



UNITED STATES GEOGRAPHY CHAMPIONSHIPS

2026 US Geography Championships Multiple Choice Examination

Instructions – This examination consists of 50 questions. You will receive two points for a correct answer. You will lose one point for an incorrect answer. Blank responses lose no points. Please fill in the bubbles completely on the answer sheet. You may write on the examination, but all responses must be bubbled on the answer sheet. All images are contained in the resource document. Diacritic marks such as accents may have been omitted from place names and other proper nouns. You have 45 minutes to complete this examination.

Questions 1-5 are about agriculture.

1. A rural settlement pattern in which farmers live on individual farmsteads scattered across the countryside is best described as which of the following?

- A. Clustered settlement
- B. Dispersed settlement
- C. Linear settlement
- D. Centralized settlement

2. Which of the following best explains why von Thünen proposed that dairy farming and market gardening would be located relatively close to a city?

- A. They require extensive grazing land far from consumers.
- B. They depend on low labor costs.
- C. They produce perishable goods with high transportation costs.
- D. They rely on farming systems linked to export markets.

3. Which of the following best describes shifting cultivation as practiced in many tropical regions?

- A. Farmers clear land, grow crops temporarily, and then move to new fields.
- B. Farmers rotate livestock between fenced pasturelands near urban markets.
- C. Farmers specialize in olives, grapes, and other orchard crops for export.
- D. Farmers use advanced machinery to produce grain on large commercial farms.

4. A large agricultural enterprise that produces bananas primarily for export to wealthier countries is most likely an example of which of the following?

- A. Intensive subsistence agriculture
- B. Nomadic pastoralism
- C. Plantation agriculture
- D. Mixed crop and livestock farming

5. Which of the following developments is most closely associated with the Second Agricultural Revolution?

- A. The diffusion of genetically modified crops in global markets
- B. The exchange of maize, potatoes, and livestock across the Atlantic
- C. The spread of high-yield seed varieties supported by chemical fertilizers
- D. The introduction of improved tools and crop rotation that increased yields

Questions 6-10 are about cities.

6. Which of the following best describes the process of gentrification in an urban neighborhood?

- A. The development of low-density housing on the rural fringe of a metropolitan area
- B. The reinvestment in older urban areas that often raises property values and displaces residents
- C. The movement of manufacturing activity from the central city to locations on the outskirts of the city
- D. The creation of separate municipalities within a large metropolitan region

7. In the multiple nuclei model, which of the following best describes how urban land use is organized?

- A. Activities are arranged in a series of concentric rings around the downtown.
- B. Similar land uses develop in wedge-shaped sectors from the city center.
- C. Different activities cluster around several distinct nodes within the city.
- D. Urban functions are evenly distributed across all neighborhoods in the region.

8. According to the sector model of urban structure, which of the following is most likely to develop outward from the central city along transportation routes?

- A. Wedges of similar land use extending from the center
- B. Uniform rings of housing of equal value
- C. Isolated villages separated from all commercial activity
- D. Agricultural zones surrounding the downtown core

9. According to the rank-size rule, which of the following patterns would most likely be found in a country with a well-developed urban hierarchy?
- A. The largest city has more people than all other cities combined.
 - B. The fourth-largest city has the same population as the second-largest city.
 - C. The capital has a population greater than the primate city.
 - D. The second-largest city has about half the population of the largest city.

10. Which of the following best explains why many cities in Latin America developed around a central plaza?
- A. Colonial planning emphasized a central space for government, religion, and commerce.
 - B. Industrial zoning required factories to be placed near the geographic center of the city.
 - C. Suburban highway systems encouraged retail activity away from the urban core.
 - D. Urban models in the region avoided concentrating political functions in one location.

Questions 11-15 are about concepts in geography.

11. Which of the following is the best example of a formal region?
- A. An area served by the same major television station
 - B. An area where residents share the same official language
 - C. An area perceived locally as part of the Midwest
 - D. An area connected by daily commuting to a central city

12. Which of the following best describes a functional region?
- A. An area organized around a node or focal point and linked by movement or activity
 - B. An area understood mainly through personal belief, reputation, or popular image
 - C. An area separated from surrounding places by major physical landforms alone
 - D. An area defined by a shared characteristic that is evenly distributed throughout

13. Which of the following is the best example of a perceptual region?
- A. A metropolitan area connected through daily commuting patterns
 - B. A state in which all residents are subject to the same laws
 - C. A region people describe as 'the South' based on shared cultural impressions
 - D. A farming zone defined by similar climate and soil characteristics

14. Which of the following best explains how scale affects geographic analysis?
- A. Scale determines whether geographers study patterns at the local, regional, or global level.
 - B. Scale determines whether a map uses latitude and longitude or a compass rose.
 - C. Scale determines whether a place is urban or rural in character.
 - D. Scale determines how population density can be measured accurately.

15. If a company chooses to build a warehouse at the intersection of two interstate highways in order to reduce shipping time to multiple markets, it is basing its decision on which of the following geographic concepts?
- A. Situation
 - B. Scale
 - C. Distance decay
 - D. Diffusion

Questions 16-20 are about volcanoes and volcanic landforms.

16. Which of the following best explains why many volcanoes are located along convergent plate boundaries?
- A. Continental crust spreads apart and creates broad lava plateaus at the surface
 - B. Transform plate motion allows magma to rise directly through shallow fractures
 - C. Weathering and erosion increase pressure beneath Earth's crust and produce eruptions
 - D. Oceanic crust is forced beneath another plate, melts, and helps generate magma

17. A broad volcano with gentle slopes formed by repeated flows of low-viscosity lava is best classified as which of the following?
- A. Composite volcano
 - B. Shield volcano
 - C. Cinder cone volcano
 - D. Lava dome volcano

18. Which of the following best describes a caldera?
- A. A narrow ridge formed where lava cools along a divergent boundary
 - B. A steep-sided hill made entirely of ash deposited by wind
 - C. A large depression created when a volcano collapses after a major eruption
 - D. A valley carved by lava flowing rapidly downslope from a volcanic cone

19. Which of the following is most likely to increase the explosiveness of a volcanic eruption?

- A. Magma with low silica content and low viscosity
- B. Magma that releases gases easily before reaching the surface
- C. Magma that cools quickly after spreading in thin surface flows
- D. Magma with high viscosity that traps dissolved gases

20. Which of the following best explains why volcanic soils are often highly productive for agriculture?

- A. Volcanic soils often contain weathered materials rich in minerals.
- B. Volcanic soils are usually thin and lack mineral nutrients.
- C. Volcanic soils prevent water from reaching plant roots.
- D. Volcanic soils form only in polar climates with low evaporation.

Questions 21-25 are about climate and energy use.

21. Which of the following best explains why per capita energy use is generally higher in more developed countries than in less developed countries?

- A. More developed countries rely more heavily on subsistence farming systems.
- B. More developed countries tend to have greater industrial activity and consumer demand.
- C. More developed countries are located only in colder climate regions.
- D. More developed countries have fewer transportation networks and services.

22. What is the term for temperatures in urban areas that are warmer than in surrounding rural areas?

- A. Greenhouse effect
- B. Thermal inversion
- C. Seasonal variation
- D. Heat island

23. Which of the following best explains why access to energy resources can influence a country's economic development?

- A. Energy resources eliminate the need for transportation and trade networks.
- B. Energy resources reduce the importance of labor and capital in production.
- C. Energy resources support industrialization, infrastructure, and economic activity.
- D. Energy resources guarantee equal wealth distribution across all regions of a country.

24. A government that promotes the use of public transit, compact development, and walkable neighborhoods in a large metropolitan area would be looking to reduce which of the following?

- A. The dependence on automobiles and related energy consumption
- B. The amount of agricultural production in rural areas
- C. The number of neighborhoods within the city
- D. The impact of tectonic activity near urban centers

25. Which of the following best explains why climate change is considered a geographic issue as well as an environmental issue?

- A. Its effects are evenly distributed across all places and populations.
- B. Its impacts vary by location, scale, and human vulnerability.
- C. Its causes and effects are limited to a small number of rural areas.
- D. Its consequences apply to weather systems and their effects.

Questions 26-30 are about forests.

26. A forest biome dominated by cone-bearing trees and long, cold winters is best described as which of the following?

- A. Temperate deciduous forest
- B. Tropical seasonal forest
- C. Mediterranean woodland
- D. Boreal forest

27. Which of the following is the best explanation for why many temperate deciduous forests lose their leaves during part of the year?

- A. Leaf loss helps trees conserve water and survive colder seasons.
- B. Leaf loss allows trees to absorb more heat from volcanic soils.
- C. Leaf loss occurs because these forests receive no rainfall in winter.
- D. Leaf loss is caused primarily by daily tidal flooding patterns.

28. Which of the following best explains why mountain regions often contain different forest types at different elevations?

- A. Higher elevations receive less solar radiation in every season.
- B. Political boundaries divide forest zones into separate management areas.
- C. Temperature and precipitation can vary with elevation over short distances.
- D. Tree species at high elevations are less affected by climate conditions.

29. Which of the following best explains why many coniferous forests are found in regions with colder climates and shorter growing seasons?

- A. Coniferous trees require year-round rainfall and consistent temperatures.
- B. Coniferous trees grow best in areas with permanently frozen soil and little sunlight.
- C. Coniferous trees depend on deep grassland soils formed by repeated prairie fires.
- D. Coniferous trees are adapted to conserve water and withstand snow accumulation.

30. Which of the following is the best example of a forest ecosystem service?

- A. Forests provide habitat, store carbon, and help regulate water flow.
- B. Forests eliminate the possibility of flooding in nearby regions.
- C. Forests prevent most forms of soil erosion on mountain slopes.
- D. Forests guarantee equal rainfall patterns across neighboring climates.

Questions 31-50 refer to images in the resource section of the examination.

Questions 31-37 refer to image 1 in the resource section.

31. Which number on the map would form by weathering and erosion of horizontally layered rocks that have been uplifted by tectonic activity?

- A. 3
- B. 5
- C. 6
- D. 8

32. What feature is indicated by number 4 on the image?

- A. alluvial fan
- B. pediment
- C. wadi
- D. sabkha

33. Which of these is NOT a reason that an oasis would form in a desert landscape?

- A. a high water table
- B. presence of seasonal lakes
- C. human activity
- D. presence of ergs in the area

34. Dunes like those shown at number 9 on the image would be formed primarily by which of these processes?

- A. wind action predominantly from one direction
- B. wind action from multiple directions
- C. erosion from larger structures like plateaus
- D. water action from seasonal rains

35. Which of these numbers on the image indicates a playa?

- A. 1
- B. 2
- C. 6
- D. 7

36. Which of these best describes the formation of a playa or salt flat?

- A. it develops when sheets of running water wash over harder surfaces in intense rainfall events
- B. it forms when a standing surface water body disappears due to evaporation
- C. it forms by weathering and erosion when less resistant rock is worn away
- D. it is an accumulation of sediments that fans outwards from a concentrated source

37. Which of these features would also be commonly found in regions with modern glaciation?

- A. 2
- B. 3
- C. 6
- D. 9

Questions 38-43 refer to image 2 in the resource section.

38. Which of the following is true of the demographic transition model?

- A. it illustrates the transition of societies from less sophisticated to more sophisticated forms of government and economic development
- B. it is a graphic representation of the interaction of population changes and economic and social development
- C. it captures the relative health and stability of a society over time, measured by income levels and immigration
- D. it does not account for factors like education level on population growth

39. Which letter on this graph represents birth rate?

- A. A
- B. B
- C. C
- D. birth rate is not clearly illustrated on this graph

40. Which letters on this graph represent a death rate that is either low or falling?

- A. only D
- B. only F
- C. only D and I
- D. D, F, and I

41. Based on the information in the chart, which of these is likely to happen with population growth in stage 1 of the demographic transition model?

- A. it will rapidly decrease
- B. it will either be stable or slowly increase
- C. it will rapidly increase
- D. it will slowly decrease

42. Which of these best characterize the birth and death rate in stage 3 of the demographic transition model?

- A. both are at low levels resulting in a falling population
- B. the birth rate is rising slightly and the death rate is low resulting in a slowly growing population
- C. both the birth and death rate are falling, with the death rate falling fairly slowly
- D. both the birth and death rate are rising, with the birth rate rising only slightly

43. Which of these countries is currently in stage 3 of the demographic transition model?

- A. South Africa
- B. China
- C. Niger
- D. Pakistan

Questions 44-50 refer to image 3 in the resource section.

44. Braided rivers like the one seen in image 3 tend to occur naturally due to which of the following?

- A. large changes in elevation
- B. manmade flood control systems
- C. only small amounts of annual rainfall
- D. high sediment loads

45. Which number on the image represents a drumlin?

- A. 7
- B. 5
- C. 4
- D. 3

46. Which of these best describes the formation of kettle lakes like those seen at 6 on the image?

- A. they form from accumulation of unconsolidated debris on an ice sheet
- B. they are formed when streams of meltwater flow away from the glacier and deposit sediment
- C. they are the result of blocks of ice calving from the front of a receding glacier and becoming buried by glacial outwash
- D. they are formed by the deposition of sediment at the bottom of ice-walled channels within or beneath a glacier

47. The structure at number 7 on the image provides the best evidence for which of the following?

- A. the extent of frost weathering
- B. the types of sedimentary structure in the underlying rock
- C. the velocity of meltwater in the region
- D. the maximum advance of the glacier

48. Moraines that result from the convergence of two glaciers are known by what term?

- A. lateral
- B. medial
- C. ground
- D. end

49. Which number on the image shows an esker?

- A. 4
- B. 5
- C. 7
- D. 8

50. Which of these is a type of proglacial lake formed when water is trapped by a retreating glacier?

- A. tarn
- B. pluvial lake
- C. subglacial lake
- D. supraglacial lake