

GEOGRAPHY SKILLS

Understanding Latitude and Longitude

VOCABULARY

latitude degree prime meridian
longitude meridian grid
parallel

WHY THE SKILL MATTERS

You have been reading about the climates of the United States. As you know, places near the equator are warmer than places far from the equator. To locate places on Earth, geographers have drawn two sets of imaginary lines on maps and globes called **latitude** and **longitude**. Lines of latitude run east and west. Lines of longitude run north and south.

USING LATITUDE AND LONGITUDE

Lines of latitude measure distance north and south of the equator. Lines of latitude are also called **parallels**. *Parallel* means "always the same distance apart." Parallels never meet. Find the equator on the map below. The equator is labeled 0° latitude. The symbol ° stands for a degree. A degree is a unit of measurement.

Lines of latitude north of the equator are labeled **N**. Those south of the equator are labeled **S**. On the latitude map below, the lines of latitude running through the United States are 45°N and 30°N.

Longitude lines are also called **meridians**. They measure distance east and west of the **prime meridian**. The prime meridian is the line of longitude labeled 0° longitude. Any place east of the prime meridian is labeled **E**. Any place west of the prime meridian is labeled **W**.

