



Social Studies for Grades K-3: Necessary Skills and Activity Ideas

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Think about your local tutoring centers or companies available within your community. Do they offer social studies as a course for potential tutoring? In most cases, the answer is a resounding: no! Most tutoring services revolve around a few central subjects, like math, reading, writing, science, study skills and test preparation. So if social studies is a major subject found across all school grade levels, why is it left out of many educational resources, such as tutoring or learning apps?

The fact of the matter is that social studies is important, and is critical to raising contributing members of society. Kids absolutely need to understand how to function in their community and the larger world around them. Join us as we dive deeper into what makes social studies so significant, and the essential skills and knowledge kids need to become global citizens of today's world!



Why is Social Studies Important?

Right now, it might not seem that the study of social studies is all that pertinent to your child who is just learning to read and write. But if you stop to think about it, one day your child will have the power to vote in local and national elections. Learning social studies from an early age helps kids to understand their role in the larger community, both locally and nationally. It helps kids to learn how to make informed decisions about the laws that govern their lives. More importantly, it teaches kids to appreciate and respect the culture and traditions of other people, allowing them to become global-minded.

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Essential Social Studies Knowledge and Skills

Kids don't start out learning about some of the social sciences, like psychology or sociology. However, kids do learn about the social world around them when they examine several key areas. When it comes to the social studies curriculum, let's take a closer look at the targeted areas that your child will need to master:

- **Citizenship and life in the community**

Preschoolers should start out small, learning about their own community. Kids can learn a lot about social studies right in their own neighborhood! Explore the concept of citizenship and what that looks like within your local area. Talk about community leaders, such as police officers, firemen, EMT personnel, teachers, and others who perform essential jobs for everyone living in your neighborhood.

Eventually, kids will branch out to learn about the local government, and understand that a community is governed by a local city council, as well as the mayor. Kids explore the topics of voting, laws, and local government until they are ready to understand that their community is just one of many in their state, and the country!



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- Government and democracy

Once kids understand their local leadership, it's time to branch out to state and national government and civics. Obviously, the concept of democracy is important to our country, and it's important that your child learns about the tenets of democracy, and how it works in the scope of our own government. Kids should learn about voting at the national level, laws that govern our country as a whole, and the three branches of government and how they work together.

- Local, national, and world culture

One essential social studies skill is learning to respect our own customs and traditions, as well as those of others. Younger children should start out with their family's traditions, values, and culture. Kids should study their own heritage, and what makes them who they are.

It's also important to learn about national culture, and what it means to be an American, as well as the importance of American symbols and values. From there, kids can begin to learn about world cultures, studying the traditions and beliefs of people from across the globe. In doing so, kids can understand what makes them unique, while also valuing and appreciating others' differences.



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- History and influential figures and leaders

Learning history is so important because it teaches about past mistakes and successes to ensure that our future is successful. Further, it's critical that kids learn about history, again at the local, national, and global levels, in order to understand the present.

Alongside history, kids should learn about influential historical leaders and figureheads. Kids should understand the importance of presidents like Abraham Lincoln, or national leaders, such as Martin Luther King Jr. Through these historical influencers, children learn what life was like in the past, making a connection to how it led to life as it is today.

- National geography

Last but not least, kids should learn about geography and what makes different areas of the world unique, and how that contributes to culture and life in those areas. Kids should start out studying simple national geography, starting with the different American states, and the diverse landforms and terrain that make up everything from the Mohave desert to the Appalachian mountains!

5 Innovative Ways to Encourage Social Studies Learning at Home or in the Classroom

1. Visits by the fire department, police, or community safety classes or events

It's time to take a field trip to discover the importance of social studies! Whether through school or by taking a trip around your own community, your child will be excited to learn about their community through first-hand visits or events! Most neighborhoods host local events or classes that help kids learn about safety, such as calling 9-1-1 or about EMT services. Many times fire stations invite kids to tour fire trucks and learn about the equipment and profession. Schools often invite the sheriff to give a talk to students, and some kids are even lucky enough to meet K-9 officers. Check out the events in your area and take your child to learn about local leaders and their important role in the community!



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2. Go virtual and play some games to learn about civics!

Social studies reading activities don't have to be boring! Take advantage of free programs and online games. Better yet, don't forget that Kids Academy offers a whole host of social studies games and worksheets on our website at kidsacademy.mobi, as well as in our Talented and Gifted app! You will find many of the topics covered above, from community leaders to national symbols.

3. Visit historical markers and nearby towns or cities

Did you know that there are interesting historical markers right in your own city and state? If you ever drove down the highway, you might have seen these brown signs that direct travelers to the local historical markers. Make it your mission to seek out all the local historical markers with your child and learn about the vibrant history near your community. Even more, check out local historical museums, or places of interest.

Be sure to check to ensure that the museum is age appropriate, but many locales have kid-friendly historical sites. Most kids aren't ready to take a trip to the Holocaust museum, but there are plenty of locations great for families of all ages. Tour a nearby cave, visit the site of a historical battle during the civil war, or visit monuments. You will be surprised to find out how many historical locations exist near your residence, even if you don't live close to Washington D.C.!



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4. Try some world foods and explore a different culture

Kids and parents alike love food, and what better way to explore local, national, and world culture, than by exploring different foods? Whether you're at home or in the classroom, it's easy to host a party exploring another culture. Start out with local traditions, branching out to cuisines and desserts from around the world! Use Pinterest to find recipes to make authentic Mexican quesadillas, or explore Korean cuisine with bibimbap or kimchi. While you're taste-testing, don't forget to discuss the culture and people the food represents!

5. Sing some songs to learn all the states!

One fun and easy way to learn all of the different states in the U.S. is to create a song, rap, or poem naming the states. Create the song together with your child and depending on age, set guidelines for length or content. Don't forget that there are already many famous songs that help kids memorize the states. Check out YouTube to listen and sing along to the 50 States Song, and use it as inspiration to make your own, or to make a song uniquely about your state!

Learning social studies is essential for kids as they learn to be productive and contributing members of our larger world. While you might not find as many resources for the subject as you can for math or language arts, there are plenty of ways to make social studies activities come alive. Engage your child as he or she learns one of life's most important skills: becoming a global citizen and preparing to make real decisions that will one day drive our society!

