

Fun Games for Early Learners to Learn the 50 States

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It's no doubt that American geography and culture is an important aspect of any elementary student's curriculum starting from an early age. After all, kids must learn and understand their own culture before they can branch out and understand the bigger world around them. But how can little learners remember all the US states when there are 50 unique states to memorize? And that's on top of learning state capitals, and about the amazing cultural differences that make our country so special!



While memorizing the 50 states may seem like a daunting task and quite a tall order for young children, there are many ways to make it easier and enjoyable. As you might try with any other academic topic, there are a plethora of games your child can play to learn about all the states. You be wondering what a USA geography game for kids might entail, and the answer is that there are many types of games your child can play from online games to games you can make yourself!

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Let's take a closer look at some fun-filled ideas to learn the 50 states easily:

Make or Print US State Trading Cards

Let's face it: what kid wants to sit around and label maps all day? Most kids would find such an activity boring, forever spoiling their love and appreciation for geography. One way to jazz up the learning process is to create and play with US state trading cards. Find templates online, or simply draw and color them with your child, adding its capital and interesting information about state on the back.



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If you remember back to your own childhood, you might recall trading and collecting baseball cards, even if you didn't watch or follow the sport. The cards even came with a stick of gum making each pack even more exciting! Bring this same excitement to your child by emulating that same childhood magic. After creating the trading cards, don't give your child all of them at once! Make it a game by giving him or her a few per week to learn about, or even hand them out for good behavior to see which of your children collect all 50 first. Laminate the cards or create a package and add a stick of gum or small candy to make the experience just like the one you had as a child!

I Have, Who Has States Games

There's no better way to create and play a US states and capitals game than by using the supplies you already have. Once your child has collected all 50 state trading cards, play a game of "I Have, Who Has"! This is a multiplayer game, so using the deck of trading cards, deal an equal number of cards to each player.

To play, select a child to go first, and choosing a card in their hands, they will announce to the group "I Have..." and the capital city of the card they are holding. Then the child will say, "Who has..." and will ask the group who has capital of a state for a card that they are not holding. The player that has that state will announce they have the capital for that state and will give the card to the player requesting it. This can be played in circles until all cards have been played. To make it easier to keep track of the states being called, keep a printable US map in the middle of the players and have each player mark off the state they requested. In doing so, all players review states, their capitals and its location on the map!

Make an At-Home US State Scavenger Hunt

All you need for this US states game is a large printable map, a way to mark answers, and a clue card filled with exciting hints to challenge your little learner's knowledge of the country!

Plan the clue card(s) ahead of time based on your child's prior knowledge, and vary the difficulty level of each clue based upon what you think your child can answer, or should learn about. The clue card should be filled with sentences describing something about the state. For example, some hints on the clue card could read:

- This state contains a desert.
- A state that is made up of islands.
- This state is connected to Canada, but borders no other US states.
- A state that is named after a president.
- Two Great Lakes surround this state.
- A state that contains the Appalachian Mountain Range.

For younger learners, use easier clues, like:

- This state starts with the letter T.

- This state contains palm trees.
- A state that borders the Atlantic Ocean.
- A state that does not border an ocean.



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After your child reads a clue, encourage him or her to mark the state for an answer. Use coins, pom poms, paint dot markers, or any other fun way to answer each hint. Keep the fun going by providing different and more challenging clue cards that advances your child's knowledge about specific states. Do this in multiple sessions, simply printing out a new state map for each new scavenger hunt!

USA Bingo

Who doesn't love a classic game of bingo? This addictive game is loved by people both young and old, but this grown-up game can serve as a helpful learning tool for many topics, including US geography!

For a round of US states bingo, you'll first need bingo cards. To do this, you can either make your own using your own artwork and card stock, or you can easily find free printable US states bingo cards online. Be sure to use cards that display the shapes of the states without naming each state. Additionally, you'll need to print a bingo call sheet that you can cut and place in a hat or bowl to pick at random. The call cards should contain a matching state to those on the cards, and you can simply call out the state's name for younger kids just learning state shapes, or you can use clues like those found in the scavenger hunt above.

To play, randomly pick a call card from the bowl or hat and announce the state or clue for each player. Kids can use coins to cover their answers. Just like regular bingo, the first player to make a straight line vertically, horizontally, or diagonally calls out bingo and wins! Don't forget to check the winner's answers to check for understanding and accuracy!

Popsicle Stick States Game

Check out this exciting USA geography game for kids that tests your child's knowledge and speed to review all 50 states! To get started, you'll need to gather the following supplies to set up the game:

- At least 53 craft sticks
- Permanent marker
- Colored markers
- Printable map of the USA
- Plastic page protector
- Thin point dry erase markers
- Basket or empty cup
- Tissue or baby wipe



Set the game up by preparing the materials ahead of time. On the popsicle sticks, use the permanent marker to write the names of each state, writing one state name per stick. Using the colored markers, color-code the sticks by geographical region. For example, for the Midwestern states, color each green. Make the Southern states red, and so on. For the remaining 3 sticks, write a phrase, like, “Whoops!” or “Oh, Snap!”. Place the sticks in a basket or empty cup, and place the printable map in the page protector and give your child a dry erase marker to start.

To play the game, set your timer or stopwatch for at least a minute, perhaps longer for younger children. The object of the game is to mark off as many states as possible in the time allotted. Once the time starts, your child will quickly pick a craft stick and read the state name and check off the state on the map using the dry erase marker. If your child selects one of the extra sticks with the phrase “Whoops!”, your child will erase his or her checks on the map using the tissue or wipe. Your child then starts over until time is called.

For even more fun, have your child square off against a friend or sibling. The player that gets the most states marked when time is called is the winner!

Free Online Games and Commercial Board Games

Simply search for US 50 states games in any search engine, and you’ll find a multitude of links to absolutely free games your child can play at the click of a mouse! While some are offered by online gaming companies, or even individual bloggers that make games, some are offered by the government, like this quiz game offered by the US Department of Labor. If you’re looking for a way to quickly review US state geography with your early learner, you won’t be disappointed by the online options available with just a few keywords and only a couple seconds of your time.

If you’re looking for something more hands-on that the entire family could play, check out Scholastic’s Race Across the USA game, offered at major retailers like Walmart and Amazon. This game helps kids “visit” states, answering geography questions along the way. The best part is that the questions are tailored for the players’ individual grade level to ensure an even playing field.

It might be tempting to dismiss US geography as something that isn’t needed in school anymore. After all, we can simply pull out our smart phones and look at a labeled map anytime we want. We use GPS to guide us to wherever we need, and unless we end up as a contestant on Jeopardy, it might not be useful to be able to point out Vermont on a map.

However, learning US geography is important for kids to learn about regional and national culture. It's important for kids to know the geographical regions of the USA, and how the people, culture, and landforms differ from that of their own. All said, it's important for kids to learn about the incredible 50 states early. Luckily there are ways to make learning geography exciting! Use the above ideas and watch your little learner blossom with pride and patriotism for his or her country!

