

Latitude and longitude info sheet

Lines of latitude and longitude are marked on maps and globes. The unit used for latitude and longitude is degrees (°) with:

- 180° of latitude (90° north ↔ 90° south), and
- 360° of longitude (180° east ↔ 180° west).

Latitude

The Equator is the key line of latitude (at 0°). It is an imagined horizontal line at the longest lateral circumference (the widest part) of Earth.

Lines of latitude are counted by degrees north and south of the Equator: 0°–90°N to the North Pole and 0°–90°S to the South Pole.

During the year, Earth tilts on its axis. Its maximum tilt north is marked by the Tropic of Cancer (latitude 23°26'12.5") and its maximum tilt south by the Tropic of Capricorn (latitude 23°26'12.5").

Lines of latitude also mark the northern Arctic Circle (at 66°33'47.5") and the southern Antarctic Circle (at 66°33'39").

Longitude

The lines of longitude are imagined vertical lines running from the North Pole to the South Pole.

The Prime Meridian (0°) is the line of longitude that runs through Greenwich, London, UK.

Lines of longitude are counted by degrees east and west of the Prime Meridian: 0°–180°E and 0°–180°W. They meet at the joint 180° line – which is also the International Date Line.

Each degree (°) can be broken into 60 minutes (') and each minute can be divided into 60 seconds ("), which is why the lines given for the tropics and polar circles above include three symbols.

In an atlas, the index will often give the unique latitude and longitude location of a place: literally its position on the globe.