

Connecting Places



SmartSteps[®]
FOR SECONDARY SCHOOLS



Year 9 Unit 2 Geographies of interconnections

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Geographies of interconnections

People walking in and around their neighbourhoods is one of the best markers of a healthy, vibrant community. Disappointingly, many urban areas are not very walkable and there has been a significant decline in walking over recent decades.

The aim of this unit outline is for students to gain an understanding of how people are connected to places in a wide variety of ways, and how these connections help to make and change places and their environments. Through an understanding of walkability, students will investigate perceptions of places, the effects of their leisure choices on

places and implications for the future of these places.

This unit has been developed by [Victoria Walks](#) in partnership with the [Geography Teachers' Association of Victoria Inc.](#)

Victoria Walks is a walking health promotion charity working to get more Victorians walking every day. Critical to this aim is the creation of vibrant, supportive and strong neighbourhoods and communities where people can and do choose to walk wherever possible. *Smart Steps* is an initiative that aims to increase the number of children, families and young people walking by making streets and neighbourhoods more walkable and increasing opportunities for them to walk.

Curriculum links – Australian Curriculum: Geography

Year 9 Unit 2: Geographies of interconnections Geographical Knowledge and Understanding

The perceptions people have of place, and how this influences their connections to different places ([ACHGK065](#))

The effects of people's travel, recreational, cultural or leisure choices on places, and the implications for the future of these places ([ACHGK069](#))

Geographical Inquiry and Skills Observing, questioning and planning

Develop geographically significant questions and plan an inquiry that identifies and applies appropriate geographical methodologies and concepts ([ACHGS063](#))

Collect, select, record and organise relevant geographical data and information, using ethical protocols, from a range of appropriate primary and secondary sources ([ACHGS064](#))

Evaluate sources for their reliability, bias and usefulness, and represent multi-variable data in a range of appropriate forms, for example, scatter plots, tables, field sketches and annotated diagrams, with and without the use of digital and spatial technologies ([ACHGS065](#))

Represent the spatial distribution of different types of geographical phenomena by constructing special purpose maps that conform to cartographic conventions, using spatial technologies as appropriate ([ACHGS066](#))

Interpreting, analysing and concluding

Evaluate multi-variable data and other geographical information using qualitative and quantitative methods, and digital and spatial technologies as appropriate, to make generalisations and inferences, propose explanations for patterns, trends, relationships and anomalies, and predict outcomes ([ACHGS067](#))

Apply geographical concepts to synthesise information from various sources and draw conclusions based on the analysis of the data and information, taking into account alternative points of view ([ACHGS068](#))

Communicating

Present findings, arguments and explanations in a range of appropriate communication forms, selected for their effectiveness and to suit audience and purpose; using relevant geographical terminology, and digital technologies as appropriate ([ACHGS070](#))

Reflecting and responding

Reflect on and evaluate the findings of the inquiry to propose individual and collective action in response to a contemporary geographical challenge, taking account of environmental, economic and social considerations; and explain the predicted outcomes and consequences of their proposal ([ACHGS071](#))

Suggested time: 4–5 weeks of class time

Resources

- Internet access
- Victoria Walks website www.victoriawalks.org.au
- a print map of the planned walk (from Google Maps or a street directory)
- camera, clipboard.

Part A Introduction: How do teenagers see places?

Time: 2 lessons

Aim

Students will better understand 'places' and 'perceptions of places' if they develop an understanding of the terms. By completing the following activity, students will first identify the features of a place and then evaluate perceptions of the place.

Australian Curriculum: Geography – definitions

Perception

In geography perception is people's subjective assessment of places and environments.

Place

Places play a fundamental role in human life. The world is made up of places, from those with largely natural features, for example an area of rainforest, to those with largely constructed features, such the centre of a large city. Places are where we live and grow up. Our most common relationships are likely to be with people in the same place. The environmental and human qualities of places influence our lives and life opportunities. Places are sites of biodiversity, locations for economic activity, centres of decision-making and administration, sites for the transmission and exchange of knowledge and ideas, meeting places for social interaction, sources of identity, belonging and enjoyment and areas of natural beauty and wonder. They are where major events occur, from natural disasters and financial crises to sporting events. Places can also be laboratories for the comparative study of the relationships between processes and phenomena, because the uniqueness of each place means that similar processes and influences can produce different outcomes in different places. The importance of Country/Place to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples is an example of the interaction between culture and identity, and shows how places can be invested with spiritual and other significance.

Activity 1: My favourite places

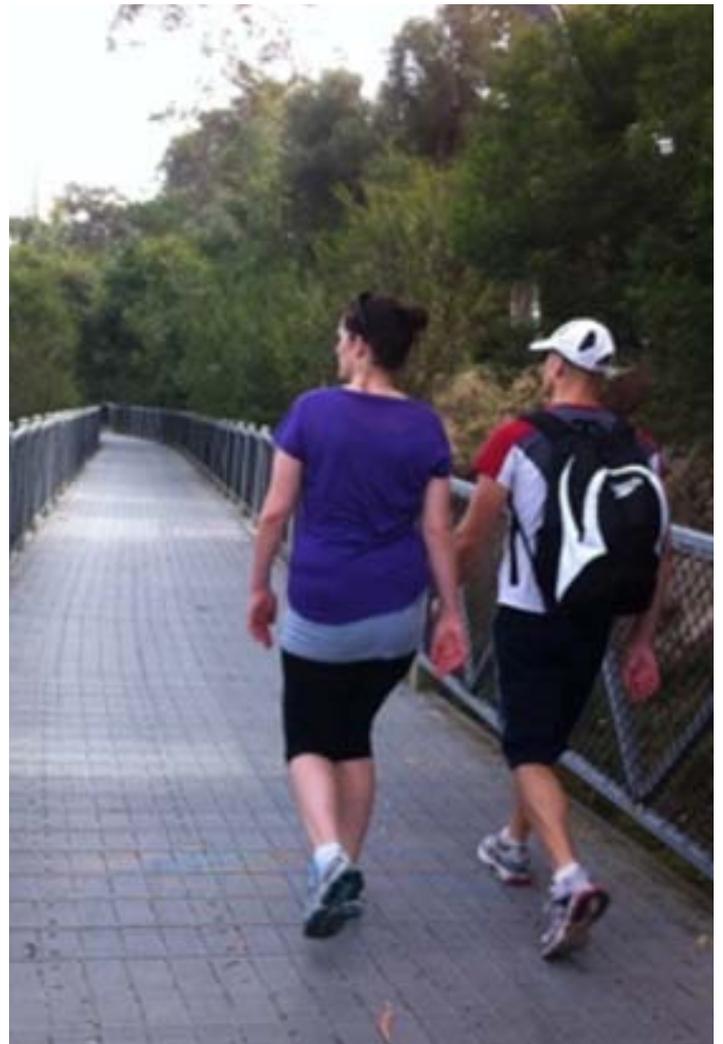
Time: 1 lesson

Aim

The aim of this activity is to get students to think about their favourite places and what makes each place special to them. They may choose places close to home or places that are favourite holiday or recreation destinations.

1. Make a list of your five favourite places.
2. Rank these in order from the place with the most appeal (1) to the place with lesser appeal (5).

3. Either using your own photos or an Internet search (or sketch, if necessary), find or create an image of the highest ranked place that typifies why you like that place so much.
4. Annotate the image to highlight the aspects of the place that gives you such a high perception of this place as a favourite place.
5. Share your work with the class as part of a class display either on the classroom wall or on a shared network (class Blog, Wiki etc).
6. Did any other students in the class nominate the same place? If so, why? If not, suggest why this would be the case. Remember this might be about perceptions.
7. Conduct a class discussion about the perception of places and how they may differ from person to person.



Activity 2: Where are the places that you meet and connect with your friends?

Time: 1 lesson

Aim

The aim of this task is for your class to identify the various local places where they are most likely to interconnect with their friends.

Australian Curriculum: Geography – definition

Interconnection

The concept of interconnection emphasises that no object of geographical study can be viewed in isolation. It is about the ways that geographical phenomena are connected to each other through environmental processes, the movement of people, flows of trade and investment, the purchase of goods and services, cultural influences, the exchange of ideas and information, political power and international agreements. Interconnections can be complex, reciprocal or interdependent, and have a strong influence on the characteristics of places. An understanding of the significance of interconnection leads to holistic thinking and helps students to see the various aspects of geography as connected rather than separate bodies of knowledge.

Victoria Walks definition – Walkability

Walkability is the quality of the walking experience for the pedestrian. A walkable neighbourhood is one in which all of the built environment works together to welcome and support people to walk - it includes good public transport, quality footpaths and places that people want to walk e.g. shops, school, sport grounds. That is, walkable neighbourhoods are useful, safe, comfortable, and interesting.

Watch the video [Copenhagen's Car Free Streets](#) (7.22mins) and note the changes that have come to the people of Copenhagen, the capital of Denmark, through making their city more walkable.



1. Describe Copenhagen – its pathways, roadways, buildings, waterways, green spaces. What is appealing about this place to you?
2. How do people use the spaces and the environment in the central part of Copenhagen?
3. Does the ability to walk and bicycle through these spaces make Copenhagen a liveable city? Why?
4. It was said that people had 'to win back public space'. Who was it won back from? Did these people change their habits and become walkers? Explain your answer.
5. Explain how places became more interconnected with the changed use of roadways and pathways.

Now consider a place you like to go to with your friends. Where is it located?

1. Brainstorm the elements or features of the location that make it a desirable place for the students to meet and connect with their friends. It will help students to focus on this task if you ask them to begin by quickly noting 10 ideas on their personal device or in their notes.
2. Make a collective summary as a class activity with students adding their ideas interactively to a white board summary or by using a scribe to keep board notes of the discussion points. Students will have created a shared list of the features that they think make a place desirable for them to connect with friends.
3. Prompts/hints from the teacher would be to suggest aspects of *environmental quality, crime and safety, access to shops and services including transport links, recreational facilities and cultural activities*.
4. Either in small groups or as a class attempt to classify the notes from the brainstorm into groupings of natural features or constructed features; then classify according to environmental qualities or human qualities. The definition of place above gives examples to guide the teacher. Use sub-headings that make the most sense given the nature of the class responses e.g. sporting facilities, safe places, community places or fun places. This step will help students to understand that things can be classified in a variety of ways depending on the criteria selected.
5. Are all places the same? Form small groups of students who have chosen similar environments (natural or human constructed) and let them debate the qualities that make one place better to them than another. Each group should be able to make a rational decision and report back to the class. For example, the best skate park is [insert name] because it has a greater variety of forms to ride, it is within walking distance from public transport and there are always other people of my age there to connect with.
6. Allow time for each of the groups to report their findings to the class.

Part B: What does an interconnected walkable community look like?

Before the fieldwork/walk: 2–3 lessons

Activity 1 – What is walkability?

Aim

The aim of this task is to get your class thinking about their perception of their local community, in particular how it is interconnected through its level of walkability. What does an interconnected walkable place look like?

Watch these two short videos on walkability:

[Walkable 101: the basics \(based in Martin Country, USA\)](#)
(4:57mins)

[Urban planning 101: walkability](#) (2:30)

Discuss the following.

- How is walkability defined?
- How are walkability and the liveability of communities interconnected?
- What are the features of places that are walkable communities?
- How can interconnection be improved in a community?
- Do you like the idea of walkable, interconnected communities? Do you have a positive perception of such a community? Discuss this as a class.



Activity 2 – preparing roles for fieldwork

Aim

The aim of this activity is to prepare the class for fieldwork to assess the walkability and points of interest in the local area.

- Divide the class into groups to undertake fieldwork (maximum of six students per group).
- The groups are based on different types of users who walk in the local area. Each of the groups will perceive the walk differently, note specific aspects relevant to their user group and suggest improvements to the walks.
- Students should be allocated to groups according to the following user groups:
 - an elderly person
 - a person in a wheelchair
 - a mum or dad with a child in a pram
 - an eleven-year-old on a skateboard
 - a teenager on crutches
 - a young, fit person.

It is suggested if possible/practical that each group should undertake the walk with props associated with the role, i.e. a wheelchair, skateboard, walking frame, pusher or pram. This will help with the audit/assessment of the walking route and help the students to look at the experience from the lens of the people they are representing.

- Each group will undertake the walk responding to three activities:
 - creating a walking map (see Part C Activity 1)
 - rating the community (see Part C Activity 2)
 - surveying users (see Part C Activity 3)

Teachers should note that all three activities take place on one walk.

- Students should be placed in their groups and brainstorm for 10 minutes the different walking needs of the person their group represents. For example, the elderly might need seating, toilets, shade; people in wheelchairs might need wide curb crossings with good pram ramps, flat and clear footpaths without posts and poles; mum and dads with a pram might need wide pathways, clear vision at corners, median strips for crossing roads; an eleven year old on a skateboard might not want too much slope; teenager on crutches might consider the traffic speed, visibility, crossing points; joggers might want to avoid plants growing onto pathways and uneven surfaces.

6. Read the [Victoria Walks Walking Audit Form](#). Each group needs to become familiar with the audit and read through the 28 questions. Each of the sub-sections – Footpaths, Facilities, Crossing the road, Traffic, Safety, Aesthetics – this could be designated to a member of the group to assess on the walk. To make the audit easy, download the pages to a personal device or print to take out during the fieldwork.
 7. What is the importance to your user group of each of these six assessments when looking at walkability in your local area?
 8. Research the importance of walking. Allocate a topic to each group – walking for health and happiness, community and social connection, and the planet. Allow each group access to the Victoria Walks website for them to research their topic. For each topic there is an information page:
 - [Walking for Health and Happiness](#)
 - [Walking for Community and Social Connection](#)
 - [Walking for the Planet](#)
 9. Rearrange the groups so that there is a student representing each of these topics researched. These new groups are to listen/discuss each of the topics and develop up to eight sentences that summarise the group perception of the importance of walking to people.
 10. Each group is to present their ideas to the class. Are everyone's perceptions of the role of walking similar? If not, why not? Discuss.
- Activity 3 – mapping walkability**
- Aim**
- The aim of this activity is to show students the type of map that each group will create back in the classroom after the walk and based on the data that will be collected during fieldwork.
1. Use a print map from a street directory or from Google Maps and distribute to label the planned walking route. Discuss with the students before selecting the most appropriate route.

There are some [terrific tips and information](#) on the Victoria Walks web site that explain all that you need to know about Walking Maps. You can also access a [Secondary Teacher's Guide to Walking Maps](#).
 2. Let the students know that they will be creating a walkability map on their return to class, using the data and information collected during the fieldwork. Two examples to view are:
 - i. the [Walking audit Map](#) for part of Westgarth and
 - ii. the [walking map in Bendigo CBD](#)
 - a. Students should view these on their personal device so they can click through the various stops quickly.
 - b. Discuss which aspects of these neighbourhoods show how people interconnect.
 - c. What makes these places walkable?
 - d. Can you spot any walkability issues? What are they?
 3. Suggest to students that there should be at least six locations on their walk at which they should complete the audit, take photographs, do field sketches and write brief notes of anything of significance, particularly of a geographic nature.
 4. Students should work in their groups to identify the information they are going to collect in the field. Take a look at www.victoriawalks.org.au/Walking_audit/ and related links at the bottom of this page, particularly the *Walk San Diego*, for a few ideas of what to look for and comments to make with photographs. Most students will know the route close to the school in their local environment and will have a perception of the area already. Ensure that their list includes such aspects as natural and human constructed (built) environments, includes collecting qualitative data and quantitative data.
 5. Develop a survey (see [Fieldwork activity sheet 1](#) as a guide) that will allow students to interview people they meet during the fieldwork about their perceptions of their local place.
 6. Trial the survey questions with a classmate and modify if necessary. Make multiple copies of the survey for the group to use. Twelve copies should be ample (see [Fieldwork Activity Sheet 1](#)). Now you are ready to go on the fieldwork. Enjoy!
 7. Your survey, walkability map and all data and information collected on the fieldwork will be used to write your final Walkability Report (see [The Walkability report](#)).

Part C: How does our interconnected community rate?

After the fieldwork/walk: 7 lessons

Activity 1 – Creating a Walking Map

Time: 2 lessons

Aim

To use the map, photographs and information collected from fieldwork to create a walkability map, ensuring that geographical knowledge and understanding are a focus of the pin points on the map; include also aspects relating to walkability.

1. Learn how to create a [walking map](#).
2. Each group member should select the most appropriate photograph/s to display for the site visited and create the description to accompany the photograph. Remember all descriptions should use geographical language. Web links can be used for additional information. If you want to include graphs or data from your survey then this is the way to do it. Remember this is an assessment task.
3. With the aid of your teacher, choose by consensus the presentation elements that best represent each group's work. After checking with the teacher, upload your photos and text to one group walking map to the Walking Maps website. The name of the map should include the school name, year level and location.

Activity 2 – Rating your community (2 lessons)

Aim

To evaluate the walkability of the walk undertaken, according to the Victoria Walks criteria in the Audit form.

1. After the fieldwork/walk students need to be given time to evaluate and represent the data collected and recorded.
2. Students should begin by looking at their data from the Victoria Walks Walking Audit. What does the data show about this community? Which aspects of the walk rated the highest – Footpaths, Facilities, Crossing the road, Traffic, Safety or Aesthetics? Which aspect the lowest? Did the ratings change depending on the user you represented?
3. Present your data in a table format.
4. Summarise the aspects of each sub-section to provide an assessment of the quality of the walk for each user group represented.
5. As a class, how can you interpret and analyse this data to make a statement about your community's interconnection through walking?
6. Who should know about your findings? Local councils/councillors and Chamber of Commerce groups are interested in what the community thinks. Communicate your class findings and links to the walking maps to a

representative from council or business either in a letter via post or email, or by preparing a press release for the local newspaper. If you write to the council, remember to request a reply from them. This is an assessment task.

7. If possible, invite the representative to the school to share a viewing of your Walking Map and discuss with the class your rating of places.

Activity 3 – Analysing the survey

Time: 3 lessons

Aim

The aim of conducting a survey was to gain a sense of people's perception of a place. The collected data needs to be recorded, analysed, evaluated and represented before interpretations can be made and conclusions drawn about people's perceptions and the walkability of the local area.

1. Collate the data gained from the survey. In your group there should be about 10 completed forms, but at some locations this may have been difficult to achieve. It will depend on your location and how many people were walking on the day you conducted your fieldwork.
2. For all those questions that are quantitative and/or closed questions you can count the number of responses per category ([sample survey questions 1–3](#)).
3. Present this information in a table format or graph the results.
4. For the open ended questions, you need to make some generalisations about what was the basis of the ideas that each respondent provided (sample survey questions 4–10). This is more difficult to do and so you need to discuss the ideas in the group.
5. With the aid of your teacher, the class can summarise the findings of the surveys. Do the different groups – elderly, person in a wheelchair, mum and dad with a child in a pram, eleven year old on a skateboard, teenager on crutches, joggers – have the same perceptions of the environment and its walkability? Is walking an important reason why people are able to connect at these places? From the perceptions of those surveyed, have you learnt anything new about a place? Are changes to the pathways or destinations wanted by those surveyed? Peoples' perceptions vary. Were there positive and negative perceptions of place?
6. Respond to the perception of the walkability and interconnection of the local place by using the Walking Audit rating scale 0–3, to provide a class overall rating.
7. Summarise the findings on the walkability of the local area in a descriptive paragraph supported by evidence from the survey. This is an assessment task.

Assessment Criteria

Use the following rubric for the assessment task.

Criteria	4	3	2	1	Points
Contribution to the creation of a group walking map – photo selection, description	Excellent contribution, including use of geographical language and walkability ratings	Very good contribution, some geographical language and walkability ratings	Sound contribution, including limited geographical language and use of walkability ratings	Limited contribution, with limited geographical language and limited use of walkability ratings	
Conveying your findings to others on the walkability of your area in a letter or press release	Excellent review of the audit of walkability using supporting evidence in the letter or press release	Very good review of the audit of walkability using some supporting evidence in the letter or press release	Sound review of the audit of walkability using minimal supporting evidence in the letter or press release	Limited review of the audit of walkability using no supporting evidence in the letter or press release	
Response to the survey – descriptive paragraph	Excellent structured and descriptive paragraph using supporting evidence from the surveys	Very good structured and descriptive paragraph using some supporting evidence from the surveys	Sound descriptive paragraph using minimal supporting evidence from the surveys	Limited descriptive paragraph using no supporting evidence from the surveys	
Total					

Part D: Taking action

Time: 2 lessons

Aim

To use the data gathered during fieldwork to propose a change that could improve the walkability and interconnection on the class *Walking Map* route.

Activity

1. In your original groups, focus your thoughts as to how to improve the walkability and connections of those users. What changes would you recommend to make the local area you visited more walkable?
2. From your fieldwork, identify aspects that you would like to see enhanced (made better) or improved for the user group.
3. Prepare an action plan. Use the templates available on the Victoria Walks site to assist with various aspects of your action plan. These templates outline how to write letters and what to say, and are found at www.victoriawalks.org.au/Resources/

Possible actions may include:

- engaging with the local media with letter/s to the editor and/or local council
- presenting the issue to the school council, if relevant
- writing in the school newsletter to inform the public of your research
- a poster campaign
- a song
- a press release
- making a short movie to explain proposed changes and upload to YouTube or similar sites

A teacher note: Victoria Walks is happy to assess action plans and, if appropriate, will provide a letter of endorsement that can be attached to the work and suggested action plan.

Geographies of interconnections



Fieldwork Activity Sheet 1

People's perception at a local place – Conducting a Survey

The aim of conducting this survey is to gain a sense of people's perception of a place. You want to get into other people's shoes and see what they think about a place. As a result, you may perceive a place in a different way.

Try building into your survey some questions that might include the following:

- respect and care for a place
- aesthetic appreciation – what it looks like
- emotional attachment to the environment
- awe and wonder
- active involvement with the place
- challenging personal space
- engagement with social, environmental and political issues connected to the place.

Developing your survey

Understand the aim of your survey clearly. Remember you are going to sample the community views so your survey needs to be no more than 10 questions with each question focussed on one aspect of perception of place. You can provide choices for participant's to select a response, such as multiple choice questions (closed questions) or be prepared to write down their responses quickly (open-ended questions) or if you are able to record their words ask permission to do so. Try to achieve at least ten completed surveys in your group – that means each of you should try to survey two people – sometimes this will not be possible.

You need to plan your survey and trial it in class or check with your teacher. Are the questions easily understood? Is there order to the questions? Is it relatively quick to complete the survey? Can you use the results to summarise ideas and report your findings?

Geographies of interconnections



Fieldwork Activity Sheet 1 (Cont.)

A sample survey

These are suggested questions only and you may add your own questions.

[Insert School logo]

Year 9 at (school name) is undertaking this survey to find out how people perceive, or think about, places.

Site of interview: _____

Interviewed by: _____

1. To which age group do you belong?

0–9 10–19 20–39 40–59 60–79 80+

2. Why do you visit (insert place name)?

Shop Meet friends Appointments (doctor, hair) Finances (bank, tax agent)
 Like the place Relaxation Sporting activities Cultural activities Enjoyment
 A safe place Other (please specify)

3. How did you get here? (more than one option may be chosen)

Walked Bicycle Train Tram Bus Car Friend's car Taxi

4. What are the best features of this place?

5. Are there features that make you wonder about the history of this place?

6. Do you feel connected to people when you are here? How?

7. How does the form of transport taken to get here affect your perception of this place?

8. Are there any controls/limits that restrict your use of the place?

9. Are there aspects of this place you would like to change? What are they? Why?

Geographies of interconnections



The Walkability report

On your return to class your group must now prepare a walkability report for the aspect that you investigated.

Which places along this walk have the highest and lowest walkability ratings?

Which places along this walk require some changes to improve walkability?

What must be included in your report?

1. A map of the walk.
2. Photos or sketches of each location linked to the map.
3. Explanatory annotations and a walkability rating for each stop.
4. For any locations with poor walkability ratings a suggestion to make this place more walkable.
5. A discussion about how improved walkability can improve liveability.

Your teacher will discuss with you the common format to be used by all groups to present your report and the time that you have to complete it.

After completing your report

1. Identify three locations on your map that best reflected appropriate walkability and liveability.
2. Identify three locations on your map that reflected problems with walkability and liveability.

After looking at the all the other group reports

1. Do most groups agree about which locations were in the most walkable places? Explain
2. Do most groups agree about which locations were in the least walkable places? Explain.
3. Use a copy of your class Walking Map and the information collected on your walk to identify which places along your walk would be rated the most liveable for young people. Annotate the map to explain your selections.
4. How could the liveability for young people be improved at two of the stops along your class Walking Map? Draw and annotate a map or plan which illustrates the strategies that you believe will enhance the liveability of these two places.