Latitude and Longitude: Earth's Address System

KS2 GEOGRAPHY KS3 GEOGRAPHY Ages 10-14 ⏰ 3 min read

What Are Latitude and Longitude?

Latitude and **longitude** are two sets of imaginary lines drawn on Earth that help us locate any place on the planet with incredible precision. Together, they create a giant grid system that covers the entire world, like a coordinate system on a map.

Latitude lines run horizontally around the Earth from east to west. They measure how far north or south a place is from the **Equator**, an imaginary line that circles the middle of the Earth. The Equator is at **0° latitude**, and lines of latitude are measured in degrees, going up to **90°** at the North and South Poles.

Longitude lines run vertically around the Earth from the North Pole to the South Pole. They measure how far east or west a place is from the **Prime Meridian**, an imaginary line that passes through Greenwich in London. Like latitude, longitude is measured in degrees, ranging from **0°** at the Prime Meridian to **180°** east and west.

Think of it like a game of battleship! Latitude is like the numbers (1–10), and longitude is like the letters (A–J). Just as you say "B5" to find a ship, you say "40° North, 74° West" to find a place like New York City.

How Do They Help Us Find Places?

When you combine a latitude reading with a longitude reading, you get an exact **coordinate**—like an address for anywhere on Earth. For example, the **Statue of Liberty** is located at **40.7° N latitude** and **74.0° W longitude**. No other place has exactly those numbers.

This system is incredibly useful for navigation, travel, and even science. **GPS (Global Positioning System)** devices in phones and cars use latitude and longitude to tell you exactly where you are and guide you to where you want to go. Sailors, pilots, and explorers all rely on these coordinates to navigate across oceans and deserts.

The beauty of latitude and longitude is that it works the same everywhere on Earth. Whether you're in **Japan**, **Brazil**, or **Australia**, the system is universal and consistent.