

National Geographic Bee FAQs

What is the National Geographic Bee?

The National Geographic Bee is an annual geography competition organized by the National Geography Society.

Who is eligible to participate in the National Geographic Bee?

Students in grades four through eight are eligible to compete in this entertaining and challenging test of geographic knowledge, and each year, more than 4 million students from thousands of schools in all 50 states, the District of Columbia, the U.S. Atlantic territories (Puerto Rico and U.S. Virgin Islands), Pacific territories (Northern Mariana Islands, Guam and American Samoa) and the Department of Defense Dependents Schools participate in the Bee using materials prepared by the National Geographic Society.

Why did National Geographic create the National Geographic Bee?

The contest is designed to encourage teachers to include geography in their classrooms, to spark student interest in the subject and to increase public awareness about geography. The competition began in 1989 in response to concern about the lack of geographic knowledge among young people in the United States.

How does the competition work?

There are three levels of the Bee: school, state and national. School winners take a qualifying written test, which is scored by the National Geographic Society. Up to 100 of the top scorers in each state or territory then take part in the state-level Bees. The 54 winners of the state Bees receive \$100 and an all-expenses-paid trip to Washington, D.C., to represent their state or territory at the national finals, which are held each May.

The national finals take place over two days. The preliminary round on day one determines the top 10 finalists, who win \$500 and advance to the final round on the second day. The student who is crowned National Geographic Bee champion wins the top prize of a \$50,000 college scholarship and a lifetime membership in the National Geographic Society. The national champion will also travel (along with one parent or guardian), all expenses paid, on a Lindblad expedition to southeast Alaska aboard *National Geographic Sea Lion*, including a stop at Glacier Bay National Park, in recognition of the 100th anniversary of the National Park Service.

The second-place finisher receives a \$25,000 college scholarship, and the student who places third receives a college scholarship of \$10,000. The final round of the National Geographic Bee is moderated by journalist and humorist Mo Rocca. Award-winning journalist Soledad O'Brien moderated the final round of the National Geographic Bee in 2014 and 2015. She took over the role of moderator from "Jeopardy!" host Alex Trebek, who moderated the Bee for 25 years, from its inception in 1989 to 2013.