

Social Science Activities for Families and Caregivers

What is social science?

In Oregon, social science is defined as the study of four main content domains:

- ⊙ Civics
- ⊙ Geography
- ⊙ Economics
- ⊙ History

The [Oregon Social Science Standards](#) were adopted by the State Board of Education in 2024 for implementation in 2026–2027. These new standards came directly from the voices of Oregonians through public input, community advocacy and legislation passed by the Oregon Legislature calling for a more complete and inclusive telling of history.

As parents and caregivers, you play an important role in your student's social science learning. Students learn about the world through conversations at home, experiences in our communities and family traditions. By encouraging discussions, asking questions and exploring history and current events together, families can help students make connections and understand how social science plays a role in everyday life.

Find ideas for activities to try with your student and questions to ask their teacher!

Grade K–3

Activities and Questions

Grade 4–5

Activities and Questions

Grade 6–12

Activities and Questions

K–3

Social Science Activities for Families and Caregivers

Here are some ideas for activities to try with your K–3 student:

Read and Explore Together

- ◉ Read with your student daily. Look for books featuring diverse cultures, historical events and community stories at your local library.
- ◉ Encourage your student to tell their own stories about their family, neighborhood or cultural traditions.

Connect to the World Around You

- ◉ Talk with your student about different countries, cultures and traditions, highlighting both similarities and unique contributions to society.
- ◉ Take a walk in your community and observe geographic features, local businesses and how people interact.
- ◉ Discuss with your student how different places and spaces shape our daily lives.
- ◉ Use a variety of maps and online navigation apps together. Find your neighborhood, plan a route or locate different places, landmarks and natural features.
- ◉ Discuss how geography and weather affect how people live and move in different places.

Explore Rules, Responsibilities and Civic Life

- ⦿ Discuss school rules and consequences. Ask questions: Why do we have school rules? How are they created? How are they enforced?
- ⦿ Discuss community rules and laws. Ask questions: What are some rules in our community? How do these rules help us? Do some rules change? How do they change? Who makes the rules in our town or city?
- ⦿ Discuss jobs and responsibilities. Ask questions: What are the most important jobs at school? In your classroom? In our community?
- ⦿ Show your student examples of civic participation. Point out voting signs, community meetings or activism in action.

Make Learning Interactive and Fun

- ⦿ When shopping, talk about where products come from. Ask questions: How does geography affect what is available in stores?
- ⦿ Discuss jobs and roles in the community. Ask questions: Who helps keep schools, hospitals and businesses running?
- ⦿ Play a past vs. present game. Ask questions: How have schools, neighborhoods, and family traditions changed over time? How do you think life was different when I was your age? What has changed? What has stayed the same?

Questions you can ask your K–3 student’s teacher:

Resources and Learning Materials

- ⦿ What books and authors would you recommend to support my student’s learning?
- ⦿ What multilingual or culturally diverse resources would you recommend that reflect my student’s identity and experiences?
- ⦿ What resources can help me teach my student about other cultures and places?

Classroom Learning

- ⦿ What social science topics is my student learning this year?
- ⦿ How can I help reinforce these topics at home?

Community Learning Opportunities

- ⦿ Which museums, cultural sites or historical landmarks could we visit?
- ⦿ Which online resources, virtual field trips or educational apps can supplement classroom learning?

4–5

Social Science Activities for Families and Caregivers

Here are some ideas for activities to try with your grade 4–5 student:

Encourage Reading and Exploration

- ◉ Read together daily and explore books about history, geography, government and cultures. Look for stories from diverse perspectives.
- ◉ Encourage your student to write their own history by creating a timeline of their family, school or community.

Explore the World Around You

- ◉ Use maps and online navigation apps to consider multiple perspectives when exploring your neighborhood, county and state. Find landmarks, natural resources and historical sites.
- ◉ Compare different places and cultures. Explore how people in other parts of the world live, work and celebrate.
- ◉ Visit local cultural events or historical sites to see history in action.
- ◉ Compare historical maps to today's maps. Discuss what has changed in Oregon and in the United States.

Discuss Civic Engagement and Everyday Economics

- ⦿ Talk about voting and decision-making. Ask questions: Why is voting important? How does it shape our community?
- ⦿ Explain wages, tipping and taxes. Discuss how wages, tipping and taxes impact workers and communities.
- ⦿ Discuss how laws and policies affect schools, jobs and the environment. Ask questions: Why do we have laws, rules and leaders? Who decides them? How do people work together to make change in a community?

Make Learning Interactive

- ⦿ Discuss what students are learning about history. Ask questions: What are you learning about Oregon history (4th grade) or United States history (5th grade)?
- ⦿ Help your student connect history to the present. Ask questions: How has Oregon (or the United States) changed over time?
- ⦿ Discuss how Tribal life in Oregon (4th grade) has changed over time. Ask questions: What traditions and histories are still present today? How has our town, state or country changed from the past to now?
- ⦿ When viewing the news or social media, encourage students to ask: What is the message? Who is the messenger? Is the source credible?
- ⦿ Encourage media and information literacy. Ask questions: What kinds of information do you see online? How can you tell if it is true or misleading? Why do different people see history differently?

Questions you can ask your student's grade 4–5 teacher:

Books and Learning Resources

- ⦿ What books, authors or digital tools can support my student's learning?
- ⦿ What resources include diverse histories and voices?

Classroom Learning and Support

- ⦿ What major themes or events will be covered in social science this year?
- ⦿ How can I help reinforce learning at home?

Community and Hands-on Learning

- ⦿ Which museums, cultural events or historical sites would help my student learn more about Oregon (4th grade) or United States (5th grade) history?
- ⦿ Which online resources, virtual field trips or educational apps can supplement classroom learning?

**Here are some ideas for activities to try with your
grade 6–12 student:**

Encourage Reading and Critical Thinking

- ⦿ Help your student find books, articles and documentaries on history, government, economics and cultures. Look for diverse voices and perspectives.
- ⦿ Discuss the importance of primary and secondary sources. Ask: Who writes history, and why does it matter who the author is?
- ⦿ Share and ask: What historical events are shaping the world today? How? How do different cultures and societies influence each other over time?

Explore Global and Local Connections

- ⦿ Talk about different countries and cultures, comparing how people live, govern and solve problems.
- ⦿ Connect current events to historical trends. Discuss how past events shape today's world.
- ⦿ Encourage your student to explore local history and geography. Talk about how historical events or cultural influences have shaped your community.

Engage in Discussions about Governments and Civics

- ⦿ Discuss what role governments play in people's daily lives. Involve your student in conversations about laws, policies and government decisions. Discuss how these decisions impact their daily lives.
- ⦿ Ask: How do people and communities create social change?
- ⦿ When making voting decisions, discuss candidates, policies and the role of civic engagement with your student.
- ⦿ Encourage empowering discussions about controversial issues. Discuss how to evaluate different perspectives and talk across differences.

Make Learning Interactive

- ⦿ Discuss how historical events compare to current events. Ask your student what patterns they notice.
- ⦿ Discuss how economies work, from personal finance to global trade, and how different systems impact people's lives.
- ⦿ Encourage media and information literacy and help your student analyze news and social media critically. When viewing news or social media, ask: What is the message? Who is the messenger? Is the source credible? How do different media outlets present the same issue? Why might they differ?

Questions you can ask your student's grade 6–12 teacher:

Resources and Learning Materials

- ⦿ What books, authors or digital resources can support my student's learning?
- ⦿ Are there multicultural perspectives incorporated into the curriculum?

Classroom Learning and Support

- ⦿ What major themes or issues will be covered in social science this year?
- ⦿ How can I help my student engage critically with what they are learning (e.g., question, analyze, take different perspectives)?

Community and Experiential Learning

- ⦿ Which museums, cultural events or historical sites would support my student's understanding?
- ⦿ What virtual field trips, online archives or other digital tools are available?