The Four Hemispheres

Key words: equator, prime meridian, North Pole, South Pole, hemisphere

Equator and Prime Meridian
Have you ever wondered why there are lines on maps and globes? Do you think you could see any of these lines on Earth? The answer is no. You can’t see any of these lines on Earth. They are imaginary lines. But these lines are very useful on maps and globes. One of the most important imaginary lines is called the **equator**. This line goes around the middle of the Earth. Find the equator on the world map.

Many places at the equator are very hot. The sun shines directly onto the equator for twelve hours every day, all year round.

The Earth has another important imaginary line. This line goes from north to south. It’s called the **prime meridian**. Find the prime meridian on the world map.

The Poles
Imagine a place that never gets warm. If you went there, you might shiver all the time. This is what it’s like at the Earth’s poles. The Earth has two poles. The **North Pole** is as far north as you can go on Earth. The **South Pole** is as far as you can go south. The poles are cold because they don’t get much direct sunlight.
Northern and Southern Hemispheres

If you were to slice the Earth along the equator, you would end up with two halves. Each half is called a hemisphere. “Hemi” means half. Everything south of the equator is in the Southern Hemisphere. Everything north of the equator is in the Northern Hemisphere.

Look at the maps above. The map on the left shows what the Northern Hemisphere looks like from the North Pole. The map on the right shows what the Southern Hemisphere looks like from the South Pole.

1. Is North America in the Northern Hemisphere or Southern Hemisphere?
2. Is Australia in the Northern Hemisphere or the Southern Hemisphere?
3. Is Africa in the Northern Hemisphere or Southern Hemisphere or both?
4. In which hemisphere is the Arctic Ocean located? What three oceans are located in both the Northern and Southern Hemispheres?
Eastern and Western Hemispheres
If you were to slice the Earth along the prime meridian you would end up with two halves, the Eastern Hemisphere and the Western Hemisphere. Everything east of the prime meridian is in the Eastern Hemisphere. Everything west of the prime meridian is in the Western Hemisphere.

Look at the maps above. The map on the left shows the Western Hemisphere. The map on the right shows the Eastern Hemisphere.

5. Which two continents are located only in the Western Hemisphere?
6. Is Asia located in the Eastern Hemisphere or the Western Hemisphere?
7. Which oceans are located in the Western Hemisphere?
8. Which oceans are located in the Eastern Hemisphere?
Every continent is in at least two hemispheres. For example, Asia is in the Northern Hemisphere and the Eastern Hemisphere.

**Skill Builder**

**Review**

1. Which three continents does the equator cross?
2. Which three continents does the prime meridian cross?
3. Is the Arctic Ocean in the Northern Hemisphere or Southern Hemisphere?
4. In which two hemispheres is Australia located?
5. In which two hemispheres is most of South America located?
6. Which continent is closer to the North Pole, Africa or Europe?
7. Which continent is closer to the South Pole, South America or Asia?

**Try It Yourself**

Pretend you’re planning to travel to the Northern and Eastern Hemispheres. Name four countries you would visit. Use the political world map on pages 66–67 to choose the countries. Trace a line with your finger to show your route.