

Social Studies Glossary

American political system - The system in the United States by which power is used to affect whether and how government will act on any given matter. It includes both governmental and extra-governmental activity. The American political system includes, but is not limited to, separation of powers, branches of government, the electoral system, American political parties, federalism, banking and monetary systems, and lobbying and special interests.

authentic context - Experiences and settings that are as close as possible to those of involved citizens and/or experts in the field.

Citation - A reference to a book, paper, author, or other resource, or the information necessary to locate a specific information resource. Citations usually follow strict formats, which can be found in style guides.

civic action - A wide range of actions that promote the common good and positive social change. Civic action is a direct application of taught social studies knowledge and skills. It often occurs in a single act but may also be part of a service-learning project. Examples of civic action include:

- Volunteering on a regular basis
- Petitioning
- Working on local/state/national political campaigns
- Educating one's community on civic or environmental issues
- Establishing a voter registration campaign among eligible students and community members
- Writing to elected representatives and newspapers
- Monitoring legislative proposals (local, state and national)
- Testifying at public hearings
- Becoming a member of civic organizations

comparative advantage - The advantage(s) a nation has when it can produce a product at a lower opportunity cost than another nation [opportunity cost is the highest valued alternative that must be forgone because another choice is made; all economic decisions involve opportunity costs].

constitutional principles - The broad concepts embodied in the United States and State constitutions that reflect the attributes and qualities of life in a republic (e.g., limited government/constitutional limits on power; democratic processes; rule of law; division of powers; checks and balances; federalism; popular sovereignty/self-government; consent of the governed; majority rule with minority rights, etc.).

current social studies issue - Public policy issues that are part of the contemporary public discourse and are closely connected to one or more social studies disciplines.

democratic ideals - The beliefs that underpin and serve as goals in democratic republican forms of government (e.g., individual rights, the rule of law, the common or public good, justice, equality, diversity, popular sovereignty, etc.).

discipline-based processes - The processes associated with the methods used in research to develop knowledge within each discipline. For example: History - analyzing primary sources, seeking multiple sources; Geography - reading, creating, and interpreting various kinds of maps; Civics and Government - interviewing, polling, and following political trends; Economics - recording and graphing trends related to fiscal policy or employment.

economic development - Improvement in the economic status/ wealth of a particular area for the well-being of its inhabitants. Efforts that seek to improve the economic well-being and quality of life for a community or society by creating, sustaining or enhancing jobs and growing incomes. It can occur at the local, regional, state, national or international level.

economic factors - Factors of an economy that have a broad impact on many aspects of life for individuals, families, businesses, governments, and societies. Economic factors may include the job market, the cost of living, the cost of production, and capital.

economic indicators - Statistics about the condition of the economy that are often used to make predictions about future performance. Some economic indicators include earning reports, unemployment, bankruptcies, retail sales, stock market prices, housing statistics, etc.

economic institutions - Organizations focused on commercial, financial, fiscal, monetary, or trade issues (e.g., companies, banks/ financial institutions, the Federal Reserve, etc.).

economic interdependence - The mutually dependent commercial, financial, fiscal, monetary, and/or trade relationships between or among nations, states, or international organizations. When a single economic unit is ultimately affected by many of the decisions or events that initially affect its trading partners. Economic interdependence can be created through formal relationships/ organizations such as the European Union or North American Free Trade Agreement.

economic processes - The processes of organizing and running businesses; those activities, actions, and operations that involve the production and sale of goods and services (this includes the extraction of raw materials and natural resources).

economic reasoning - The use of the economic concepts to make decisions related to economics and to life.

economic systems - The institutional framework that a society uses to allocate its resources to produce and distribute goods and services. Major types of economic systems

include: market economies, mixed economies, command economies, and traditional economies; nearly all modern economic systems are mixed.

entrepreneur - A person who operates and assumes the risk for a business venture.

ethical reasoning skills - The skills involved when making ethically sound decisions, including the skills of:

- defining core values
- analyzing conflicting values
- resolving dilemmas using ethical decision-making principles (ends-based, rule-based, care-based, or some combination of these)
- acting with moral courage

For more information, see the 2001 Maine DOE publication, [Taking Responsibility: Standards for Ethical and Responsible Behavior in Maine Schools and Communities](http://www.state.me.us/education/cep/homepage.htm), www.state.me.us/education/cep/homepage.htm.

fiscal, monetary, and trade policies –

Fiscal (budgetary) policy involves the use of government spending and taxation programs to affect the level of economic activity in such a way as to promote price stability, maximum employments, and reasonable economic growth. (Also known as budgetary policy).

Monetary policy refers to actions by the Federal Reserve System that lead to changes in the supply of money and availability of credit as a means of helping to promote economic goals.

Trade policy refers to a government's policies concerning foreign trade and treaties and agreements entered into with other governments to influence foreign trade.

founding documents - Documents establishing our nation and the plan for government (e.g., The Declaration of Independence, The United States Constitution, The Bill of Rights).

geographic grid - A system of imaginary lines on the globe. The grid is formed by horizontal lines of latitude running east and west around the globe north and south of the equator, and vertical lines of longitude running north and south from the globe's poles east and west of the Prime Meridian at Greenwich, England.

geographic tools - The sources and instruments used by geographers as they study the earth's surface and human activity on the earth (e.g., representations such as atlases, globes and maps, almanacs, geographic dictionaries, statistical databases, photos and satellite images).

goods and services

Goods are objects that can satisfy people's wants.

Services are activities that can satisfy people's wants.

governmental structures - The bodies and levels into which a government and/ or states are organized.

historic - Important in history.

historic symbols, monuments and traditions

Symbols are something visible that relate to principles or historic events by association, resemblance, or convention, for example the American flag, state flags, and town seals.

Monuments refer to large structures such as the Statue of Liberty, the Washington Monument, and the Lincoln Memorial.

Traditions are the passing down of elements of a culture from generation to generation; a time honored practice.

historical and recent immigrant groups - Groups that have immigrated to the United States including the "original" European immigrants and all successive immigrant groups.

international relations - Relations between or among nations or relations that occur in the context of international organizations, for example NATO, EU, UN, and agencies and organizations such as the WTO, IMF, World Bank, IAEA, and WHO.

market economy - An economic system in which economic decisions and the pricing of goods and services are guided by the aggregate (collective) interactions of a country's citizens and businesses. This is the opposite of a centrally planned economy, in which government decisions drive most aspects of a country's economic activity. Market economies work on the assumption that market forces such as supply and demand are the best determinants of what is right for a nation's well being.

natural, human, and capital resources

Natural resources are "gifts of nature"; they are present without human intervention, for example wind, sun, minerals.

Human resources represent the quantity and quality of human effort directed toward producing goods and services.

Capital resources include financial capital (money) and economic capital (resources) used to produce goods and services.

non-print sources - Information supplied through visual texts (e.g., illustrations, diagrams, graphics, hypertexts, pictures, videos, etc.).

organizational features - Aspects of written texts that aid readers in locating and comprehending information (e.g., titles, tables of contents, etc.).

personal finance - The aspects of individuals or family life that involve earning and spending money; often includes making budget choices, savings and investing, the use of credit, and managing risk and insurance.

place and location - In geography, **place** refers to locations having distinctive characteristics which gives it meaning and distinguishes it from other locations.

Absolute location refers to a specific location of a point on Earth's surface which can be expressed in latitude and longitude. **Relative location** refers to the location of a place or region in relation to other places or regions.

political structures of cultures - The structures a culture uses in making decisions on behalf of the community or society. For example, some Native American nations use tribal councils to make decisions and some use elders or spiritual leaders to make decisions for the community.

primary and secondary sources - **Primary sources** are actual records that have survived from the past, such as letters, photographs, articles of clothing. **Secondary sources** are accounts of the past created by people writing about events sometime after they happened; secondary sources are texts based on primary sources or other secondary sources.

print sources - Information conveyed in written format often following a linear sequence of organization (e.g., books, magazines, newspapers, etc.).

real or simulated decision - In the context of social studies, "real" decisions include students making collective decisions about rules, projects or proposals to improve the school or community. "Simulated" decisions include decisions made by students in inauthentic or artificial settings such as a mock legislative body (town council, state legislature, congress, UN), local committee, non-profit board or jury.

rights, duties, and responsibilities in the United States [civic, or of citizens]

Rights include those guarantees in founding documents and state constitutions.

These include:

- Personal rights (association, religion, expression, movement/travel/residence, privacy, etc.)
- Political rights (to vote, petition, assembly, freedom of press, speech, etc.)
- Economic rights (to own property, join labor unions, copyright and patent, enter lawful contracts, etc.)

Duties include fulfilling obligations such as those outlined in "responsibilities".

Responsibilities include understanding the basic values and principles in founding documents, monitoring the performance of political leaders and government agencies, and monitoring one's own behavior to foster the common or civic good. More specific civic responsibilities include obeying the law, paying taxes, being informed and attentive to public issues, voting, and serving as a juror.

scarce resources - Those resources that are desirable and not in great supply at a given time.

service-learning - Service-learning is a teaching strategy through which students identify, research and address real community challenges, **using knowledge and skills learned in the classroom**. Through service-learning, students meet local curricula and State learning standards. **Service-learning should not be confused with community service.**

specialization - When an individual, company or nation produce a more narrow range of goods and services than they consume.

supply and demand

Supply is the amount of a good or service that producers are willing and able to offer for sale (at all possible prices during a period of time).

Demand is the amount of a good or service that consumers are willing and able to buy (at all possible prices during a period of time).

The relationship of **supply and demand** influences the prices and quantity of goods and services sold in competitive markets; generally the lower the price of something, the more of it will be purchased and vice versa.

text features - Visual presentation of information designed to facilitate comprehension of the information by the reader. Text features are varied and have different purposes such as to present an overview of the information (e.g., table of contents), to assist in locating information (e.g., index), to show connections or relationships among ideas (e.g., diagrams, flow charts, maps, time lines), to emphasize certain points or ideas (e.g., bullets, boldface font, headings), to show how information is organized (e.g., webs, tree diagrams), to define terms (e.g., glossary), to explain for deeper understanding (e.g., cross section, cutaways, close-ups, descriptions connected to a graphic representations) etc.

types of maps - Kinds of maps that include political, physical, topographic, and ecological, maps.

unity and diversity

- Unity – common bonds based on the values, processes, and institutions that support a way of life.
- Diversity – unique traditions, perspectives, experiences, and values that set various groups apart from a larger culture; in a historical sense, diversity may be cultural, ethnic, economic or social (class).

variety of audiences - In the context of social studies, an audience for student presentations might include the teacher, classmates, parents, other students and teachers in the school unit, and community members. For middle and high school students, an audience might include adults from outside the school, and thus significantly increase the sense of importance of the presentation for students.