**Foundation Year Overview**

**Curriculum overview**

 The theme for the Foundation year is [People live in places](http://www.australiancurriculum.edu.au/Geography/Curriculum/F-10#level=F).

Place is the starting point of geography. From our earliest years, we have an attachment to certain places and an increasing knowledge of their uniqueness. We learn about their features, and we have strong feelings about places we like, dislike, feel comfortable within or fear. Foundation students are in a process of learning their way around their local surroundings - their place.

At Foundation level, children will be learning from hands-on play activities which develop their fine motor skills, their personal organisation skills and their group cooperation skills. Flowing on from these hands-on activities come the questions, inquiries and the communication of understandings. The illustrations of practice use these principles and are focused around learning by doing.

**About the illustrations**

 The two illustrations for Foundation level are both hands-on activities involving individuals and groups in structured play. The activities are developed from the natural play of children at this age. Toys and other items are used to create models of objects commonly seen in the places around them. Toy cars and toy people are used together with roads, trees, fences, buildings, parks, rivers made from paper, cardboard and other materials.

[Illustration 1: Making a model of a place like mine](http://www.geogspace.edu.au/core-units/f-4/exemplars/year-f/f4-exemplars-yf-illus1.html) supports the creation of models of familiar places. Some photographs are provided to stimulate ideas.

[Illustration 2: Mental maps](http://www.geogspace.edu.au/core-units/f-4/exemplars/year-f/f4-exemplars-yf-illus2.html) suggests a variety of methods to recreate places that are significant or special to your students.

Each of the illustrations has a physical product of a 3D model or a map. Each of these can be dynamic, and modified by individuals and groups. They can be used for discussion, for comparison, and as the basis of stories and further inquiries.

**Making a model of a place like mine**

**Curriculum overview**

The [Australian Curriculum: Geography](http://www.australiancurriculum.edu.au/Geography/Rationale) content descriptions addressed in the illustration are:

* The representation of the location of places and their features on maps and a globe ([ACHGK001](http://www.australiancurriculum.edu.au/Curriculum/ContentDescription/ACHGK001))
* The places people live in and belong to, their familiar features and why they are important to people ([ACHGK002](http://www.australiancurriculum.edu.au/Curriculum/ContentDescription/ACHGK002))

Source: Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority (ACARA).

**Learning goals**

This activity is designed to build on the natural play patterns of children (which includes the tendency to build miniature versions of what they see around them). You will guide your students to make a model by using toys and objects, which represent things in their local areas (place).

The illustration-specific learning goals are:

* developing observational and representational skills
* developing manual dexterity and fine motor skills
* understanding groupings and combinations of geographical features
* developing verbal communication skills in describing patterns seen in the model.

**Geographical understanding and context**

This activity fits into the continuum of learning skills of drawing and interpreting maps. The children are familiar with the toys used, but have to use their imaginations to see pieces of cardboard, paper and other items as representing roads, trees, buildings and fences. In making the model, children will be looking down on it from above, seeing it in map form, as well as looking at it from the side. This helps them develop the first skill of map use – looking from above. The model town does not have to be to scale and it does not have to have a consistent key or a grid (all of these skills come later in the sequence of map-reading skills).

The development of students' geographical ideas related to natural and constructed features (and the grouping of these) can be done in discussions between you and the children when constructing or playing with the model town.

**Teaching approaches**

This activity can be developed in ways that suit your students, including as an ongoing project in a corner of the classroom, leading to further input, changes and play over time. [Making models](http://www.geogspace.edu.au/verve/_resources/2.1.3.2_1_place_like_mine_images.pdf) (PDF, 610 KB) shows photographs of four different models of various complexities which can be used to stimulate ideas.

**1. Creating a model**

The central activity of this illustration is the creation of a model of a place similar to the local area of the class. It is a play-based activity. The model can be as large or as small as you and your students want it to be. It can include objects such as:

* plastic cubes or small boxes to represent houses
* cardboard cartons
* plasticine or playdough
* sandpit area
* natural materials such as branches and stones
* pieces of card or felt to represent roads
* cut out shapes for trees
* toy cars
* toy people
* toy animals.

You might like to introduce this activity by asking your students about the place they live in. It could start with a simple model in a sand pit and then move inside, or vice versa. An open-ended question about choice of materials could be posed to the children.

**2. Using conversation**

While the children are constructing the model, they can be discussing the range of natural and built features which should be included, the relative placing of each of these in relation to other features, and the contributions that each of the features make to the place as a whole.

The activity should involve children in natural play with the objects. It should also involve much language use in discussing and describing the model.

The simplest form of this activity would be to just aim at creating a model of any urban or rural place with houses, roads, buildings, trees and other features. While the activity is in progress, you could then discuss with students their ideas for what features to include, which features are natural or built, which locations certain features should be placed in, and which features should go with each other.

**3. Looking at different views**

However simple or complex the task becomes, encourage your students to view the model settlement from above and from the side to notice the differences. You can discuss what the layout looks like from different viewpoints. To help students develop these precursor skills to effective map use, digital photographs could be taken of the model from above, from the side, and from an oblique angle. These could be displayed and discussed.

**4. Extension activity**

Simple computer software such as Kid Pix might be used to allow children to draw a version of their model. Shapes and objects in this program can be used to represent what the child wants. The conversations about this can help develop language skills.

A further extension might be to make models of contrasting places such as a forest, grassland, desert or city centre. An example is shown in the last photograph in [Making models](http://www.geogspace.edu.au/verve/_resources/2.1.3.2_1_place_like_mine_images.pdf) (PDF, 610 KB).

**What you need**

The materials needed to construct the models include:

* coloured cardboard or paper or natural materials
* blocks or boxes
* paper
* toys.

Preparation: Cutting shapes for roads, parks, trees and some other objects.

Time frame: Variable, from a few hours of construction up to a few weeks of using the completed model and modifying it in different ways.

**Curriculum connections**

This illustration links with the content descriptions of the following Phase 1 Australian Curriculum.

**English**

* Listen to and respond orally to texts and to the communication of others in informal and structured classroom situations ([ACELY1646](http://www.australiancurriculum.edu.au/Curriculum/ContentDescription/ACELY1646))

**Mathematics**

* Sort, describe and name familiar two-dimensional shapes and three-dimensional objects in the environment ([ACMMG009](http://www.australiancurriculum.edu.au/Curriculum/ContentDescription/ACMMG009))
* Sort and classify familiar objects and explain the basis for these classifications. Copy, continue and create patterns with objects and drawings ([ACMNA005](http://www.australiancurriculum.edu.au/Curriculum/ContentDescription/ACMNA005))
* Describe position and movement ([ACMMG010](http://www.australiancurriculum.edu.au/Curriculum/ContentDescription/ACMMG010))

**Science**

* Explore and make observations by using the senses ([ACSIS011](http://www.australiancurriculum.edu.au/Curriculum/ContentDescription/ACSIS011))
* Share observations and ideas ([ACSIS012](http://www.australiancurriculum.edu.au/Curriculum/ContentDescription/ACSIS012))

**History**

* Sequence familiar objects and events ([ACHHS015](http://www.australiancurriculum.edu.au/Curriculum/ContentDescription/ACHHS015))

Source: Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority (ACARA).

**Resources**

Australian Curriculum Assessment and Reporting Authority (ACARA). (2013). [Australian Curriculum: Geography](http://www.australiancurriculum.edu.au/Geography/Rationale). Retrieved May 2013, from: [www.australiancurriculum.edu.au/Geography/Rationale](http://www.australiancurriculum.edu.au/Geography/Rationale)

[Making models](http://www.geogspace.edu.au/verve/_resources/2.1.3.2_1_place_like_mine_images.pdf) (PDF, 610 KB). A number of photographs show images to stimulate ideas:

* a simple model of a town made with toys and readily available materials
* a model town made with a play mat and toys
* a cardboard box model of a grassland savanna place, featuring toy animals and items made from cut-out paper
* a more complex model of a town as part of a model railway layout.

All other required resources are listed in the 'What you need' section above.

**Mental maps**

**Curriculum overview**

The [Australian Curriculum: Geography](http://www.australiancurriculum.edu.au/Geography/Rationale) content descriptions addressed in the illustration are:

* The representation of the location of places and their features on maps and a globe ([ACHGK001](http://www.australiancurriculum.edu.au/Curriculum/ContentDescription/ACHGK001))
* The places people live in and belong to, their familiar features and why they are important to people ([ACHGK002](http://www.australiancurriculum.edu.au/Curriculum/ContentDescription/ACHGK002))
* The reasons why some places are special to people, and how they can be looked after ([ACHGK004](http://www.australiancurriculum.edu.au/Curriculum/ContentDescription/ACHGK004))

 Source: Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority (ACARA).

**Learning goals**

All of us have mental maps of the places familiar to us. Children develop mental maps of the layout of their houses, and progress to the layout of the places they move within. At the same time, they develop mental maps (not necessarily accurate) of places they have never visited, from indirect experiences such as television and other people, and also of the mythical places in the stories told or read to them.

The illustration-specific learning goals include:

* developing a greater understanding of features of the local area
* developing observational and representational skills
* developing the skills involved in translating mental ideas into concrete objects and onto paper
* developing verbal communication skills in describing their local places.

**Geographical understanding and context**

This activity brings together the content and skills of geography by encouraging students to think about what they know of the places in their local area, and then representing this knowledge in a variety of forms. It also encourages them to examine and express their own feelings about places which are special to them and others.

**Teaching approaches**

A number of activities can be undertaken, starting from making simple mental maps and progressively moving to more complex ones. For example, make a mental map of:

**1. Home**

Children might start by using concrete objects (boxes, toys etc) to represent part of their house or room. Discuss with the children the idea of drawing what the inside of their house looks like from a different viewpoint (above, sideways etc). For example, they might draw their bedroom with the walls drawn from above, but the bed and furniture drawn from the side. A photograph or video of a place in their home could help children to see it from different perspectives.

**2. Places in the school**

In this activity, ask students to use tangible materials (boxes, cardboard) to represent places in their school. Some students could progress from this to draw a map of the parts of the school that they are familiar with. This further develops the skills addressed in the first activity (above). The point of this activity is not how much they know, but which places in the school are important to each of them individually.

Encourage students to try to represent (on paper) each of the places in the school that are important to them. Again, some will represent them by lines, some by colours, and some by their own symbols. You could photograph objects from above and from the side to make children aware of the differences.

**3. The way from home to school**

This is a more difficult activity and will produce variable results. Some students will walk to school with a parent or caregiver, others will be driven, providing them with a different perspective of places they pass on the way.

A starting activity could focus on which places in the local area are most familiar to each child. This could be an individual drawing activity, or it could involve a discussion of digital photographs you have taken of nearby places.

Suggest to the class that they should be showing things of interest to them on their journey, and their finished product might be a kind of map (for example, a story map) which could tell other people about their journey.

The discussion during the activity should include encouragement for each child to think about the information they hold in their mind (mental maps) about the places around them.

Representation of places can be by bird’s-eye view or by eye-level sketch. This will depend on the developmental level of the map skills of each child.

During the drawing, or afterwards, there can be discussion about special places, significant places, and looking after places. Children could be asked to put gold stars on their favourite places, or red stars on dangerous places.

**4. Extension**

Mental maps can be drawn of imaginary places that children have heard about in stories or films. Stories that are related to place characteristics, including fairy tales (such as Three little pigs, Little red riding hood, Three billy goats gruff) could all be used as the basis for drawing a map which the child visualises as fitting the story. Stories told by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples can also be useful.

This could then lead to discussions of each child’s favourite places (either in stories or reality) and of any places which provoked other feelings such as fear, excitement, pleasure or warmth.

**What you need**

Large sheets of paper.

Materials for drawing, writing and making models and maps (such as pens, pencils, crayons, boxes, toys and stickers).

Time frame: The activities could be spread over a week or two among other activities.

**Curriculum connections**

This illustration links with the content descriptions of the following Phase 1 Australian Curriculum.

**English**

* Understand that language can be used to explore ways of expressing needs, likes and dislikes ([ACELA1429](http://www.australiancurriculum.edu.au/Curriculum/ContentDescription/ACELA1429))
* Respond to texts, identifying favourite stories, authors and illustrators ([ACELT1577](http://www.australiancurriculum.edu.au/Curriculum/ContentDescription/ACELT1577))

**Mathematics**

* Sort, describe and name familiar two-dimensional shapes and three-dimensional objects in the environment ([ACMMG009](http://www.australiancurriculum.edu.au/Curriculum/ContentDescription/ACMMG009))
* Sort and classify familiar objects and explain the basis for these classifications. Copy, continue and create patterns with objects and drawings ([ACMNA005](http://www.australiancurriculum.edu.au/Curriculum/ContentDescription/ACMNA005))
* Describe position and movement ([ACMMG010](http://www.australiancurriculum.edu.au/Curriculum/ContentDescription/ACMMG010))

**Science**

* Explore and make observations by using the senses ([ACSIS011](http://www.australiancurriculum.edu.au/Curriculum/ContentDescription/ACSIS011))
* Share observations and ideas ([ACSIS012](http://www.australiancurriculum.edu.au/Curriculum/ContentDescription/ACSIS012))
* Engage in discussions about observations and use methods such as drawing to represent ideas ([ACSIS233](http://www.australiancurriculum.edu.au/Curriculum/ContentDescription/ACSIS233))

**History**

* Distinguish between the past, present and future ([ACHHS016](http://www.australiancurriculum.edu.au/Curriculum/ContentDescription/ACHHS016))

Source: Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority (ACARA).

**Resources**

Episodes of the animated television series *Dora the Explorer.* These can be accessed in a variety of formats such as video and on the Internet.

Fictional stories which include maps.

Fairy stories, legends, and stories told by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

**Books:**

Fanelli, S. (1995). *My map book.* London: Walker Books. Colourful examples of children’s maps.

Ritchie, S. (2009). *Follow that map.* Ontario: Kids Can Press. This is a first book of mapping skills for early readers.

Rosen, M. & Oxenbury, H. (1989). *We’re going on a bear hunt.* London: Walker Books. This children's illustrated book has been used successfully for descriptive journeys of adventure.

Sweeney, J. (1996). *Me on the map.* New York: Dragonfly Books. This is a picture book written specifically for young learners.

**Websites:**

Australian Curriculum Assessment and Reporting Authority (ACARA). (2013). [Australian Curriculum: Geography](http://www.australiancurriculum.edu.au/Geography/Rationale). Retrieved May 2013, from: <http://www.australiancurriculum.edu.au/Geography/Rationale>

All other required resources are listed in the 'What you need' section above.