a global scale</p> <p>Collate a collection of cartoons, photographs and multimedia to illustrate Australia's connections to places in Asia</p>

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STAGE	GEOGRAPHICAL TOOLS				GEOGRAPHICAL INQUIRY SKILLS			
	Maps	Fieldwork	Graphs & Statistics	Spatial Technologies	Visual Representations	Acquiring	Processing	Communicating
5	Types of maps Relief maps Political maps Topographic maps Flowline maps Cadastral maps Thematic maps Isoline maps Landuse maps, Précis maps Special purpose maps. Cartograms	Activities Observing, measuring, collecting and recording data, Developing and conducting surveys and interviews Fieldwork instruments e.g Weather instruments, vegetation identification charts, compasses, GPS, GIS	Data tables Types of graphs Pie Graphs Column graphs Compound column graphs Line graphs Scatter graphs Climate graphs Population profiles	Virtual maps Satellite images GPS GIS Remote sensing data Augmented reality	Photographs Aerial photographs Illustrations Annotated diagrams Multimedia	Examine thematic maps to identify biomes and describe their spatial distribution on a global scale Observe, measure, collect and record data about factors affecting agricultural production and challenges to production during a fieldwork visit to an Australian farm	Analyse scatter graphs OR climate graphs to determine relationships between climate and biome distribution Interpret case studies, synoptic charts, illustrations or annotated diagrams to draw conclusions about the causes of food insecurity	Write a speech explaining the challenges facing the production of one agricultural product at a global scale. Support your speech with photographs and illustrations . Debate the statement: "Technology will solve global food insecurity" using examples, maps, graphs and statistics to support an argument.
	Synoptic charts Maps to identify direction, scale and distance, area and grid references, degrees and minutes of latitude and longitude, bearings, aspect, altitude, area, density, contour lines, gradient, local relief	Field and photo sketches Cartoons Mind maps Web tools	Multiple tables and graphs on a geographical theme Statistics to find patterns and trends and to account for change	Aerial photographs, climate statistics and landuse maps to explain settlement patterns in Australia and one other country	Use line graphs, pie graphs, population profiles and/or thematic maps to acquire key facts about the urbanisation of the world's population.	Analyse choropleth maps, climate statistics and landuse maps to explain settlement patterns in Australia and one other country	Create an infographic that contains multiple tables and graphs, special purpose maps and photographs to illustrate trends in urbanisation.	Create a mind map or consequence diagram to explain the consequences of one environmental change
						Environmental change and management	Create a aerial photographs to describe to one environment. Support conclusions with case studies from	Write a letter to a local government member proposing and justifying a solution of a local environmental change issue – include a sketch map, photograph or diagram
							Conduct fieldwork to observe, measure, collect and record data using appropriate fieldwork instruments to complete the inquiry	Use a précis map and photo sketch to record an area of change in a local environment
								Human wellbeing
								Create a TED Talk multimedia presentation to summarise the findings of a geographical inquiry into one human wellbeing issue
								Develop a campaign using visual resources e.g. cartoons, illustrations and photographs to raise awareness of a human rights issue