

Materials Needed:

- Computer or Tablet with Internet Access
 - Google Maps (accessible via web browser or app)
 - Notebook or Paper
 - Pencil or Pen
-

Introduction: Your Digital Compass! (10 mins)

Have you ever wondered how people find their way around? Long ago, they used stars and paper maps! Today, we have amazing digital tools like Google Maps right at our fingertips. Think of it as a super-powered, interactive map of the entire world! We can use it to find places nearby, explore faraway lands, and even see what streets look like without leaving home. Today, we're going on a geography adventure using Google Maps!

Activity 1: Mapping Your World (15 mins)

Let's start exploring!

1. Open Google Maps in your web browser or app.
2. Find the search bar. Type in your home address (or just your city/town if you prefer). See how the map zooms in?
3. Practice zooming in and out using the '+' and '-' buttons or your mouse/touchpad.
4. Practice panning: Click and drag (or swipe) to move the map around.
5. Find the button to switch between 'Map' view (like a drawing) and 'Satellite' view (real pictures from space!). Look at your area in both views. What differences do you notice?
6. Search for a familiar place nearby, like a park, library, or grocery store.

Activity 2: Global Feature Hunt! (20 mins)

Now, let's become world explorers! Switch to Satellite view for this activity.

1. **Find a Mighty River:** Search for the 'Nile River' in Africa. Follow its path. Can you see where it ends in the Mediterranean Sea? Describe what the river and the land around it look like from space.
2. **Find a Vast Desert:** Search for the 'Sahara Desert' in Africa. Zoom out so you can see how big it is! What colors do you see? Does it look smooth or bumpy?
3. **Find Towering Mountains:** Search for 'Mount Everest' in Asia. Zoom in. Can you see the snowy peaks? This is part of the Himalayan mountain range. Look at the shapes and shadows.
4. **Find a Huge Ocean:** Search for the 'Pacific Ocean'. Zoom way out. This is the largest ocean on Earth!
5. **Challenge:** Can you find a large lake? (Example: Lake Superior in North America)

In your notebook, write down the name of each feature you found and one observation about how it looked in Satellite view.

Activity 3: How Far Is It? (15 mins)

Maps help us understand distance. Google Maps has a tool for this!

1. Go back to your home location (or city).
2. Right-click (or long-press on tablet) on your starting point and choose 'Measure distance'.
3. Click on another point on the map (like that park or library you found earlier). A line will appear showing the distance!
4. Try measuring the distance between two major cities, like 'New York City' and 'Los Angeles'. How far is it?
5. Click multiple points to measure a longer path.
6. Discuss: Why is knowing the distance between places important? How does the map scale change as you zoom in and out?

Activity 4: Virtual Road Trip! (15 mins)

Let's plan a trip!

1. Click the 'Directions' button (usually a blue arrow).
2. In the starting point, type a city you'd like to visit 'from' (e.g., 'Chicago').
3. In the destination, type a city you'd like to visit 'to' (e.g., 'Miami').
4. Google Maps will show you a driving route! Look at the path it suggests. Does it follow major highways?
5. Zoom in along the route. What states or major landmarks would you pass through?
6. *Optional (with supervision):* You can use 'Street View' by dragging the little yellow person icon onto a blue highlighted road. This lets you see 360-degree photos of that location! Explore a small part of your virtual route.
7. Describe your virtual trip in your notebook: Where did you start? Where did you end? What was one interesting thing you saw or passed through on the map?

Wrap-up & Discussion (5 mins)

Wow, we explored so much today using Google Maps! What was your favorite part? How is using Google Maps different from using a paper map? How can tools like this help us learn more about geography and the world around us?