

Early Years Geography with Go Jettters

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CBeebies Grown-ups

COMMENTS

Go Jettters has landed on the CBeebies website, offering pre-schoolers a fun-filled introduction to geography and the wider world. We talked to Dr Paula Owens – the Geographical Association’s Curriculum Development Leader for Primary / Early Years – to find out why it’s so crucial to introduce geography to young children...



Why is it important to introduce geography to young children?

Geography helps children to make sense of their world. Very young children are naturally curious, and they love to actively explore the world around them, noticing all kinds of detail. That’s why they need to develop geographical vocabulary like the names of places, people and things, and the words needed to describe and locate them.

It helps to think of children as little geographers – they each have their own world of private geographies - the places they name for themselves with meanings that only they understand: the dens where they hide out with their friends, special meeting places in the school playground. Whether they’re playing in the back garden, or splashing through a muddy puddle on the way to school, children are intrepid explorers making new (to them) discoveries about the world every single day.

It’s not just home territory and their local area that interests little ones: they are fascinated by the wider world and collect all sorts of ideas about places near and far through things like stories, news, holidays, television and the Internet. Some of their ideas might be quite accurate and some less so – and talking to children about what they’ve seen and heard, and how true it is, is really valuable. Encourage them to think up good questions too – geography is all about enquiry.

Most people associate geography with maps and globes, and even very young children of three and four enjoy drawing pretend maps, or using simple maps. This is the start of them developing spatial awareness, and is a skill they’ll hone throughout their lives.

Why do you think a game like Go Jettors is useful to this age group?

We all love playing games – children will have fun encountering the different places, landmarks and people, and they'll be developing new geographical vocabulary and knowledge without even realising it.

The graphics of the game show the Earth spinning in space, with the shapes of land masses, oceans, rivers, deserts and mountains coming into view as the Go Jettors zoom in on each location – things like this help children to better imagine what our Earth looks like, and what kind of features it has.

Also, the Go Jettors always try to look after the planet, and this is a very positive message for young children.

What will children learn from Go Jettors?

Children will have a better understanding of what the Earth is like, and be able to name some places and features after just a few games! They'll also pick up facts about the different landmarks they 'travel' to. The game also introduces different people and places around the world in positive ways, encouraging children to talk about and feel comfortable with the idea of 'difference' – this in turn helps them to develop tolerance, as well as to feel more confident about their own sense of who they are and where they 'belong'.