

Choosing a suitable fieldwork site: GeogSpace Resources

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Syllabus Links

Fieldwork is an integral and mandatory part of the study of Geography as it facilitates an understanding of geographical processes and geographical inquiry. Fieldwork can enhance learning opportunities for all students because it caters for a variety of teaching and learning approaches. The enjoyable experience of active engagement in fieldwork helps to create and nurture a lifelong interest in and enthusiasm for the world students live in.

Fieldwork involves observing, measuring, collecting and recording information outside the classroom. Fieldwork can be undertaken within the school grounds, around local neighbouring areas or at more distant locations

Fieldwork activities should be carefully planned to achieve syllabus outcomes. Fieldwork activities should be integrated with the teaching and learning program to take full advantage of the enhanced understanding that can be achieved through direct observation, field measurements and inquiry

Choosing a suitable location for fieldwork that suits the needs of students at different stages of learning can be difficult.



GeogSpace – www.geogspace.edu.au



Younger students investigate local places while older students go further afield and into places not suited to smaller children.
Photos L Chaffer and R Pierpoint

The following pages from the Geogspace website provide guidelines to consider when choosing a suitable fieldwork



GeogSpace

For teachers and secondary students

Australian Geography Teachers Association

Support units: Fieldwork

Illustration 1: Selecting a fieldwork site

Selecting a fieldwork site: Foundation year

The site you choose needs to suit the age group (typically five+ years). Consider their capacity for movement and their understanding of their environment. Their minds are very inquiring, so it is a great opportunity to start with simple fieldwork – geography outside the classroom.

Specified concepts to be covered

- place.

Possible sites

At this year level it is best to begin fieldwork in areas familiar to the students, close to their school and community, for example:

- The school grounds. Explore areas around the school, particularly ones that are outside their day to day activities, for example, where the Year 6 groups meet.
- Nearby. Take a short walk to somewhere close to the school (such as a park) that they can view as not just a place to play.
- Further afield. Visit a 'special' place in the community, such as a library, gallery, fire station or police station. Ideally this should be a place where it is unlikely that all students will have visited previously. This fieldwork may require the organisation of transport and specific administrative procedures at your school.

Fieldwork activities

These should include observation and the use of the senses based on an enquiry approach. Some possible questions to explore include:

- Where is this place?
- What happens here?
- Is it a safe place?
- What do you see?
- What noises can you hear?
- Why does our school or town need this place?
- Is it well looked after?
- Would you like to live or work here?

Reporting on the fieldwork

A few suggestions include:

- creating picture maps, drawings and photographs
- creating a story about the place
- making a rhyme
- comparing the place with other places
- imagining the place in five years time.



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Support units: Fieldwork

Illustration 1: Selecting a fieldwork site

Selecting a fieldwork site: Years 1 and 2

Students in Years 1 and 2 are typically up to eight years of age. As such they are capable of more extensive periods of time outside the classroom and should be encouraged to collect data, photograph and sketch at the fieldwork site.

Specified concepts to be covered

- place
- scale
- interconnection
- space
- change.

Possible sites

- The school grounds. Areas around the school can be used for basic weather recording activities. For example, temperature, rainfall, wind direction and cloud cover can be recorded at three or four sites, and students can consider the question: Where is the best space to play?
- Nearby. A short walk can be undertaken to a local environmental feature close to the school such as an area of bushland, wetland, parkland, farm or beach. The task here is about identifying features and how these features may have changed or might be changing in the future.
- Further afield. Students can compare businesses in commercial areas, such as places handling different scales of services (for example a supermarket and a corner shop), or an international company and a gardening service. Parents may be able to provide contact into different scales of services. This fieldwork may require the organisation of transport and specific administrative requirements at your school.

Fieldwork activities

These should include observation, measurement and use of the senses based on an enquiry approach. Some possible questions to explore include:

- Where is this place?
- What happens here?
- Why is this place here?
- How does weather affect the place?
- Why does our school or town need this place?
- Is it well looked after?
- Is this place changing?



Support units: Fieldwork

Illustration 1: Selecting a fieldwork site

Selecting a fieldwork site: Years 3 and 4

Students in Years 3 and 4 are typically from eight to 10 years of age. As such they are capable of extensive periods of time outside the classroom and should be encouraged to measure and collect data, photograph and sketch at the fieldwork site.

Specified concepts to be covered

- place
- interconnection
- environment
- sustainability.

Conceptual understandings to be extended

- space
- interconnection
- scale
- change.

Possible sites

- The school grounds. Areas around the school can be used for a waste management activity or a tree planting program.
- Nearby. A short walk to a park can be undertaken to study and test soils, classify vegetation types, identify the presence of animals by studying scats, and explore interconnections between people and their local environment. Consider becoming involved in an educational program established in the park.
- Further afield. A number of options for visits to less familiar environments can be undertaken. For example:
 - A farm. Any type of farm would be suitable for urban students and a niche farm, such as lavender, pig, llamas, could be selected for rural students.
 - A production site, such as a dairy, cheese-making, knitting mill or foundry.
 - A region where different types of settlements are influenced by the environment, such as coast, river, valley or mountain.

Parents may be able to provide contact into different environments such as food, fibre, timber or metal production. This fieldwork may require the organisation of transport and specific administrative requirements at your school.



Support units: Fieldwork

Illustration 1: Selecting a fieldwork site

Selecting a fieldwork site: Years 5 and 6

Students in Years 5 and 6 are typically from 10 to 12 years of age. As such they are capable of extensive periods of time outside the classroom and should be encouraged to measure and collect data, photograph and sketch at the fieldwork site. With greater confidence, students should be able to seek opinions from the public.

Specified concepts to be covered

- place
- interconnection
- environment
- space
- scale.

Conceptual understandings to be extended

- sustainability
- change.

Possible sites

- The school grounds. Areas around the school can be used for the study of a local planning issue, such as a survey as to where a basketball court should be built or the designation of a school drop-off zone.
- Nearby. A short walk to town or a shopping strip to explore the location of businesses and services can be undertaken to consider if specific activities tend to locate within the same vicinity by choice or by zoning requirements.
- Further afield. Visit diagonally different suburbs of a large city (not commonly known to the students) to show the inequalities of wealth, health and education. Interviews may be considered as an appropriate form of data collection. Another possibility is a visit to a food processing plant or distribution centre to discover the interconnections through export. These fieldworks may require the organisation of transport and specific administrative requirements at your school.

Fieldwork activities

These should include observation, collecting data and use of the senses based on an enquiry approach. Some possible questions to explore include:

- Where is this place?
- What happens here?
- How do I rank this place against a set of criteria – aesthetic, emotional, spiritual?



Support units: Fieldwork

Illustration 1: Selecting a fieldwork site

Selecting a fieldwork site: Years 7 and 8

Students in Years 7 and 8 are typically from 12 to 14 years of age. Students should be encouraged to suggest some of the possible elements that can be explored on the fieldwork. They are capable of an entire day outside the classroom and should be encouraged to measure and collect data, photograph and sketch at the fieldwork site.

With growing confidence, students should be able to seek opinions from the public.

Specified concepts to be covered

- place
- interconnection
- environment
- space
- scale
- change
- sustainability.

Possible sites

The school grounds can be used to introduce apparatus that might be used in the field, but this does not replace actual fieldwork.

- The school grounds. Areas around the school may provide the opportunity to look at land degradation and the processes involved. Is there a walkway that is eroding or soil compaction on a path? Students may consider what ought to be done to remedy the situation.
- Nearby. A short walk to a town area can be undertaken to administer a pre-developed survey on the liveability of an area and to undertake observation of sustainable lifestyles. This can include elements such as the use of tank water for gardens, soil protection, paved surfaces, solar panels, air conditioners, chimneys and evidence of bicycles.
- Further afield. A visit to a number of sites along a river within one catchment can be undertaken to consider changing flows and changing uses of the water on the sustainability of the river. This type of fieldwork may require the organisation of transport and specific administrative requirements at your school.



Support units: Fieldwork

Illustration 1: Selecting a fieldwork site

Selecting a fieldwork site: Years 9 and 10

Students in Years 9 and 10 are typically from 14 to 16 years of age. As such they are capable of an entire day outside the classroom and should be encouraged to measure and collect data, photograph and sketch at the fieldwork site.

Students should be able to confidently seek opinions from the public. They should also take on responsibility for their own learning and be actively engaged in the structure of the fieldwork investigation.

Specified concepts to be covered

- place
- interconnection
- environment
- space
- sustainability.

Conceptual understandings to be extended

- scale
- change.

Possible sites for Year 9 fieldwork

The school grounds can be used to introduce apparatus that might be used in the field, but this does not replace actual field work.

- The school grounds. An area at the school may contain a vegetable garden (or maybe at a nearby school) where the use of water, nutrient levels and the role of technology can be shown to effect crop yields.
- Nearby. A short walk can be undertaken to a venue that attracts crowds of people for an activity, such as a sporting arena, railway station, cinema, park, beach or shopping centre. Data on users of the site, transport, accessibility and perceptions of safety can be studied.
- Further afield. A visit to a farm producing a food crop can be undertaken. Environmental factors, innovative farming methods, changing markets and land ownership, and farm restoration of adverse environmental impacts can be explored. This type of fieldwork may require the organisation of transport and specific administrative requirements at your school.