

KNOWLEDGE ORGANISER

Geography - North and South America

Summary



Alaskan tundra, North America



New York City, New York



Rio de Janeiro, South America

- The term America (or Americas) refers to all lands in the Western Hemisphere comprising of North, Central and South America, it also includes the West Indian Islands (Caribbean).
- The United States of America (USA) is a country in North America, when people use the word 'America' they are normally referring to the USA.
- North and South America are both continents - Central America lies within the continent of North America.

North America facts

- The USA is the third largest country in the world by both land area and population.
- The USA is a country that comprises of 50 states and other jurisdictions.
- Most North Americans speak English, Spanish and French.
- North America is the only continent that has every kind of climate: polar, temperate, subtropical (or continental) and tropical.
- 50% of the world's corn harvest is produced in North America.

South America facts

- More than 30% of South America is covered by rainforests.
- The Amazon River is 4000 miles long.
- South America has the shortest coastline for its size of any of the continents.
- South America contains more than 40% of the world's plants and animals.
- The Amazon Rainforest is found in Brazil and covers an area of 2,300,000 square miles.
- 70% of South America's wealth is produced in areas that receive rainfall or water from the Amazon.



Key vocabulary

- **Country** - a geographical area that has its own government.
- **Continent** - a large landmass usually made up of many countries.
- **Latitude** - geographical coordinates that specifies north south position on the earth's surface (divides into climate zones).
 - 0° = the Equator
 - 90 °N = the North Pole
 - 90°S = the South Pole
- **Longitude** - geographical coordinates that specifies east west position on the earth's surface (defines date and time).
 - 0° = Greenwich Meridian (or prime meridian) lies in Greenwich, London.
- **Hemisphere** - half of the earth, divided into the northern and southern hemispheres by the Equator, and western and eastern hemispheres by the Greenwich Meridian Line.
- **Weather** - short term changes in the atmosphere.
- **Atmosphere** - the layer of gas that surrounds Earth.
- **Climate** - describes the average weather over a long period of time in a specific area.
- **Climate zone** - areas with distinct climates which occur in an east-west direction around the earth.
- **Biome** - a large geographical area that has a certain climate and certain types of living things. Major biomes include forests (rainforest, boreal/taiga, temperate/deciduous), tundra, deserts and grasslands.
- **Koppen Information System** - used to denote different climate regions on Earth based on local vegetation.
- **Flora** - the plants of a particular region or habitat.
- **Fauna** - the animals of a particular region or habitat.
- **Population** - the inhabitants of a particular place.
- **Physical geography** - natural characteristics of a region, eg land formations, climate, flora/fauna.
- **Human geography** - human interaction with its surroundings: where people live, what they do and how they use the land. Includes buildings and structures such as roads, transport etc.