

Sketch Mapping Your Local Area

A flexible home education lesson plan for ages 8–14

Age range	8–14
Main idea	Go for a short local walk, make quick sketch notes, then return home to create a clearer sketch map of the area.
Skills covered	Geography, fieldwork, observation, relative position, symbols and keys, speaking, drawing and explanation.

Lesson aim: Children explore their local area as geographers, noticing landmarks, routes and features, then turn those observations into a neat sketch map that another person could understand.

Learning objectives	You will need	Safety and access notes
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> notice key landmarks and route clues use labels, arrows and simple symbols describe where things are in relation to one another present information clearly in map form 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> clipboard or notebook pencil and rubber optional colours plain paper for final map optional camera or phone for reference photos 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> choose a safe adult-led route stop only in sensible places adapt the walk for age and mobility use a window view or photo walk if needed

Suggested lesson sequence

Stage	What to do
1. Before the walk	Explain that a sketch map shows the important parts of a place, not every tiny detail. Look at a simple map together and notice titles, labels, symbols and keys.
2. On the walk	Follow a short local route. Make quick notes of roads, turns, paths, buildings, green spaces, signs, playgrounds, shops, crossings, bus stops, beaches, parks or other useful landmarks.
3. While sketching	Encourage rough shapes, labels and arrows rather than perfect drawings. Focus on what is next to what, what is opposite, and what comes first, next and last on the route.
4. Back at home	Create a neat final sketch map on plain paper. Add a title, labels, a key and a simple route line. Include a compass arrow if appropriate.
5. Review	Ask the child to explain the map aloud. Could another person follow it? Which landmarks were most helpful?

Prompt questions to use during the walk

Questions	Notes or answers
What is the first landmark we notice on this route?	
Which way does the road or path bend?	
What is next to the shop, park, house or beach?	
Which features should definitely appear on the final map?	
What could we show using a symbol instead of a drawing?	
If someone used your map, would they know where to turn?	

Differentiation and extension ideas

Support for younger learners	Core task	Extension for older learners
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • keep the route short • focus on 4–6 landmarks • adult can help with labels • use arrows and simple symbols 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • create a labelled sketch map with title and key • show route order and relative position • include both human and natural features 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • add a compass point • estimate distance or walking time • include a simple grid • write directions using the finished map

Optional follow-up: Use the final map to write directions for a friend, compare old and new parts of the area, or design a visitor map showing the best places nearby.

Printable field note sheet

Local area field notes	
Date / place	
Landmarks I noticed	
Roads, paths or route clues	
Symbols I could use on my map	

Tip: Quick messy notes are perfect here. The neat final version comes later.

Final map checklist

Have I included...	Tick
a clear title	<input type="checkbox"/>
important landmarks	<input type="checkbox"/>
roads or paths	<input type="checkbox"/>
readable labels	<input type="checkbox"/>
a key or simple symbols	<input type="checkbox"/>
a route line if needed	<input type="checkbox"/>
a compass arrow if appropriate	<input type="checkbox"/>
neat presentation	<input type="checkbox"/>

Space to sketch the final map

