U.S. Geography

Use this key to check answers and read the explanations.

1. Which ocean borders California on the west?
   A. Pacific Ocean
   B. Atlantic Ocean
   C. Arctic Ocean
   D. Indian Ocean
   Correct answer: A. Pacific Ocean
   California is on the Pacific coast of the United States.

2. Which state is a chain of islands in the central Pacific Ocean?
   A. Florida
   B. Alaska
   C. Hawaii
   D. Rhode Island
   Correct answer: C. Hawaii
   Hawaii is a volcanic island chain in the Pacific. The other states have territory on the North American mainland.

3. Which country separates Alaska from the contiguous United States on a road trip?
   A. Mexico
   B. Canada
   C. Russia
   D. Greenland
   Correct answer: B. Canada
   Alaska shares its land border with Canada. Canada lies along the overland route between Alaska and the connected 48 states.

4. Which of the Great Lakes lies entirely within the United States?
   A. Lake Ontario
   B. Lake Superior
   C. Lake Erie
   D. Lake Michigan
   Correct answer: D. Lake Michigan
   Lake Michigan lies entirely within the United States. The U.S.–Canada border crosses each of the other Great Lakes.

5. The Great Smoky Mountains lie along parts of Tennessee and North Carolina. Which mountain system includes them?

A. Rocky Mountains
B. Appalachian Mountains
C. Cascade Range
D. Sierra Nevada

Correct answer: B. Appalachian Mountains
The Great Smoky Mountains are part of the southern Appalachian Mountains.

6. Which river flows south past St. Louis and Memphis and reaches the sea through southern Louisiana?

A. Mississippi River
B. Missouri River
C. Ohio River
D. Arkansas River

Correct answer: A. Mississippi River
The Mississippi passes those cities and has its mouth in southern Louisiana. The other three rivers are its tributaries.

7. Which state shares a land border with both New Mexico and Louisiana?

A. Arizona
B. Oklahoma
C. Arkansas
D. Texas

Correct answer: D. Texas
Texas meets New Mexico to the west and northwest and Louisiana to the east.

8. A route starts on the Massachusetts mainland and follows a peninsula that curves north to Provincetown. Which peninsula is it?

A. Delmarva Peninsula
B. Cape Ann
C. Cape Cod
D. Door Peninsula

Correct answer: C. Cape Cod
Provincetown sits near the curled tip of Cape Cod in Massachusetts.

9. Which river forms a long stretch of the state line between Oregon and Washington?

A. Columbia River
B. Snake River
C. Willamette River
D. Klamath River

Correct answer: A. Columbia River
The river forms much of the boundary as it heads west toward the Pacific Ocean.

10. A milepost near the Four Corners describes one point shared by four states. Which set of states should it list?

A. Colorado, New Mexico, Utah, and Wyoming
B. Arizona, Colorado, Nevada, and Utah
C. Arizona, New Mexico, Texas, and Utah
D. Arizona, Colorado, New Mexico, and Utah

Correct answer: D. Arizona, Colorado, New Mexico, and Utah
Utah and Colorado meet north of the point. Arizona and New Mexico meet south of it.

11. A stream begins and ends within a closed basin of the Great Basin. Where can its water go without reaching the ocean?

A. Into the Gulf through the Mississippi River system
B. Into a coastal estuary reached by the Columbia River
C. Into an inland lake or low spot, where it can evaporate or soak in
D. Into the Atlantic through the St. Lawrence River

Correct answer: C. Into an inland lake or low spot, where it can evaporate or soak in
Closed basins have internal drainage. Water runs into inland depressions and can evaporate or seep into the ground.

12. Two hikers stand on opposite sides of the Continental Divide at Milner Pass. Which pairing describes where runoff can eventually reach?

A. East side toward the Pacific, west side toward the Atlantic
B. East side toward the Atlantic, west side toward the Pacific
C. Both sides toward the Atlantic
D. Both sides toward the Pacific

Correct answer: B. East side toward the Atlantic, west side toward the Pacific
The divide separates the drainage at the pass. Runoff east of the pass heads toward the Atlantic system, and runoff to the west heads toward the Pacific system.

13. A river forms much of the Vermont–New Hampshire boundary, then runs south through Massachusetts and Connecticut. Which river follows that route?

A. Kennebec River
B. Hudson River
C. Merrimack River
D. Connecticut River

Correct answer: D. Connecticut River
The Connecticut River follows the Vermont–New Hampshire line before crossing Massachusetts and continuing through Connecticut.

14. A river separates Pennsylvania and New Jersey for much of its course. It becomes tidal near Trenton and eventually enters a bay of the same name. Which river matches all the clues?

A. Delaware River
B. Susquehanna River
C. Hudson River
D. Potomac River

Correct answer: A. Delaware River
The Delaware runs along Pennsylvania and New Jersey and becomes tidal near Trenton. Its estuary widens into Delaware Bay.

15. Starting in Lake Superior and following the main downstream route toward the St. Lawrence River, which order puts the four lakes on that route in sequence?

A. Superior → Ontario → Huron → Erie
B. Superior → Erie → Huron → Ontario
C. Superior → Huron → Erie → Ontario
D. Superior → Huron → Ontario → Erie

Correct answer: C. Superior → Huron → Erie → Ontario
Water moves from Superior to Huron, then through connecting waterways to Erie. It then reaches Ontario, which drains to the St. Lawrence River.