



Geography Key Words

ABRASION	A process of erosion involving the wearing away of the valley floor and sides (glaciers) and the shoreline (coastal zones)
AID	Money, food, triaging and technology given by richer countries to poorer ones, either to help with an emergency or for long-term development.
ANTICYCLONE	An area of high atmospheric pressure
AQUIFER	An underground reservoir of water stored in pores and/or joints in a rock such as chalk
ARABLE FARMING	Growing crops
ARCH	A headland that has been partly broken through by the sea to form a thin-roofed arch
ATTRITION	The knocking together of stones, making them gradually smaller and smoother
BAR	A spit that has grown across a bay
BAY	A broad coastal inlet often with a beach
BEACH	A deposit of sand or shingle at the coast, often found at the head of a bay



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BIOFUELS	The use of living things, such as crops like maize to make ethanol (an alcohol-based fuel) or biogas from animal waste. It is the use of crops that has become especially important.
BIRTH RATE	The number of babies born per 1,000 people per year
BROWNFIELD SITES	Land that has been built on before and is to be cleared and reused. These sites are often in the inner city.
CARBON CREDITS	A means of trading carbon between organisations or countries in order to meet an overall target.
CARBON FOOTPRINT	The amount of carbon generated by things people do, including creating a demand for out-of-season food
CARBONATION	Weathering of limestone and chalk by acidic rainwater
CARBON EMISSIONS	Release of carbon (usually in the form of carbon dioxide) often by burning fossil fuels
CASH CROPS	Crops grown in order to sell to make a financial profit
CAVE	A hollowed-out feature at the base of an eroding cliff
CAVERN	A large underground cave



Geography Key Words

CENTRAL BUSINESS DISTRICT (CBD)	The main shopping and service area in a city. The CBD is usually found in the middle of the city so that it is easily accessible.
CHANNEL	The part of the river valley occupied by the water itself.
CHEMICAL WEATHERING	The process where chemical reactions change or destroy minerals when rock comes into contact with water and/or air
CLIFF	A steep or vertical face of rock often found at the coast
CLIMATE	The average weather conditions recorded over a period of at least 30 years
CLIMATE CHANGE	Long-term changes in the climate, such as cooling leading to an Ice Age or the current trend of global warming
COMMERCIAL FARMING	A type of farming where crops and/or livestock are sold to make a profit
COMMUTER VILLAGE	A village located in the rural-urban fringe many of whose inhabitants commute to work in surrounding towns or cities
COMPOSITE VOLCANO	A steep-sided volcano that is made up of a variety of materials, such as lava and ash.
CONSERVATION	The thoughtful use of resources; managing the landscape in order to protect ecosystems and cultural features.



Geography Key Words

CONSERVATIVE PLATE MARGIN	A plate margin where two plates are sliding alongside each other
CONSTRUCTIVE PLATE MARGIN	A plate margin where two plates are moving apart
CONSTRUCTIVE WAVE	Powerful wave with a strong swash that surged up a beach
CONSUMER	Organisms that get their energy by eating other organisms
CONTINENTAL PLATE	A tectonic plate made of low density continental rock that will not sink under another plate
CORRIE	A deep depression on a hillside with a steep back wall, often containing a lake
CROSS PROFILE	A line that represents what it would be like to walk from one side of a valley, across the channel and up the other side
CRUST	The outer layer of the earth
DAM	An artificial structure designed to hold back water to create a reservoir
DEATH RATE	The number of deaths per 1,000 people per year



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DEBT	Money owed to others, to a bank or to a global organisation such as the World Bank
DECOMPOSERS	Organisms such as bacteria that break down plant and animal material
DEFORESTATION	The removal of trees and undergrowth
DE-INDUSTRIALISATION	A process of decline in some types of industry over a long period of time. It results in fewer people being employed in this sector and falling employment.
DEMOGRAPHIC TRANSITION MODEL	A theoretical model that shows changes in population information over a period of time.
DEPOSITION	The dumping (deposition) of sediment that has been transported by a river
DESTRUCTIVE PLATE MARGIN	A plate margin where two plates are moving towards each other resulting in one plate sinking beneath the other
DESTRUCTIVE WAVE	A wave formed by a local storm that crashes down onto a beach and has a powerful backwash
DEVELOPMENT MEASURE	Statistics used to show the level of development, which allows countries to be compared
DISCHARGE	The volume of water passing a given point in a river at any moment



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DRAINAGE BASIN	Area from which a river gets its water. The boundary is marked by an imaginary line of highland known as a watershed.
EARTHQUAKE	A sudden and often violent shift in the rocks forming the earth's crust, which is felt at the surface.
ECONOMIC	This relates to costs and finances at a variety of levels, from individuals to government.
ECOSYSTEM	The living and non-living parts of an environment and the interrelationships between them
ECOTOURISM	Tourism that focuses on protecting the environment and the local way of life. Also known as green tourism.
EMIGRANT	Someone leaving their country of residence to move to another country
ENVIRONMENTAL	This is the impact on our surroundings, including the land, water and air as well as features of the built-up areas
EPICENTRE	The point at the earth's surface directly above the focus of an earthquake
EROSION	The sculpting of a landscape, for example by rivers, involving the removal of material



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EXPONENTIAL GROWTH	A pattern where the growth rate constantly increases – often shown as a J-curve graph.
EXTREME ENVIRONMENTS	Places with particularly difficult environments; such as being very hot or cold. Tourism to these places has only recently occurred due to people wanting to visit somewhere with different physical challenges.
EXTREME WEATHER	A weather event such as a flash flood or severe snowstorm that is significantly different from the average.
FAIR TRADE	A system whereby agricultural producers at lesser stages of development are paid a decent price for their produce. This helps them to attain a reasonable standard of living.
FLOODPLAIN	The flat area next to the river channel, especially in the lower part of the course. This is a natural area for water to spill onto when the river reaches the top of its banks.
FLOODS	These occur when a river carries so much water that it cannot be contained by its banks and so it overflows onto surrounding land – its floodplain
FOOD CHAIN	A line of linkages between producers and consumers
FOOD MILES	The distance that food items travel from where they are grown to where they are eaten



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FOOD WEB	A diagram that shows all the linkages between producers and consumers in an ecosystem
FREEZE-THAW WEATHERING	Weathering involving repeated cycles of freezing and thawing
FUNCTION	The purpose of a particular area, for example for residential use, recreation or shopping
GENDER STRUCTURE	The balance between males and females in a population. Small differences can tell us a great deal about a country or city.
GLOBAL WARMING	An increase in world temperatures as a result of the increase in greenhouse gases in the atmosphere brought about by the burning of fossil fuels, for example.
GLOBALISATION	The increasing links between different countries throughout the world and the greater interdependence that results from this
GNI	Gross National Income – the total value of goods and services produced within a country including income received from and payments made to other countries
GNP	Gross national product – the total value of all goods and services produced by a nation in a particular year
GORGE	A narrow steep-sided deep valley



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GREENFIELD SITES	Land that has not been built on before, usually in the countryside on the edge of the built-up area
GROSS DOMESTIC PRODUCT (GDP)	The total value of goods and services produced by a country divided by its total population. Foreign income is not included.
GROYNE	Timber or rock structure built out to sea to trap sediment being moved by longshore drift
HABITAT	The home to a community of plants and animals
HARD ENGINEERING	Building artificial structures such as sea walls aimed at controlling natural processes
HAZARD	An event where people's lives and property are threatened and deaths and/or damage results
HAZARD MAP	A map that shows areas that are at risk from hazards such as earthquakes, volcanoes, landslides, floods and tsunamis
HDI	Human Development Index – an index based on three variables: life expectancy at birth; level of education, including both literacy rate and years spent in school; income adjusted for purchasing power.
HEADLAND	A point of usually high land jutting out into the sea



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HOT DESERTS	Deserts have a rainfall of less than 250mm per year. Hot deserts are generally found between 30 degrees North and 30 degrees South
HURRICANE	A powerful tropical storm with sustained winds of over 120kph (75mph). Also known as a tropical cyclone, a cyclone or a typhoon
HYDRAULIC ACTION	The power of the volume of water moving in the river
HYDRAULIC POWER	The use of flowing water to turn turbines to generate electricity
IGNEOUS ROCKS	Rocks formed from the cooling of molten magma
IMMEDIATE RESPONSE	How people react during a disaster and straight afterwards
IMPERMEABLE	Rock that does not allow water to pass through it
INDUSTRIALISATION	A process usually linked with the development of an economy, where an increasing proportion of the population work in industry
INFANT MORTALITY	The number of babies that die under a year of age, per 1,000 live births
INFORMAL SECTOR	That part of the economy where jobs are created by people to try and get an income and which are not recognised on official figures
INNER CITY	The area around the CBD – usually built before 1918 in the UK



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INTERDEPENDENCE	The relationship between two or more countries, usually in terms of trade
IRRIGATION	Artificial watering of the land
KYOTO PROTOCOL	An international agreement to try and reduce carbon emissions from industrialised countries
LANDSLIP	A type of mass movement common at the coast involving material slipping downhill usually along a curved slip surface
LAND USE	The type of buildings or other features that are found in the area, for example terraced housing, banks, industrial estates, roads, parks
LANDFILL	Digging a large hole in the ground and lining it before filling it with rubbish
LATERAL EROSION	Sideways erosion, for example in a river channel at the outside bend of a meander
LATITUDE	Determines the geographic north-south position of a point on the earth. 0 degrees is at the Equator and 90 degrees is at the Poles
LEVEES	Raised banks along the course of a river in its lower course. They are formed naturally but can be artificially increased in height
LIFE-CYCLE MODEL	A theoretical model used to describe the changes that take place as a tourist resort develops



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LIFE EXPECTANCY	The number of years a person is expected to live, usually taken from birth
LITERACY RATE	The percentage of adults in a country who can read and write sufficiently to function fully in work and society
LIVING STANDARDS	People's quality of life, mostly measured economically but also socially, culturally and environmentally
LOAD	Material of any size carried by the river
LONG PROFILE	A line representing the course of the river from its source (relatively high up) to its mouth where it ends, usually in a lake or the sea, and the changes in height along its course
LONGSHORE DRIFT	The transport of sediment along a stretch of coastline caused by waves approaching the beach at an angle
LONG-TERM AID	Aid given over a long period, which aims to promote economic development
LONG-TERM RESPONSES	Later reactions that happen in the weeks, months and years after an event
MANAGED RETREAT	Allowing controlled flooding of low-lying coastal areas or cliff collapse in areas where the value of the land is low



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MARGINAL LAND	Land that is only just good enough to be worth farming. It may be dry, wet, cool, stony or steep
MASS MOVEMENT	The downhill movement of material under the influence of gravity
MASS TOURISM	Tourism on a large scale to one country or region. This is linked to the Development and Consolidation phases of the Butler tourist resort life-cycle model
MEANDER	A bend or curve in the river channel
MECHANICAL WEATHERING	A process where physical forces break down or reduce a rock into smaller fragments
MIGRATION	The movement of people from one permanent home to another, with the intention of staying at least a year. This move may be within a country (national migration) or between countries (international migration)
MULTIPLIER EFFECT	Where initial investment and jobs lead to a knock on effect, creating more jobs and providing money to generate services
NATIONAL PARK	An area where development is limited and planning controlled. The landscape is regarded as unusual and valuable and therefore worth looking after
NATURAL CHANGE	The difference between birth rate and death rate given as a percentage



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NATURAL HAZARD	An event over which people have little control, which threatens people's lives and possessions. This is different from a natural event as volcanoes can erupt in unpopulated areas without being a hazard
NUTRIENT CYCLING	The recycling of nutrients between living organisms and the environment
OCEANIC PLATE	A tectonic plate made of dense iron-rich rock that forms the ocean floor
OCEAN TRENCHES	Deep sections of the ocean, where an oceanic plate is sinking below a continental plate
ORGANIC FARM	A farm that does not use chemicals in the production of crops or livestock
OUTER CITY OR SUBURBS	The area on the edge of the city. Many suburbs were built after 1945 and get newer as they reach the edge of the city
OXBOW LAKE	A horseshoe or semi-circular area that used to be a meander. Oxbow lakes are cut off from a supply of water and so will eventually become dry
PERMEABLE ROCK	A rock that allows water to pass through it
PHYSICAL QUALITY OF LIFE INDEX (PQLI)	The average of three social indicators: literacy rate, life expectancy and infant mortality
PLATE	A section of the earth's crust



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PLATE MARGIN	The boundary where two plates meet
PRECIPITATION	The transfer of water from the atmosphere to the ground, for example rain and snow
PREDICTION	Attempts to forecast an event – where and when it will happen – based on current knowledge
PREPARATION	Organising activities and drills so that people know what to do if an earthquake happens
PRIMARY EFFECTS	The immediate effects of an event, for example a volcanic eruption, caused directly by it
PRODUCERS	Organisms that get their energy from a primary source such as the sun
PUSH-PULL FACTORS	Push factors are the negative aspects of a place that encourage people to move away. Pull factors are the attractions of a place that encourage people to move there
QUALITY OF LIFE	How good a person's life is as measured by such things as quality of housing and environment, access to education, health care, how secure people feel and how happy they are with their lifestyle
RECIPIENT COUNTRY	A country receiving aid from another country
RECYCLING	Using materials, such as aluminium or glass, time and again



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REGENERATION	Improving an area
RELIEF	The height and slope of the land
RESERVOIR	Commonly an artificial lake formed behind a dam and used for water supply
RESURGENCE	A stream that emerges from underground
RETAIL PARKS	Large warehouse-style shops often grouped together on the edge of a town or city, aiming to serve as many people as possible
ROCK ARMOUR	Piles of large boulders dumped at the foot of a cliff to protect it by forcing waves to break and absorbing their energy
RURAL-URBAN FRINGE	An area around a town or city where there is a mix of urban and rural land uses
ALTATION	The bouncing movement of small stones and grains of sand along the river or sea bed
SECONDARY EFFECTS	The after-effects that occur as an indirect effect of an event, for example a volcanic eruption, on a longer timescale
SEA WALL	Concrete or rock barrier built at the foot of cliffs or at the top of a beach



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SEDIMENT	Loose rock debris that has been weathered or eroded before being transported and then deposited
SEDIMENTARY ROCKS	Most commonly rocks formed from the building up of sediment on the sea floor
SEGREGATION	Occurs where people of a particular ethnic group choose to live with others from the same ethnic group, separate from other groups
SELECTIVE LOGGING	The cutting down of selected trees, leaving most of the trees intact
SELF-HELP	Sometimes known as assisted self-help (ASH), this is where local authorities help the squatter settlement residents to improve their homes by offering finance in the form of loans or grants and often installing water, sanitation etc.
SHORELINE MANAGEMENT PLAN (SMP)	An integrated coastal management plan for a stretch of coastline in England and Wales
SHORT-TERM AID	Aid given to help a disaster situation, for example people who have been made homeless and are starving after a serious flood
SLASH AND BURN	A form of subsistence farming in tropical rainforests where some trees are felled and land is cleared by burning before being replanted



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SLIDING	A type of mass movement involving material moving downhill on a flat surface (a landslide)
SLUMPING	A type of mass movement involving material moving downhill under its own weight
SOCIAL	Refers to people's health, their lifestyle, community etc.
SOFT ENGINEERING	A sustainable approach to managing the coast without using artificial structures
SOFT ENGINEERING (RIVERS)	This option tries to work with the natural river system and involves avoiding building on areas most likely to flood, warning people of a possible flood and planting trees to increase lag time
SOIL EROSION	The removal of the layer of soil above the rock where plants grow
SOLUTION	The dissolving of rocks and minerals by rainwater. This is a means of transportation as well as an erosion process
SOLUTION (COASTAL TRANSPORTATION)	The transport of dissolved chemicals
SPIT	A finger of new land made of sand or shingle, jutting out into the sea from the coast
SQUATTER SETTLEMENTS	Areas of cities (usually on the outskirts) that are built by people from any materials they can find on land that does not belong to them. They have



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	different names in different parts of the world (for example, favela in Brazil) and are often known as shanty towns
STACK	An isolated pinnacle of rock sticking out into the sea
SUBSISTENCE FARMING	Farming to produce food for the farmer and his/her family only
SUBURBANISED VILLAGE	A village with easy access to a large urban area much in demand. Housing estates attached to the village edges aim to fulfil this demand
SUSPENSION	Small material carries (suspended) within the water
SUSTAINABILITY	Development that looks after future resources and considers the needs of future generations
SUSTAINABLE	Making sure there is enough water in the long term without harming the environment
SUSTAINABLE CITY	An urban area where residents have a way of life that will last a long time. The environment is not damaged and the economic and social fabric are able to stand the test of time
SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITY	Community (offering housing, employment and recreation opportunities) that is broadly in balance with the environment and offers people a good quality of life



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SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT	This allows economic growth to occur, which can continue over a long period of time and will not harm the environment. It benefits people alive today but does not compromise future generations
SUSTAINABLE MANAGEMENT	A form of management that makes sure that developments are long lasting and do not harm the environment
TOP-DOWN AID	Aid used so that governments can run more efficiently or to build infrastructure such as roads and bridges
TRACK	The path or course of a hurricane
TRACTION	The rolling along of the largest rocks and boulders along the sea or river bed
TRANSMIGRATION	A population policy that aims to move people from densely populated areas and provide them with opportunities to improve the quality of their lives
TRANSNATIONAL CORPORATIONS (TNCs)	Companies that spread their operations around the world to try to reduce costs
TRNSPORTATION	The carrying of sediment downstream from the point where it has been eroded to where it is deposited
TROPICAL RAINFORESTS	The natural vegetation found in the tropics, well suited to the high temperatures and heavy rainfall associated with these latitudes



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TSUNAMI	A special type of wave created where an event
URBAN SPRAWL	The spreading of urban areas into the surrounding rural/urban fringe areas
URBANISATION	The increase in the proportion of people living in cities, resulting in their growth
VERTICAL EROSION	Downwards erosion, for example when a river gouges out a deep valley
VOLCANO	An opening in the earth's crust through which molten lava, ash, and gases are ejected
WATER POLLUTION	Putting poisonous substances into water courses, such as sewage, industrial effluent and harmful chemicals
WATERFALL	The sudden, and often vertical, drop of a river along its course
WAVE-CUT PLATFORM	A wide, gently sloping rocky surface at the foot of a cliff
WEATHER	The day-to-day conditions of the atmosphere involving, for example, temperature, cloud cover and wind direction
WEATHERING	The breakup or decay of rocks in their original place at or close to the earth's surface