The Human Grid

Lesson activity: finding places with latitude and longitude. Students become points on a giant floor grid, then practise reading coordinates on paper.

TOPIC	LEVEL	STRAND	TIME
Latitude & Longitude	Grades 5–8	Map skills	45 minutes

Learning objectives

By the end of the lesson, students can:

- explain what latitude and longitude measure, and the 0° lines they start from;
- read and write coordinates in degrees, with latitude first (e.g. 20°S, 40°E);
- locate points on a grid map and name the hemispheres they lie in.

Materials

- Masking tape or chalk
- Coordinate cards (one per student; see step 3)
- A globe or world map
- Sample Worksheet (one per student)
- Classroom Quiz (optional, next lesson)

Key vocabulary

- **Equator** – 0° latitude
- **Prime Meridian** – 0° longitude
- **Latitude** – degrees north or south
- **Longitude** – degrees east or west
- **Hemisphere** – half of the Earth
- **Coordinates** – latitude + longitude

Lesson flow

Time	Stage	What happens
0–5 min	**Warm-up**	Ask: *"How would you tell a pen pal on another continent exactly where our school is?"* Collect ideas, then introduce the idea of a 'global address' that works anywhere on Earth.
5–15 min	**Teach**	On the globe, show the Equator (0° latitude) splitting the Earth into Northern and Southern Hemispheres; latitude rises to 90° at each pole. Show the Prime Meridian (0° longitude) through Greenwich, London; longitude runs to 180° east or west. Rule: **latitude first, then longitude**. Example: Abuja is at about 9°N, 7°E.
15–35 min	**Activity**	**The Human Grid** (steps below).
35–42 min	**Practice**	Students start the Sample Worksheet, Parts A and B. Parts C and D can be finished for homework.
42–45 min	**Exit ticket**	Three quick questions (below), answered on a slip of paper and handed in at the door.

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Activity: The Human Grid

Space needed: a cleared classroom floor, hall or playground. About 20 minutes.

1. **Mark a 5 × 5 grid** on the floor with tape or chalk, lines about 1 metre apart.
2. **Label the middle row** "Equator 0°" and the middle column "Prime Meridian 0°". Label the other rows 20°N, 40°N, 20°S, 40°S and the other columns 20°E, 40°E, 20°W, 40°W.
3. **Hand out coordinate cards**, each with one grid crossing written on it, for example *20°N, 40°W* or *0°, 20°E*. Students walk to their point and stand on it.
4. **Run quick checks:** "Everyone in the Southern Hemisphere, raise a hand." "Everyone on the Prime Meridian, step forward." "Who is furthest north?"
5. **Swap and race:** collect the cards, shuffle, hand them out again and time the class. Repeat two or three times and challenge them to beat their best time.

Exit ticket

1. What is the latitude of the Equator?
2. Write the coordinates of a point 20° south of the Equator and 40° east of the Prime Meridian.
3. A city is at 16°S, 48°W. Which two hemispheres is it in?

Differentiation

Support
Give students a small printed copy of the floor grid with the lines already labelled. Pair them with a partner for the first round of the Human Grid.

Extension
Students find the coordinates of their own town and two world capitals, then work out which of the three is furthest from the Equator.

> **Teacher tip.** Students often mix up the two. Try this: lines of **latitude** are flat, like the rungs of a **ladder** (lat–ladder). Lines of **longitude** are **long**, running all the way from pole to pole.

Answers to the exit ticket are in the Teacher Answer Key.

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