Our Geography 7 Key Concepts

**Place**

**Space**



**Change**

**Interconnection**

**Sustainability**

**Scale**

**Environment**

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| Key Stage | Key Concepts Covered |
| KS1 | Place, Space and Environment |
| LKS2 | Place, Space, Environment, Scale and Change |
| UKS2 | Place, Space, Environment, Scale, Change, Interconnections and Sustainability |

The geographical concepts of place, space, environment, interconnection, scale, sustainability, and change are integral to the development of geographical understanding. They are ideas that can be applied across the subject to identify a question or guide an investigation. They are the key ideas involved in teaching students to think geographically.

Place

1. **Place**

**The concept of place is about the significance of places and what they are like.**An understanding of the concept of place may be developed in the following ways:

* Places are parts of the Earth’s surface that are identified and given meaning by people. They may be perceived, experienced, understood and valued differently. They range in size from a part of a room or garden to a major world region. They can be described by their location, shape, boundaries, features and environmental and human characteristics. Some characteristics are tangible, for example, landforms and people, while others are intangible, for example, scenic quality and culture.
* Places are important to our security, identity and sense of belonging, and they provide us with the services and facilities needed to support and enhance our lives. Where people live can influence their wellbeing and opportunities.
* The environmental characteristics of a place are influenced by human actions and the actions of environmental processes over short to long time periods.
* The human characteristics of a place are influenced by its environmental characteristics and resources, relative location, connections with other places, the culture of its population, the economy of a country, and the decisions and actions of people and organisations over time and at different scales.
* The places in which we live are created, changed and managed by people.
* Each place is unique in its characteristics. As a consequence, the outcomes of similar environmental and socioeconomic processes vary in different places, and similar problems may require different strategies in different places.
* The sustainability of places may be threatened by a range of factors, for example, natural hazards; climate change; economic, social and technological change; government decisions; conflict; exhaustion of a resource and environmental degradation.
1. Space

**The concept of space is about the significance of location and spatial distribution, and ways people organise and manage the spaces that we live in.**

An understanding of the concept of space may be developed in the following ways:

* The environmental and human characteristics of places are influenced by their location, but the effects of location and distance from other places on people are being reduced, though unequally, by improvements in transport and communication technologies.
* The concept of space considers how the environmental and human characteristics are influenced by their location, but also how the effects of location and distance from other places and people are being reduced by improvements of transport and communication technologies.
* Spaces are perceived, structured, organised and managed by people, and can be designed and redesigned to achieve particular purposes.
1. Environment

**The concept of environment is about the significance of the environment in human life, and the important interrelationships between humans and the environment and the ability to change it.**

An understanding of the concept of environment may be developed in the following ways:

* The environment is the product of geological, atmospheric, hydrological, geomorphic, edaphic (soil), biotic and human processes.
* The environment supports and enriches human and other life by providing raw materials and food, absorbing and recycling wastes, maintaining a safe habitat and being a source of enjoyment and inspiration. It presents both opportunities for, and constraints on, human settlement and economic development. The constraints can be reduced but not eliminated by technology and human organisation.
* Culture, population density, economy, technology, values and environmental worldviews influence the different ways in which people perceive, adapt to and use similar environments.
* Each type of environment has its specific hazards. The impact of these hazards on people is determined by both natural and human factors, and can be managed but not eliminated by prevention, mitigation and preparedness.
1. Interconnection

**The concept of interconnection emphasises that no object of geographical study can be viewed in isolation.**

An understanding of the concept of interconnection may be developed in the following ways:

* People and organisations in places are interconnected with other places in a variety of ways. These interconnections have significant influences on the characteristics of places and on changes in these characteristics. We need to look at the impact of people, places and processes.
* Environmental and human processes, for example, the water cycle, urbanisation or human-induced environmental change, are sets of cause-and-effect interconnections that can operate between and within places. They can sometimes be organised as systems involving networks of interconnections through flows of matter, energy, information and actions.
1. Scale

**The concept of scale is about the way that geographical phenomena and problems can be examined at different spatial levels.**

An understanding of the concept of scale may be developed in the following ways:

* Generalisations made and relationships found at one level of scale may be different at a higher or lower level. For example, in studies of vegetation, climate is the main factor at the global scale but soil and drainage may be the main factors at the local scale.
* Cause-and-effect relationships cross scales from the local to the global and from the global to the local. For example, local events can have global outcomes, such as the effects of local vegetation removal on global climate.
* This is about understanding the bigger picture as well as our experiences in day-to-day life. For example – if we are studying climate- how do we examine climate on a personal, local and global scale?
1. Sustainability

**The concept of sustainability is about the capacity of the environment to continue to support our lives and the lives of other living creatures into the future.**

An understanding of the concept of sustainability may be developed in the following ways:

* Sustainability is both a goal and a way of thinking about how to progress towards that goal.
* Progress towards environmental sustainability depends on the maintenance or restoration of the environmental functions that sustain all life and human wellbeing (economic and social).
* An understanding of the causes of unsustainability requires a study of the environmental processes producing the degradation of an environmental function; the human actions that have initiated these processes; and the attitudinal, demographic, social, economic and political causes of these human actions.
* There are a variety of contested views on how progress towards sustainability should be achieved and these are often informed by worldviews such as stewardship.
1. **Change**

**The concept of change is about explaining geographical phenomena by investigating how they have developed over time.**

An understanding of the concept of change may be developed in the following ways:

* Environmental change can occur over both short and long-term time frames, and both time scales have interrelationships with human activities.
* Environmental, economic, social and technological change is spatially uneven, and affects places differently.
* An understanding of the current processes of change can be used to predict change in the future and to identify what would be needed to achieve preferred and more sustainable futures.
* Physical process – an event or sequence of events that occur naturally due to the power of the planet.
* Human process – things created/affected by people. These processors would not occue without human involvement.