

Teachers and Leaders Guide: Try it yourself: What is a map?



This activity is designed to help beginners understand the perspective which a map gives them and how this helps us to better understand our landscapes and how different areas relate to each other.

There are learner sheets for use with this activity, with suggestions for going further. As an introduction, you may wish to begin with a group discussion about where the building you are currently. This might be a school or community centre.

- Where is it in relation to other buildings and landmarks in the area?
- Which street is it on?
- Where do people live in relation to the school or building you are in?
- How do we know this? Imagine you are giving someone directions – is it easier to explain it or draw it out?

Worm's Eye, Bird's Eye

To get learners used to the idea of how maps look, ask them to draw their desk from a worm's eye and a bird's eye view, using the record sheets and explanations provided. Once they have done this, then you could have a discussion about which is the easier to use to understand where things are on the desk in relation to each other.

There is a matching game on the 'Mapping History' website which asks learners to match the bird's eye view of a site with the correct worm's eye view. This is very useful in helping learners to understand what the same site looks like from both perspectives and to begin to understand how to build the relationship between what can be seen on the ground

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Finding your way

This activity helps learners to further understand how valuable a bird's eye perspective is in helping people find their way. Now that learners have got a good idea of how to draw a map, ask them to draw a map of a familiar route. You can use the explanation and record sheets which have been provided.

This route could be from home to school, from home to a relative's house, to the library – any route which they know well. They should then swap their maps with a partner who tries to find the route on an actual map of the area. This could be an Ordnance Survey map or a Google map. It might be easier if the start point is given! Then you can use the discussion point questions below to explore how useful maps can be.

Keep these maps, as there will be opportunities to build more detail into them in other activities.

Discussion point!

- How easy was it to transfer the route from the drawn map to the "official" map?
- Were there any landmarks which were missing?
- What could you not see from the ground?
- Were there high fences that you couldn't see over or other roads which hadn't been drawn into the map?
- Are maps a useful tool for navigating and finding your way?