How Geographers Use Maps

Geographers use maps to show distributions. The maps help us see patterns and relationships of things. What geographers map is related to the Six Essential Elements of Geography:

- The World in Spatial Terms
- Places and Regions
- Physical Systems
- Human Systems
- Environment and Society
- Uses of Geography

The World in Spatial Terms

Geographers use maps to show where things exist in the world so we can understand patterns and relationships of anything existing on earth.

Boring, OR

Exact location on earth: 45° 25' 47" N, 122° 22' 29" W

Places and Regions

Places and regions are defined by the cultural and physical features found there. Geographers use maps to identify places and regions that share common characteristics, such as a “Downtown” region with skyscrapers, a “Pearl District” area with residential housing, and a “Chinatown” region with Chinese sculpture and art.

Physical Systems

Geographers use maps to help understand how the earth is affected by physical systems. This map shows where rain and snow fall in Oregon. We can look at the map to understand not only where precipitation falls but also where vegetation that depends on rain grows.