

## Using Geography Cards

**Before you begin:** Be sure the children have a concrete introduction to (1) experiences from around the world (e.g., via books, celebrations, stories, meals) and (2) the continents (e.g., via the Montessori colored globe and continent puzzle map). Review all of the photos and the information on the back of each card before you introduce them to the children. Always begin with the cards for the school's continent. The children will be ready to work with the cards for other continents (which they may not have visited) only after they begin to abstract ideas. For example, when they decide to share food preparation at the snack shelf rather than eating it themselves, it indicates that they are beginning to think of others instead of only themselves. This is a sign of their developing theory of mind or ability to abstract concepts. Stick with the child's home continent until you witness this shift. If you introduce abstract ideas too soon, it will have much less value to the child. Theory of mind typically begins to develop around age 4 or 5.

**Preparing the Folder:** These cards are designed to be placed in a pocket folder that you label with a color-coded image of its continent. For example, the North American folder would have an orange image of the North American continent. The folder should not have any words/letters on it; the image itself is all that is needed to identify the contents. Maintain the labelled folder in a location the children can easily access. Create a routine of rotating the pictures regularly so that there is often something new in some of the folders. Only one folder for each continent stays on the shelf.



**Presenting the Folder:** Invite one or a few children to work with you. Lay out two rugs in an L-shape.

Guide the children to place the continent puzzle map and the geography folder on the left rug. Sit together at the rugs. Point to the continent image on the folder and say, "This is North America. That's where we live! Let's see if we can find it on the puzzle map." Guide the children to find it, pick up the piece, and compare it to the image on the folder. Touch the folder and say, "All of the pictures in this folder are from North America. Let's see what we can find out about North America from these pictures." Place the puzzle piece on the top left of the empty rug. Remove the first picture from the folder and discuss what you see. Encourage the children to talk about their own experiences that relate to the photo and to ask each other questions about it (e.g., "Have you ever seen anything like this before? Where?"). Show the children the color-coded continent on the back of the picture to confirm that the picture is indeed from North America. Place the photo on the top left of the empty rug, just beneath the puzzle piece. Repeat for another picture in the folder. After you discuss it, place the card on the rug in a column beneath the first photo. Let the children step in and continue for as long as they like (fade and observe as soon as they are independent). When the children are finished, show them how to pick up one photo and return it carefully to the folder. Let the children do the rest, one-at-a-time. Return the folder to the shelf together. If they are ready, free them to repeat the work independently with the same or a different folder anytime they like.

**Sorting:** Invite one or two children to choose two continent folders (or later even more) that they have already used. Guide the children to lay out two rugs in an L-shape. Place the continent map and geography folders on the left rug. Say, "Today, let's see if we can remember which picture is from which continent." Place the continent puzzle piece for the first folder on the top left of the empty rug and the piece for the second folder on the top right. Take out all of the pictures from both folders and randomize them into one face-up pile on the map rug. Pick up the first picture and place it under the appropriate continent. Guide the children to step in as soon as they are able so that they make columns under each puzzle piece. When all cards are laid out, show the children how to check their own work by turning the cards over to reveal the color-coded continent image on the back. Clean up carefully together by sorting the pictures into two piles (one for each continent) and returning each stack to its appropriate folder.

**Writing Descriptions:** Guide the child to choose his/her favorite continent folder and bring it to a table. Have the child choose one picture from the folder. Encourage them to write about what they see in the picture (using the movable alphabet, chalkboards, or paper and pencil as appropriate for the child). If you have other children who are reading, you might encourage the children to play detective. Say, "Let's play detective. You can write about what is happening in this picture. Then, when you're done, we'll put the picture away and invite Bobby to read your note and figure out which picture it describes!"

