

Describing Location

Have you ever given directions to a friend or family member? If so, there's a good chance that you described the place's relative location. The **relative location** of a place is where it is, compared with other places on Earth.

To describe relative location, people use terms that show connections between places. They often use phrases such as *next to*, *near*, or *bordering* to tell about relative location. The states of Maryland, West Virginia, Kentucky, Tennessee, and North Carolina border Virginia. The District of Columbia—also known as Washington, D.C.—borders Virginia on the northeast. You could describe Virginia's relative location by saying it is next to all these places.

Another way to give Virginia's relative location is to describe where it is in the United States. Geographers often group the 50 states into larger regions. A **region** is an area of Earth with similar features. Virginia is one of the 13 states that make up the Southeast region.

1 Describe Virginia's relative location in your own words.

2 Study the map below. Circle the names of the states that border Virginia.



The Potomac River forms part of Virginia's northern border.

Borders and Location

Virginia covers about 40,000 square miles. In size, it is the thirty-sixth-largest state. The borders that outline Virginia have changed over time. These borders are mostly imaginary lines. The only way to see them is by looking at a map or a globe.

Natural features, such as mountains and bodies of water, form some borders. In eastern Virginia, the Atlantic Ocean and Chesapeake Bay form two parts of the state's border. The Potomac River forms part of the border in the eastern and northern parts of the state.

Knowing Virginia's borders can help you better describe its relative location. For example, you could say that Virginia is west of the Atlantic Ocean and south of the Potomac River. You could also say that it is south of Maryland and West Virginia—and that it is east of Kentucky and north of Tennessee and North Carolina.



3 Scan the second paragraph on this page. Circle the main idea, and underline one detail.

4 Describe Virginia's relative location using the Potomac River.