

How to Read a Map · Conversation & classroom guide

Learning with a grown-up · Ages 4–8 · Flexible participation

What does the title tell us?

Learning aim: Use a title, key and compass rose to interpret a simple map and follow a connected path.

A five-minute conversation

Pretend you and Olivia are reading this practice map together. Begin with its title, then choose one symbol in the key and find its match.

Start here: Offer one symbol at a time and trace together.

Explore further: Ask the child to describe the path with east/north as shown by this map's compass rose.

What does the title tell us?

Answer cue: The map shows an imaginary practice park. It is for learning, not a real walking route.

How does the key help you?

Answer cue: It explains what the tree, bridge and playground symbols mean. Find the same shapes on the map.

How can you go from the star to the playground without crossing through the water?

Answer cue: Follow the path from START across the bridge, then continue along the path to the playground. Use the actual map path; it is not a real-world navigation instruction.

Keep the idea clear

North points toward the top of this map because its compass rose says so. Not every map is drawn with north at the top. Symbols and keys can differ between maps.

Try: Make an imaginary park map

Materials: Paper and a pencil or crayon.

1. Draw a made-up park with a path and two features.
2. Choose a small symbol for each feature and repeat it in a key.
3. Invite someone to match the symbols and trace your path.

What this can show: Can the child use a key symbol correctly and keep the route on the pictured path? Keep the map imaginary or of a public example. Do not ask the child to record or share a home address, school location or personal route.

Return to it: Ask a partner to find a symbol using only your key. What could make the match clearer?

How to Read a Map · In the classroom

A 20-minute classroom lesson

Prepare: Read the picture and answer cues. Have the optional explorer's notebook available. Paper and a pencil or crayon.

Words to explore

map — A drawing that shows where places and features are.

title — The name that tells what a map shows.

symbol — A small mark or picture that stands for something.

key — A guide that explains the symbols on a map.

north — A compass direction opposite south.

east — A compass direction opposite west.

south — A compass direction opposite north.

west — A compass direction opposite east.

3 min · Notice: Orient: read the map title and find north on its compass rose.

4 min · Compare: Match: compare each key symbol with the same symbol on the map.

8 min · Try together: Draw a made-up park with a path and two features. Choose a small symbol for each feature and repeat it in a key. Invite someone to match the symbols and trace your path.

5 min · Explain: Route: start at the star and follow the path across the bridge to the playground.

Understanding check: Can the child use a key symbol correctly and keep the route on the pictured path?

Answer guidance: The map shows an imaginary practice park. It is for learning, not a real walking route. It explains what the tree, bridge and playground symbols mean. Find the same shapes on the map. Follow the path from START across the bridge, then continue along the path to the playground. Use the actual map path; it is not a real-world navigation instruction.

Explain symbol shape and label together; color is additional information, not the only clue.

A response to keep

Try the three views on notebook page 3. Then choose symbols and meanings for your own key on page 6.

One clue I can explain now...

Something else I wonder...

<https://kiddos.ai/learn/olivia-the-globetrotter/read-a-map>

Related story: Olivia the Globetrotter stories — Olivia's books explore real places with Doudou. This imaginary park is a practice diagram, not an additional book destination.

Our discovery record

Use words, marks, a drawing or an adult's notes. Keep this page with you; nothing needs to be uploaded.

Date / time (if useful): _____

My question or idea

What I noticed

What I think now

What I want to explore next

Stories to continue together: <https://kiddos.ai/books>

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