

Using Geography Memorization as a Way to Master Historical Concepts: An analysis of effective memory tools

Read the Full Article Here: <https://www.modelteaching.com/education-articles/testing-strategies-prep/using-geography-to-master-history>

For history teachers of 2nd- 12th graders

In your history classroom today, you are likely expecting your students to analyze global conflicts, understand the historical basis of past events, and explain changes over time in our world and the nation's history.

When students do not know where countries are, history becomes too abstract, because they cannot properly visualize how history has been shaped near borders. To truly understand history, students need to see the countries involved in their minds. This is where focused preparation in geography becomes important. Memorization of countries and their locations, when done intentionally and strategically, can become an essential way for your students to interact with the historical concepts you are teaching

This article first makes the case for memorizing countries, cities, and regions around the world, and then discusses a few technology tools that can help your students memorize geography concepts, enabling deeper engagement with history, current events, and global issues.

Memory's Connection to Deeper Thinking

The ability to recall concepts is the first step toward higher-order thinking, because students cannot analyze or evaluate information without first retrieving it from memory.

When students can more easily recall facts, they can more easily participate in discussions, make connections across topics, and engage in critical thinking. So, a strong memory is a critical component of ensuring that reasoning and critical learning take place in the classroom.

In geography, this means that before students can really understand and analyze global events, they must first build an internal map of the world. Knowing where countries are, how they relate spatially, and which regions they belong to helps students build a foundation for understanding the complexities of history and current events.

Dual Coding: Why Visual + Verbal Learning Is So Powerful

Dual Coding Theory, first proposed and popularized by Allan Paivio, explains that the brain processes information through two main channels:

- **Verbal** (words, names, language)
- **Visual** (images, spatial layouts, symbols)

When students learn through both channels at once, memory becomes stronger and more durable. This is why learning geography is uniquely powerful. It naturally combines country names with an image and a location on a map.

For example, when students see a map of Africa, say the country names aloud, and repeatedly practice locating each country, they not only build long-term memory of these countries but also interact with the map in ways that make the information more deeply ingrained in their minds. Simply talking about a country will not have the same effect on students' understanding if they can't easily visualize it and its location in their minds.

Memorizing Countries is the Starting Point for Rigorous Historical Discussions

Memorizing countries is not the end goal for student learning in your classroom. When students practice recalling country names or locations and can identify the countries easily on a map, they can later more easily understand why and how conflicts may occur where they do, they can analyze how the country's location shapes its culture and its economy, and they can critically compare historical and current events across regions around the world. Your students' ability to easily recall country names and locations enables automatic recall to support higher-order thinking through more in-depth analysis of historical and current events.

The Tools to Help

You are probably surrounded by digital learning tools on a regular basis, and geography tools may be no different. However, not all geography memory tools are the same. When choosing a tool to help your students learn and memorize countries, rivers, mountain ranges, and more, it's important that you focus on a tool that allows for deep understanding and supports a focus of recall to improve memory. In other words, digital tools that might be designed as quick play and easy games may be fun, but you want to ensure that you are also selecting tools that are rooted in educational research to support recall practice for improving memory. We have identified four geography tools that can support recall and

improve your students' memory. We will delve into each a bit more now, then provide you with a rationale for why it ranks best.

What Makes a Geography Tool Effective?

Research in learning science shows that durable learning requires:

1. **Retrieval practice** – students must recall, not just recognize
2. **Dual coding** – pairing visual maps with verbal labels
3. **Multiple modalities** – practicing the same content in different ways
4. **Spaced repetition** – returning to information over time
5. **Immediate feedback** – correcting misconceptions in the moment

Any tool that lacks these elements may feel engaging, but may not be beneficial for supporting long-term memory. What's great is that the digital tools you choose can be incredibly simple and serve a very specific purpose. As long as you can evaluate their use of memory theories like those listed above, you can feel assured that you are supporting your students on the right path to mastering knowledge of geographic countries and regions. Continue on in this article now to read more about the four tools we evaluated for this article.

Tool Comparisons

1. Seterra Geography [<https://www.geoguessr.com/quiz/seterra>]

A widely used geography quiz site with hundreds of map-based activities.

Strengths

- Provides an extensive quiz library
- Focused on map-based recall

Limitations

- Mostly single-mode interaction
- Limited variation in practice style

Learning-Science Takeaway:

Supports retrieval but lacks the modality variation needed for durable memory.

2. Fizzy Learning – Geography [<https://geography.fizzylearning.com/>]

An interactive platform for memorizing world countries, capitals, and regions through multiple practice modes.

Strengths

- Multiple practice formats (maps, typing, flashcards, quizzes, build-your-own quiz, printable maps)
- Allow for both recall practice and testing of knowledge

Limitations

- Primarily focused on factual geography knowledge
- Limited higher-order application without teacher-guided extension

Learning-Science Takeaway:

Strong long-term retention is supported through varied retrieval and spacing, making geography knowledge more durable and transferable.

2. Lizard Point Quizzes [<https://lizardpoint.com/>]

A long-standing geography site with quizzes, statistics, and country data.

Strengths

- Provides additional factual content
- Large question banks and reference materials

Limitations

- Interaction modalities are more limited
- Its focus is more on assessment of knowledge than a complete learning tool

Learning-Science Takeaway:

Checks knowledge but may not actively build it through visual-spatial encoding.

4. World Geography Games [<https://world-geography-games.com/>]

An interactive website with many geography quizzes.

Strengths

- Provides a wide topic range in a game-like format
- Covers maps

Limitations

- One primary practice format
- No structured system for studying and testing knowledge

Learning-Science Takeaway:

Engaging, but memory may not be emphasized without repeated, varied retrieval.

Full Comparison Table

✓ = supports this memory process very well

-- = something supports this memory process

✗ = Does not support this memory process, or supports it very little.

DIGITAL TOOL	S Seterra	★ RECOMMENDED F Fizzy Learning Geography	L Lizard Point	W World Geography Games
MEMORY THEORY				
Retrieval Practice	✓	✓	—	✓
Dual Coding (Visual + Verbal)	—	✓	—	—
Multiple Modalities	—	✓	✗	—
BEST USE	Wide content breadth BREADTH	Strongest studying, recall, and memory storage application BEST OVERALL	Additional reference facts available REFERENCE	Gamified practice on geography and other topics GAMIFIED

Note: All the digital tools we analyzed in this article offered spaced repetition and immediate feedback; therefore, those memory theories were excluded from the table above.

The top contender:

Fizzy Learning – Geography

All the geography sites listed in this article can help you learn more about countries and regions around the world. Some of these sites also provide content that engages and supports interactions with geography. But when analyzing each website's features for improving recall and memory of countries, regions, and features, **Fizzy Learning - Geography** (<https://geography.fizzylearning.com/>) edges out the other websites. It integrates retrieval practice, dual coding, and multiple modalities through a fun and user-friendly interface. Like other websites, it supports spaced repetition and immediate feedback, making it easy for students to pick up and practice at any time.

Final Thought

Understanding and deeply engaging with concepts involving both historical and current events requires students to grasp the geographic regions involved. This is where strong memory and the ability to recall facts and concepts are critical for fully engaging with more complex topics. Requiring the memorization of countries or regions as a supplement to your history lessons allows for richer understanding and discussion among your students. Choose any of the above websites to get started. But if your focus is on improving students' memory and recall, Fizzy Learning - Geography could be a great tool to begin using in your classroom or at home.