

HOW TO BUILD A TILE MAP

Print map pieces and work with students in Grades K–12 to assemble large wall or floor maps that are up to 12 feet wide and 8 feet tall.



Background Information

A tile map is a large wall or floor map that students can build together. The finished product can cover the wall of a classroom, cafeteria, or gymnasium—even the side of a school building. It includes outlines of continents, major islands, country and state borders, major cities, bodies of water, and rivers. Pale lines labeled on the four sides indicate latitude and longitude in degrees. Tile maps allow students to explore a variety of features and topics by physically interacting with and making maps.

Setup

Clear a space on the floor approximately 20' x 20' for each tile map of a continent to be assembled, or clear wall space from floor to ceiling approximately 12' wide. Students can work on tables or the floor to start assembling.

Materials You Provide

paper
scissors or paper cutter
transparent tape
wide tape to hang map on wall
world atlas

DIRECTIONS (30 MINUTES)

1. Prepare the materials.

Print the black-and-white tile maps on 8.5 x 11 paper. Trim the edges as needed with scissors or a paper cutter to remove white frames between tiles. Refer to the tile map key to group the tiles if students will assemble the tiles in small groups. You can laminate the tile map pieces for sturdiness, re-use, and ease and use wet or dry erase markers for activities.

2. Demonstrate how to assemble the tiles.

Show students how to assemble the tiles. Hold two tiles together on a flat surface, aligning map features such as rivers, borders, and place names. Using small pieces of transparent tape, attach the tiles together at the corners or along the sides.

3. Assemble the map.

Have students work in groups on the floor or on tables. Depending on students' ages and the class time available, have students assemble groups of contiguous tiles to form small sections of the map. Although the tiles are numbered for easier organization, you can have students try to assemble the map using the map features, without explicitly telling them about the numbers.

Modification

For younger students or to save time, assemble groups of tiles in advance so that students put together fewer pieces of the large map.

Modification

Adding competition to the map-building can motivate older students. Print two sets of maps and divide students into two large groups. Then have the groups race to see which assembles the map first.

Extending the Learning

Use the assembled tile map with any activities where students apply different types of information to the map to develop mapping and analysis skills