

# KS2 Physical geography glossary

<b>Place knowledge</b>	
Antarctic circle	Imaginary circle around the earth, parallel to the equator, at latitude 66° 33' south
Arctic circle	Imaginary circle around the earth, parallel to the equator, at latitude 66° 33' north
Continent	One of the earth's large land masses
County	A political division of the UK
Country	A political unit or state on a national scale
Equator	The imaginary line around the earth's surface equidistant from the north and south pole
Europe	Continent containing 47 countries north of Africa and west of Asia
Greenwich Meridian	Imaginary line used to indicate 0° longitude. It passes through Greenwich, London and ends at the North and South Pole.
Latitude	Distance in degrees north or south of the equator
Longitude	Distance in degrees east or west of the Prime Meridian
North America	Continent containing 23 countries including those in Central American and Caribbean
Northern hemisphere	The northern half of the earth's surface; north of the equator
Ocean	A very large stretch of sea, one of five oceans of the world – Pacific, Atlantic, Indian, Arctic and Southern.
South America	Continent containing 12 countries south of North America
Southern hemisphere	The southern half of the earth's surface; south of the equator
Time zones	A region throughout which the same standard time is used. There are 24 time zones in the world, demarcated approximately by meridians at 15° intervals, an hour apart.
Topography	Detailed description of the surface features of a region.
Tropic of Cancer	Line of latitude 23.5° north of the equator and the most northerly position on the earth at which the sun may appear directly overhead
Tropic of Capricorn	Line of latitude 23.5° south of the equator and the most southerly position on the earth at which the sun may appear directly overhead
UK	Country comprised of four nations: England; Northern Ireland; Scotland; and Wales.

<b>Tectonic activity</b>	
Convection currents	Heat from the core causes mantle to rise and fall in currents. These currents slowly move the crust around
Core	The centre of the earth
Crust	The thin layer of the earth's surface
Earthquake	A shaking of the earth's crust caused by sudden tectonic movement
Fold mountains	Mountains formed by the earth's movement
Lava	The name given to liquid magma when it reaches the surface of the earth
Magma	Molten rock in the mantle
Mantle	The molten rock that surrounds the core
Margin/boundary	The line between two plates (two plates can move towards each other, away

	from each other of slide side by side)
Mountain	A natural upward projection of the earth's surface, higher and steeper than a hill.
Pressure	Force that builds up in the mantle or crust leading to volcanic eruptions or earthquakes
Pyroclastic flow	Fast moving current of hot gas and rock ejected explosively from a volcano and moving at great speed
Richter scale	Measures the strength (magnitude) of the volcano
Tectonic plates	A large section of the earth's crust
Tremors	Small vibrations of the earth's crust that increase in frequency and intensity before or after an earthquake (foreshocks and aftershocks)
Tsunami	High tidal waves caused by an earthquake underwater
Vent	The opening through which lava flows in a volcano
Volcanic bombs	A lump of lava thrown out by a volcano
Volcano	An opening in the earth's crust from which molten lava, rock fragments, ash, gases and dust are ejected

<b>Water cycle</b>	
Atmosphere	The envelope of air surrounding the earth and bound to it by gravity
Condensation	A change of state in which gas becomes a liquid by cooling
Evaporation	When a liquid changes state to a gas
Infiltration	Water movement is interrupted by something, usually vegetation
Impermeable	A substance which fluids are unable to pass through, e.g. rock
Interception	When precipitation lands on vegetation
Precipitation	Moisture that falls from the air to the ground
Saturated	When land is unable to hold any more liquid
Surface run off	Water running across the surface of the earth
Transpiration	Water evaporating off vegetation
Water cycle	The continual movement of water between the rivers, oceans, atmosphere and land

<b>Rivers</b>	
Bank	The ground at the side of a river
Bed	The riverbed is the ground at the bottom of the river
Channel	A groove in the land that a river flows along
Confluence	Where two rivers or streams meet
Current	The flow of a river
Delta	A fan shaped area of sediment built up at the mouth of a river
Downstream	The direction that a river flows, towards the mouth of the river
Deposition	When a river drops the sediment or material that it was carrying often when the river current slows
Depth	How deep the river is
Erosion	The wearing away of the land
Estuary	A drowned river valley in a coastal lowland area. Occurs near or at the mouth of a river, where the tide meets the current and the fresh and salt waters mix
Flood	Occurs when a river has too much water in its channel and the water breaks over or through the river banks and spreads over the surrounding land

Flood plain	The flat land alongside the river usually found in the lower course of the river. It is a fertile area of land often used for farming
Gorge	A step-sided river valley which is very narrow and deep
Landform	A recognisable feature in the land, e.g. meander
Hill	A natural elevation of the earth's surface, less high or craggy than a mountain.
Irrigation	The supply of water to farmland so that crops can grow in areas where water is scarce or unreliable
Lower course	The section of river near the sea where there is a lot of deposition and the valley becomes flatter and wider
Meander	A bend in the river usually in the lower or middle course of the river
Middle course	The section of river between the highland and the lowland where there is a lot of transportation and the river begins to cut sideways
Mountain	A natural upward projection of the earth's surface, higher and steeper than a hill.
Mouth	The place where the rivers meets the sea
Oxbow lake	A small arc-shaped lake formed when a meander is sealed off by deposition
Process	A repeated pattern that shapes the land in different ways
River basin or drainage basin	The area of land that is drained by a river and its tributaries
Source	Where the stream begins
Transportation	The moving of material from one place to another
Tributary	A small river that joins the main river channel
Upper course	The higher stage of a river with steeper gradients and more erosion
Valley	A long depression in the land surface usually containing a river
Velocity	The speed of the water flow
Waterfall	A place where the river course is interrupted by a tall step
Watershed	The place that divides two river basins
Width	How wide the river is

<b>Coasts</b>	
Arch	A wave eroded passage through a small headland
Bay	Found between headlands where the waves have eroded the softer rock more rapidly for form bays
Beach	An area of sand or shingle sloping down to a sea or lake
Deposition	When a river drops the sediment or material that it was carrying often when the river current slows
Cave	Found in coasts made of more resistant rock
Cliff	A steep rock face along the coast
Coast	Where land meets the sea
Erosion	The wearing away of the land
Fetch	The distance a wave has travelled
Headland	An area of land sticking out to sea formed of more resistant rock
Long shore drift	Waves approaching the coast at an angle result in the gradual zig-zag movement of beach materials along the coast
Rock	Dry solid part of the earth's crust
Sea defences	Measures taken to defend the coast from erosion, cliff collapse and flooding
Spit	A long, narrow accumulation of san and shingle formed by long shore drift (transportation) and deposited where the coastline abruptly changes direction
Stack	Rock left standing out at sea after wave erosion has separated it from the

	mainland
Stump	Formed by continuing wave action attacking a stick until it collapses
Tide	The alternate rising and falling of the sea
Transportation	The moving of material from one place to another
Waves	Caused by the transfer of energy from wind blowing over the surface of the sea

<b>Biomes and vegetation belt</b>	
Biodiversity	The different types of living things in the world or habitat
Biome	A large area on the earth's surface defined by the types of plants and animals living there
Boreal forest / Taiga	Biome in a nearly continuous belt across North America (Boreal) and Eurasia (Taiga) made up of coniferous trees
Climate	The long term weather average
Coniferous forest	Forest characterised by cone-bearing, needle leaved evergreen trees. Located in temperate areas of the world
Deciduous forest	Forest characterised by trees with leaves that fall off or are shed seasonally, usually at the end of the growing season. Located above tropical rainforests and below coniferous forests
Desert	A dry, often sandy and rocky region of little rainfall, extreme temperatures, and sparse vegetation
Ecosystem	A community of organisms living in a particular environment
Environment	The natural and built surroundings of a place
Equator	The imaginary line around the earth's surface equidistant from the north and south pole
Flora	Plants of a particular region
Forest	A large wooded area having thick growth of trees and plants
Latitude	Distance in degrees north or south of the equator
Rainforest	Dense forest found in tropical areas of heavy rainfall
Savanna	Rolling grassland scattered with shrubs and isolated trees found between a tropical rainforest and desert biome
Soil	The top layer of the land surface of the earth that is composed of disintegrated rock particles, humus, water and air.
Sun	Light or warmth received from the earth's sun
Temperate	Region or climate with mild temperatures
Tundra	Large, flat, treeless Arctic region of Europe, Asia and North America
Vegetation belt	An area with certain flora and fauna due to climatic conditions

<b>Climate zones</b>	
Atmospheric pressure	Pressure exerted by the atmosphere on any surface
Climate	The average weather conditions over a long period of time
Continent	One of the earth's large land masses
Continental climate	A climate with a high temperature range away from the influence of the sea. Winters are colder and summers warmer compared to a coastal location for the same latitude
Equator	The imaginary line around the earth's surface equidistant from the north and south pole
Equatorial climate	Climate 0-5° north and south of the equator (hot, humid and wet)

Humidity	Water vapour content of the air
Maritime climate	A climate with a low range influenced by proximity to the sea. Winters are warmer and summers cooler compared to a continental location for the same latitude
Ocean	A very large stretch of sea, one of five oceans of the world – Pacific, Atlantic, Indian, Arctic and Southern.
Precipitation	Moisture that falls from the air to the ground
Temperature	The degree of hotness or coldness in a substance, in this case the air
Season	Patterns that can be identified at a certain time of year
Weather	The short term (minutes to 15 days) variations of the atmospheric state including temperature, wind, precipitation and cloudiness.
Wind	Movement of air caused by changes in temperature and air pressure

<b>Key vocabulary</b>	
Distribution	Arrangement or location of something
Global	Relating to the whole world
Interaction	A mutual or reciprocal action
Interdependent	When two or more things are dependent on each other
Landmark	A prominent or well-known object or a feature of a human or physical landscape
Location	A site or position
Pattern	An arrangement of repeated or corresponding parts.
Region	An area considered as a unit for geographical reasons.