

Geography

Year 1

SECTION

1

# THE CONCEPT OF GEOGRAPHY



# THE EARTH AND ITS NEIGHBOURHOOD

## The Earth and its Features

### Introduction

This section explains what geography is about, including the study of Earth's physical landscapes, human population and their complex interactions. You will develop an understanding of the fundamental principles of this subject, exploring its various branches, including physical, human and practical geography. Additionally, you will find career opportunities open to you if you pursue geography.

This section will also help you understand the complex nature of our world, such as the formation of landforms, spatial differentiation and global resource distribution. This knowledge will equip you with critical thinking and problem-solving skills invaluable in numerous geography-related professional fields, such as environmental management, urban planning and map use.

### At the end of this section, you should be able to:

- Explain geography and identify its branches.
- Discuss career prospects you can expect by studying geography.

### Key Ideas

- Geography is the study of the Earth's physical landscapes, human population, and their complex interactions.
- There are three main branches; Physical, Human and Practical Geography.
- When you study geography, you have a wide range of career opportunities such as cartography, surveying, weather forecasting and hospitality or tourism management among others.

# MEANING OF GEOGRAPHY AND ITS BRANCHES

## The meaning of Geography

Geography was derived from the Greek word ‘ge’ or ‘geo’ which means ‘Earth’ and ‘graphein’ or ‘graphos’ meaning to ‘write’ or ‘describe’ or ‘draw’. Geography simply means the writing about or description of the Earth. However, geography extends beyond mere description of the Earth and can therefore be explained as the study of the physical features of the Earth, its atmosphere and the relationship between them and humans. Geography is simply the study of people, their activities, places, and physical things or features of the Earth.

In your own understanding, try and explain the meaning of geography. Visit the link below to watch a video on the meaning of geography. After watching the video, explain the meaning of geography to your friend.



If you cannot access the video, check your school or local library or look for an internet café near your home.

### Activity 1.1

1. Take a walk in your environment and identify the features in the environment that will help you explain the meaning of geography. Record land or physical features like hills, rivers, lakes, and forests. Also record man-made features like buildings, roads, and factories.
2. Split the word geography up into ‘geo’ and ‘graphy’. Identify two geographical terms that begin with ‘geo’ and the other two that end with ‘graphy’. How do these terms help you explain geography?

Here are some examples to help you:

<b>Geology</b> – the study of the Earth’s rocks	<b>Geomorphology</b> – the study of the shape of the land.
<b>Cartography</b> – map drawing and making	<b>Topography</b> – description of the land of an area including height and landforms.

These terms show just some of the specialised branches of geography.

## BRANCHES OF GEOGRAPHY

1. **Physical geography:** Physical geography focuses on the Earth's natural features, which include its landforms such as mountains, valleys, plains, plateaus, rivers, distribution of flora and fauna, weather and climate.
2. **Human geography:** Human geography looks at the role and activities of humans and their relation to the physical environment. It also includes the built environment where human activities are conducted such as schools, markets, roads and railways, airports and farmlands, among others.
3. **Practical geography:** Practical geography is a branch of geography that equips learners with practical skills to enhance their understanding and interpretation of human, physical and geographical information. Practical geography can involve interpreting information and data, maps and diagrams related to physical and human features. Examples are statistical method geography, map work and fieldwork, remote sensing and geographic information systems (GIS), among others.

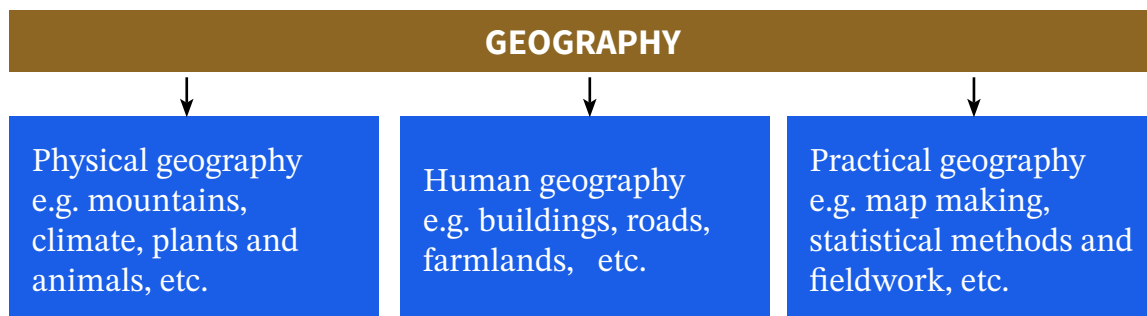


Fig. 1.1: Branches of geography

### Activity 1.2

1. Identify features from the school compound and classify them into physical and human geography.

For this activity, divide your page into two. List natural features like slopes, streams, and areas with trees on one side and then list human features like buildings, gardens, and parks on the other.

2. Go around the school compound and observe critically. Try and sketch the school compound, show and name the administrative block, library, science/ ICT lab and other two features of your choice to enhance your practical skills in geography.

For this activity, work in partnership with a friend. Sketch the school grounds before you explore and agree on where the above features are located. Add new features you discover. Back in class, make a neat copy of your plan for display. You have been doing the job of a cartographer.

## CAREER PROSPECTS AND THE IMPORTANCE OF STUDYING GEOGRAPHY

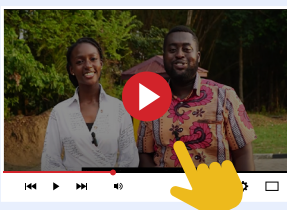
We have just discussed the meaning and the branches of geography. There are career opportunities associated with the study of geography at higher levels. You can become a professional, based on the skills and expertise you acquire in studying geography. So, you see why it is important to study geography? You can build a career and earn a living in the following areas if you study geography successfully:

1. **Surveyor:** The one who determines and draws maps of land boundaries, zoning of areas, road routes and building locations.
2. **Teaching:** A geography teacher imparts geographical knowledge to learners like you. So you see, your geography teacher earns a living from the certificate and the skills they acquired by studying geography.
3. **Health/Medical geographer:** Deals with the occurrence and distribution of disease.
4. **Town and country planning:** Helps in the location of human structures in towns and cities.
5. **GIS specialist/analyst:** Helps in the digitisation of maps, locations and spread of activities in areas.
6. **Cartographer:** Making local maps and plans to be used by tourists, architects, and pilots.
7. **Environmental protection specialist:** Helps preserve the Earth as a planet through environmental education and acting as an agent of environmental conservation. *How can you become an agent of environmental conservationists in your community?*
8. **Meteorologist:** Specialises in atmospheric activities such as predicting the weather.

### Activity 1.3

1. a. Identify three people whose occupations are related to geography. Some occupations include teacher, surveyor, and meteorologist. Can you think of more?
  - b. Describe what each job you chose entails (1a).
2. a. Suggest two places where a meteorologist might be working.
  - b. Explain the importance of a weather forecaster to a farmer.

Visit the link below and watch a video on the career prospects of geographers.



If you cannot access the links above, find out about careers in geology from your community library or school. Ask the librarian for help or ask your teacher.



**Fig. 1.2:** A surveyor at work



**Fig. 1.3:** What geographical skill and expertise is this individual exhibiting?



**Fig. 1.4:** Which professional aspect of geography is this picture depicting?

## SECTORS OF THE ECONOMY WHERE THE SKILLS AND EXPERTISE OF GEOGRAPHERS ARE NEEDED

Areas where geographical skills could be employed include the following:

- Tourism
- Transport
- Trade and commerce
- Education
- Civil service
- Building and construction
- Agriculture
- Manufacturing
- The Military
- Health

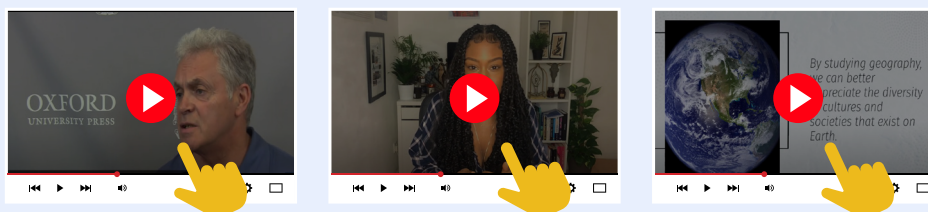
### Importance of studying Geography

Have you ever thought of the value you will derive from studying geography? Apart from earning a certificate from studying it, there are varied benefits to individuals, societies and nations. Some benefits are listed below:

1. It fosters an appreciation of the global spatial differentiation of human and natural features.
2. It enhances understanding and appreciation of natural landscapes and the distribution of various landforms.
3. It helps us understand and appreciate the diverse ways of life of people around the world.
4. It promotes an appreciation of the variations in population distribution.
5. It aids in understanding people and their economic activities.
6. It allows for a better understanding of cultural differences among people.
7. It highlights the relevance of environmental resources and how they can be harnessed for human use.
8. Geography enhances our spatial awareness, enabling us to interpret and navigate the world around us.
9. It helps us understand global issues such as climate change and overpopulation.

#### Activity 1.4

Use the internet to search and gather information about the importance of and career prospects in studying geography. Check these links:



If you cannot access the video, check your school or local library or look for an internet café near your home.

# Review Questions

1. What does the word geography mean?
2. What are the three main branches of Geography?
3. Describe what is studied in each of the three branches of geography.
4. Identify three careers that are linked to geography
5. For the three careers you have chosen in question 4, describe the work people following each career might be doing.
6. State two things that make studying geography in secondary school important.



# Answers to Review Questions

1. Geography can be explained as the study of the Earth's physical landscapes, human population, and their complex interactions.
2. Practical – undertaking field investigations to collect and interpret information, data, maps, and diagrams related to physical and human features.
3. Physical, Human and Practical.  
Physical – Earth's natural features like hills, rivers lakes, seas, and forests.  
Human – Earth's man-made features like buildings, roads, parks, factories.
4. Teacher, Surveyor, Meteorologist.  
Teacher – working in schools to teach learners what geography is about; teaching tourists to appreciate local features and landscapes.  
Surveyor – drawing up plans for the location of buildings, roads, and other human-caused features.  
Meteorologist – studying climate and weather, forecasting weather.
5. Any four of the following: Helps to explain the global distribution of physical and human features (spatial differentiation), explains natural landscape features, builds respect for other cultures and peoples, explains global concentrations of people, explains the location of economic activities, helps to explain local and global problems, explains how local and global resources are used.

## Extended Reading

- Dadson I. Y., Adu-Boahen A. and Owusu B. A. (2019). *Essentials of Physical Geography*, University of Cape Coast Press: Cape Coast
- Dadson I. Y. (2021). *Integrated Human and Regional Geography*, University of Cape Coast Press: Cape Coast

## References

1. Lambert, D. & Balderstone, D. (2012). *Learning to teach Geography in secondary school: A companion to school experience (2 Ed.)*, Routledge: New York.
2. Tsibu, B. (2022). *Physical Geography for Senior High Schools*, Abundance of Grace Ent., Kumasi.

## Acknowledgements



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