



Support units: Language of geography

Illustration 2: Vocabulary and spelling

Derivation of words: Developing the technical language of geography

Investigating the etymology (derivation) of words will assist students to read, understand the meaning and spell technical terms and the wider vocabulary of geography.

Word root	Origin	Meaning	Examples
Aqua	Latin	water	aquifer
Circum	Latin	around	circumference
Dorm	Latin	sleep	dormitory suburb
Graphos	Greek	drawn, written	geography
Hygro	Greek	wet	hygrometer
Infra	Latin	below, beneath	infrastructure
Khoro	Greek	place	choropleth map
Kilo	Greek	1,000	kilometre
Meteorlogia	Greek	discussion of astronomical conditions	meteorology
Mono	Greek	one	monocline
Ology	Greek	the science of	meteorology
Ped	Latin	foot	pedology, paedology
Volvo	Latin	I roll	revolve, revolution

Importing words from other places

Word	Origin and meaning
Arête	Latin <i>arista</i> (ear of grain, the top of an ear)
Alligator	Spanish <i>el lagarto</i> (the lizard)
Banana	Arabic <i>banan</i> (finger)
Barchan	Kazakh <i>barkhan</i>
Billabong	Wiradjuri <i>bilaban</i> (a watercourse that only runs after rain)
Compass	French <i>compasser</i> (to go around, measure, divide equally)
Diurnal	Latin <i>diurnalis</i> (daily)
Epiphyte	Greek <i>epi</i> (upon) <i>phyton</i> (plant)
Fiord	Norse <i>fjorðr</i> (lake-like water body used for passage and ferrying)
Gibber	Dharuk <i>giba</i> (stone)
Hamada	Arabic <i>hamāda</i> (hard, rocky desert plateau)

Word	Origin and meaning
Isthmus	Greek <i>isthmos</i> (narrow neck of land)
Jungle	Sanskrit <i>jangala</i> (wilderness)
Kampong	Bahasa Melayu <i>kampong</i> (village)
Loess	Swiss-German dialect <i>lösch</i> (loose)
Meander	Greek <i>Maiandros</i> (River Maeander)
Nomad	Latin <i>nomas</i> (wandering shepherd)
Oxen	Sanskrit <i>ukshan</i> (ox, bull)
Podsol	Russian <i>pod</i> (under) <i>zola</i> (ashes)
Quebec	Algonquin <i>quebec</i> (narrow passage, strait)
Ratoon	Spanish <i>retoñar</i> (to sprout)
Spinifex	Latin <i>spina</i> (a thorn) <i>facere</i> (to make)
Tombolo	Latin <i>tumulus</i> (hillock, mound)
Undulating	Latin <i>undula</i> (small wave)
Veldt	Afrikaans <i>veld</i> (field)
Xerophyte	Greek <i>xeros</i> (dry) <i>phyton</i> (plant)
Yacht	Dutch <i>jaghtschip</i> (light sailing ship, fast pirate ship), <i>jaght</i> (hunt) and <i>schip</i> (ship)
Zooplankton	Greek <i>zoon</i> and <i>planktos</i> (wanderer, drifter)

Aboriginal place names

Place name	Origin	Meaning	Location
Aranda	Arrente	White cockatoo	Suburb of Canberra
Ballarat	Wathaurong	Resting place From <i>ballaarat</i> (resting place)	City in Victoria
Berri	Meri	A wide bend in the river	Town in South Australia
Caboolture	Kabi	Place of the carpet snake	Town in Queensland
Joondalup	Noongar	Either 'place of whiteness, glistening', or 'place of a creature that can only move backwards'	Regional city in Perth, Western Australia
Maningrida	Kunibidji	Anglicised version of <i>manayingkarrra</i> , from the phrase <i>mane djang karirra</i> , meaning 'the place where the Dreaming changed shape'.	Town in Northern Territory
Murwillumbah	Bundjalung	Camping place, From <i>murrie</i> (Aboriginal people), <i>wolli</i> (a camp) and <i>bab</i> (the place of)	Town in northern New South Wales

Source: N Hutchinson.