Around the Town

Goal: Use maps to compare the distance to different places around town

Before beginning

Make “location cards.” Find familiar places on your street map. Write the name of one place on each card.

How far?

Gather children around a street map. Help them identify where they are now and a few other familiar places. Ask them to compare distance to two places:

Talk About...

Which do you think is closer to us? King Park or the City playground? How can we tell?
If needed, show how to count blocks on the map.

2 Give out location cards and maps

Ask pairs to:

Predict the distance in blocks to each place.
Use the map to find the distance in blocks. Record findings.
Find how many blocks to places they choose.

3 Share findings

Talk About...

What’s the farthest away of all the places we’ve discussed? How do you know?
Who lives farthest away?

Variations

10 blocks or less (easier). Use locations no more than 10 blocks away.

For rural and suburban towns, children measure the route they’d walk to each place with string or rulers and find the most distant.

Around the world (harder). Try the activity with places around the state or cities around the world. Use regional or world maps.
Grades

4-6+

Minimum number of participants

2

Suggested grouping

divide into pairs

Time

10-20 minutes

Math

comparing distances on a map

Materials

index cards: 2 per child

local street maps (or printouts of streets around your location from a web site)

1 per pair

scrap paper and pencils

Prerequisites

some familiarity with reading maps