

International Academic Competitions

History and Geography Study Guide 1: National Capitals

Directions: The capitals of countries are some of the most frequently referenced clues in questions not only for the International Geography Bee, but also in questions for the National History Bee and the National History Bowl. In National History Bee and National History Bowl tournaments, questions are asked about the history of all parts of the world. Often, when we ask about the history of a country (for example, where the answer is “Sweden”), the question will mention the name of its capital, especially towards the end (for example, “Name this Scandinavian country where a museum dedicated to the band ABBA and a wooden ship named for this country’s royal House of Vasa can be found in its capital city of Stockholm.”).

Study the Level 1 countries and their capitals first, as they are the most famous and most frequently referenced. Then move on to Level 2, and learn those before moving on to Level 3. Remember, that in the History Bowl, having different team members be responsible for learning the capitals of different parts of the world (especially at Levels 3-5) can be an efficient and effective strategy for making sure your team is well-prepared and has this material mastered. Pronunciation guides are included for certain cities (these are shown as pr. XXXX). It is important these are learned as well as pronunciation needs to be close enough for an answer to be deemed correct.

Note that all US state capitals are also essential knowledge (the equivalent of Level 1 or 2). These are not listed, but should also be learned. Canadian provincial & territorial capitals are listed in an appendix below.

Level 1 – 13 countries

Americas

Brazil – Brasilia
Mexico – Mexico City
USA – Washington, DC

Asia

China – Beijing
India – New Delhi
Japan – Tokyo

Europe

France – Paris
Germany – Berlin
Greece – Athens
United Kingdom – London

Europe

Italy – Rome
Russia – Moscow
Spain – Madrid

Level 2 – 31 countries

Africa

Egypt - Cairo
Kenya - Nairobi
South Africa 1 – Cape Town
(Cape Town is the legislative capital)

Americas

Argentina – Buenos Aires
Canada – Ottawa
Chile – Santiago
Colombia – Bogotá
Cuba – Havana
Peru – Lima

Asia

Iran – Tehran
Israel – Jerusalem
Pakistan – Islamabad
Philippines – Manila
South Korea – Seoul (pr. SOLE)
Thailand – Bangkok
Turkey – Ankara

Level 2 – 31 countries (continued)

Europe

Austria – Vienna
Belgium – Brussels
Czech Republic – Prague (pr. PRAHG)
Denmark – Copenhagen
Finland – Helsinki
Hungary – Budapest
Ireland – Dublin

Europe

Norway – Oslo
Poland – Warsaw
Portugal – Lisbon
Sweden – Stockholm
Switzerland – Bern
Ukraine – Kiev

Oceania

Australia – Canberra
New Zealand – Wellington

Level 3 – 26 countries

Africa

Algeria – Algiers
Ghana – Accra
Morocco – Rabat
Nigeria – Abuja
South Africa 2 – Pretoria
(Pretoria is the executive capital)

Americas

Bolivia 1 – La Paz
(La Paz is the executive capital)
Ecuador – Quito
Jamaica – Kingston
Venezuela – Caracas

Asia

Afghanistan – Kabul
Indonesia – Jakarta
Iraq – Baghdad
Malaysia 1 – Kuala Lumpur
(Kuala Lumpur is the legislative capital)
Qatar – Doha
Saudi Arabia – Riyadh (pr. REE-yahd)
Sri Lanka 1 – Colombo
(Colombo is the executive capital)
Syria – Damascus
Taiwan – Taipei
United Arab Emirates – Abu Dhabi
Vietnam – Hanoi

Europe

Croatia – Zagreb
Cyprus – Nicosia
Iceland – Reykjavik (pr. RIKE-yah-vik)

Europe

Romania - Bucharest
Serbia – Belgrade
Slovakia - Bratislava

Level 4 – 28 countries

Africa

Democratic Republic of Congo – Kinshasa
Ethiopia – Addis Ababa
Libya – Tripoli
Mali – Bamako
Senegal – Dakar
Somalia – Mogadishu
Tunisia – Tunis
Zimbabwe – Harare (pr. hah-RAH-ray)

Americas

Dominican Republic – Santo Domingo
Costa Rica – San Jose
Nicaragua – Managua
Paraguay – Asuncion (pr. ah-sun-see-OAN)
Trinidad and Tobago – Port of Spain
Uruguay – Montevideo

Additional Notes and Tips

1. Consider using a map or globe while learning these capitals and countries. Knowing their location on a map is very helpful for gaining an understanding of world history and geography.
2. Certainly, other world capitals are referenced in clues and (more rarely) are answers to questions themselves. However, outside of Championship level geography competitions, these do not come up at a frequency where they should be a primary target for studying.
3. Remember that some countries do not have separately named cities as their capitals (e.g. Singapore, San Marino, Monaco), contain the name of their country in their capital (e.g. Kuwait City, Guatemala City) or are very similarly named (e.g. Andorra's capital is Andorra la Vella). These countries certainly may be referenced, but their capital names are not particularly useful clues so they are not listed above.
4. Many other countries' most famous or most populous cities are not referenced here. For example, Dar es Salaam is a larger and more famous city, and more frequently referenced than Dodoma for questions on Tanzania. So be sure not to neglect other cities in your preparation.
5. Note that certain countries have two separate capital cities and one country (South Africa) has three separate capitals. Some of these are listed above along with their function, but not all of them are important enough to warrant inclusion here.
6. Some countries are found on two continents (e.g. Russia and Turkey), but we have placed such countries in only one list here for sake of clarity.
7. Kosovo and Taiwan are not recognized as countries by many nations, but are de facto countries, and are often referred to as such in IAC questions.
8. Ivory Coast is often known by its official French name of Côte d'Ivoire (pr. coat div-WAH). Both names of the country, French and English, may be referenced in questions.
9. Sana'a is the official capital of Yemen, but it has been occupied by a rebel group since 2015 and since then, Aden has been the acting capital.