NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC BEE

All San Diego area homeschoolers in grades four through eight are invited to compete in the San Diego County Homeschoolers' GeoBee. This is a great opportunity for your students! Even if you don’t think you can “win” we encourage you to try! Staying poised enough to make an educated guess when you're stumped is a valuable lifelong skill! Classroom level rounds of the competition all begin with United States geography questions.

The ENTIRE "school-level" competition for San Diego County homeschoolers--from the preliminary "classroom-level" rounds through the final "school championship" rounds--will be held on the same date.

Who: San Diego County area homeschooled students in 4th-8th grades
When: Friday, January 15, 2010
Time: 2:00-4:00pm
Where: Living Way Church 13609 Twin Peaks Rd in Poway
Cost: $6 per student with maximum of $12 per family
Sign-up and Questions: Contact Sylvia at sylpie@cox.net

STUDY ADVICE (from Julie Sih who ran the Bee for several years):

DO: Set goals for what you're going to study as the GeoBee approaches. After you've reviewed the major features of the U.S., which countries will you focus on? Will you base your studies on your other subject material, such as your art or history coursework? Pick a few countries on each continent? Focus on one or two continents in particular?

DON'T: Try to learn everything in the world in a few weeks of study. It can't be done. Even generals who have tried to conquer the world concentrated on a few specific areas first! You'll feel less overwhelmed if you pick a manageable chunk of information and focus on learning that.

DO: Brush up on the capital and largest city of each U.S. state.

DON'T: Waste precious time studying state flowers and state birds. Although one section of last year's Bee did include references to such trivia, each of those questions *also* mentioned the state's capital, largest city, or obvious landmark. Kids who knew their major cities had no problem, even if they had no clue what the state flower was.

DO: Memorize the capital and largest city of AT LEAST the five most populous countries on each continent. (Ideally, you would know this stuff for ALL the world's countries, but you have to start somewhere!)

DON'T: Memorize these from a source dated 1996. Things have changed A LOT in the last ten years.

DO: Pay attention to the instructions. Every year there is a fairly easy round of questions about the seven continents, and NEARLY EVERY CONTESTANT ANSWERS INCORRECTLY.

DON'T: Answer with anything other than a continent name when you get to that round. Example: "The Eiffel Tour is a landmark on which continent?" "Paris" is NOT THE RIGHT ANSWER. "France" is NOT THE RIGHT ANSWER. The answer HAS to be a CONTINENT!

DO: Find out what the words "archipelago," "metropolis," and "megalopolis" mean. (These three words come up in every GeoBee.) And it wouldn't hurt to study a list of other geographic terms--peninsula, isthmus, cirque, moraine, etc.

DON'T: Stop listening to a question as soon as it mentions something you don't know. GeoBee
questions often "start" with something bizarre and "end" with a more familiar clue. For example, if your question begins "The Tlingit people...", and you've never even heard of the Tlingit people, don't turn your brain off at that point, or you'll miss the rest of the question: "...of the Pacific Northwest are found in which state--Washington or Florida?" The question really boils down to "Which state is in the Pacific Northwest--Washington or Florida?" But you won't see that if you panic at "Tlingit".

DO: Make sure you can identify the states on an unlabeled U.S. map. Every year, an early final round question requires the students to use an unlabeled outline map to identify which states are touched by a river, trail, or weather feature.

DON'T: Spend a lot of money buying books of outline maps or printing out maps from the Internet. You can make your own outline maps by putting tracing paper over regular maps and...well...tracing them. An inexpensive middle-school student atlas should provide enough detail for you to trace decent political maps (showing borders and major cities) and topographical maps (showing major mountain ranges, rivers, deserts, etc.). Again, make sure the atlas is a fairly recent one--no point in studying the wrong borders!

I hope this info helps you allocate your study time. Good luck, everyone! The national website (http://www.nationalgeographic.com/geographybee) also mentions two study aids available for purchase--the Official Study Guide (which contains sample Bee questions at various levels of competition--classroom, school, state-level, and national-level) and a fact-filled book called Afghanistan to Zimbabwe. I would HIGHLY recommend purchasing these books if your kids are serious about advancing to the higher levels of the Bee. You can order them through your local bookstore or via the website. I would NOT recommend the National Geographic Bee game, which my family found to be no fun at all and too scattershot to be of much use for studying.

Another recommendation: Have your child play the geography games on the Sheppard Software web site. You can work on U.S. geography or on the countries, capitals, rivers, and geographic regions, of any of the continents. Here is the link: http://www.sheppardsoftware.com/Geography.htm

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Below are three sample questions from each of the first seven rounds of the 2004 National Geographic Bee (for classroom-level competitions). Probably these questions won't be asked in this year's Bee--the categories are different every year--but they will give you an idea of what the questions will be like in each round. I will let you look up the answers yourselves.

ROUND ONE: United States Geography
1. The Red River of the North runs along the border between Minnesota and which other state--North Dakota or Illinois?
2. Madison is the capital of which state that is one of the leading producers of oats in the U.S.--Iowa or Wisconsin?
3. Which state straddles the Tropic of Cancer--Alaska or Hawaii?

ROUND TWO: Traveling Around the U.S.
1. If you hiked to Springer Mountain, the southern end of the Appalachian trail, you would be in which state--Arkansas or Georgia?
2. If you visited Mobile [moh-BEEL] Bay and Tuskegee University, you would be in which state--Alabama or Maryland?
3. If you climbed Mount Elbert and Mount Massive [MASS-iv], you would be in which state--Colorado or Massachusetts?

ROUND THREE: U.S. Physical Geography
1. Which state has large areas of permafrost--Oklahoma or Alaska?
2. Which state has an area of Mediterranean climate--California or Virginia?
3. Saginaw Bay, an inlet of Lake Huron, lies off the coast of which state—Michigan or Idaho?

ROUND FOUR: Odd One Out
1. Which state is NOT a major producer of cotton—Mississippi, Maine, or Texas?
2. Which of the following states does NOT include part of the Missouri River—Arkansas, Montana, or South Dakota?
3. Which state does NOT border Kentucky—Indiana, North Carolina, or West Virginia?

ROUND FIVE: Continents
(Beginning with this round, a choice of answers is no longer provided.)
1. Wildlife attracts tourists to the Serengeti [ser-en-GEH-tee] National Park on which continent?
2. Christianity and Buddhism are among the religions that originated on which continent?
3. To which continent do the majority of people in the United States and Canada trace their ancestry?

ROUND SIX: Geography of Cultures
1. Coffeehouses are a cultural tradition in Austria's capital city. Name this city.
2. Many people practice voodoo in a country on the western part of the island of Hispaniola. Name this country.
3. Pagodas [peh-GO-das], towerlike structures often seen in eastern Asia, are most commonly associated with which major religion?

ROUND SEVEN: Economic Geography
1. Name the currency of the European Union.
2. Commercial flowerbulb production is an important economic activity in what country just north of Belgium?
3. A country just east of Calcutta, India, is one of the world's largest exporters of jute, which is used in making burlap. Name this country.

FINAL ROUND (school-level competition):
The first set of Final Round questions involved an unlabeled United States map. Each competitor, in turn, had to use this map to answer his or her own question. For those who survived that question, the remaining questions were pretty tough; again, they started with United States geography and moved on to international topics.

MORE INFORMATION

The Bee is open to students in grades 4-8 who have not yet turned 15 years of age. All grades compete together. Obviously an eighth grader will have had exposure to more history and other geographic-relevant topics than a fourth grader, but the Bee's intent is to get younger kids interested in geography so that they can try again next year. And the year after. And the next. And the next. (A ten-year-old fifth grader DID win the whole shebang a few years ago.)

The Bee competitions consist of oral questions, answered orally. Occasionally the same question is asked of all the participants simultaneously, in which case the kids have to write their answer in large letters on a sheet of paper, but SPELLING DOES NOT COUNT so long as a reasonable facsimile of the correct answer appears on the paper; the student still answers orally, while holding up the paper. (Since the kids can only answer one at a time orally, the students who aren't first to answer could otherwise change their answers.)

The preliminary round (the "classroom-level" round for traditional schools) consists of seven rounds with seven different topics. Each student answers one question in each round, for a total of seven questions. In the first three rounds, the students choose between two possible answers. In Rounds 4, 5, and 6, a choice of answers is not provided, but Round 7's title is "Odd Item Out"; this means that in each of the
questions in Round 7, students are given a choice of three answers, and must choose the one answer that does NOT belong.

Students’ scores are not tabulated until the end of the seventh round. The top ten contestants are then invited to the final or "school-level" round. All finalists start the final competition with a clean slate, and are eliminated after answering two answers incorrectly.

The school-level questions begin with an unlabeled outline map of all fifty United States. The map shows certain features (in the 2006 Bee it was rivers, in 2005 it was historic trails, in 2004 it was the sites of natural disasters). Each student answers a different question, using the map to name the state affected by a particular feature. The maps are then put away and there are two more questions about U.S. geography. After that point, ALL the questions are about world geography.

People often ask me whether they should focus their study time on U.S. geography or world geography. As you can see, the overall champion will be decided on a world geography question. However, you will be eliminated before you even *get* to that point if you don't know your U.S. geography!

Our "school-level" champion will take a one-hour, 70-question multiple-choice test before the postmark date of January 18. The top 100 scores in each state earn invitations to compete at the state-level competition.