



Do You Know?

Focus In





Do You Know?



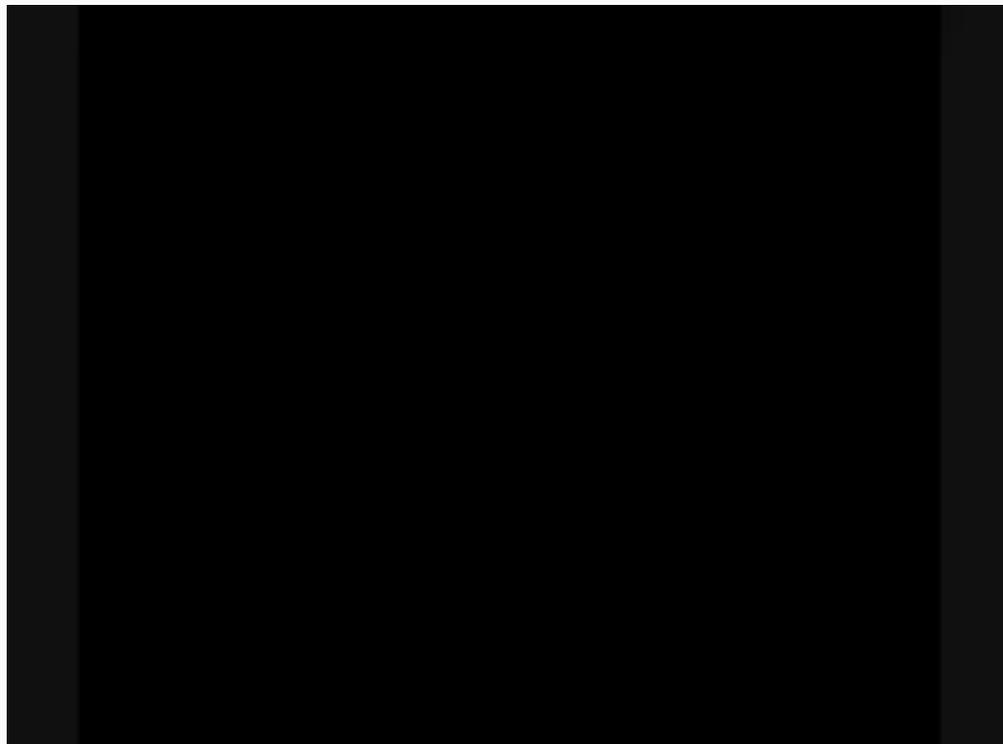
From the following video clip, can you tell the difference among British Isles, Great Britain, England, the United Kingdom, and British Commonwealth?





Do You Know?

 Back





Focus In



- Have a general idea of the geographical position of the UK
- Know the different names for the country and its components
- Know something about the topography of the UK
- Be familiar with the important rivers and lakes in the UK
- Know about the climatic pattern in the UK





What do you need to know about the UK?

Where is the UK located?

Four components

Highland and Lowland

Rivers and lakes

What is the weather like in the UK?





1. Names for Britain



A few names are often used for this country, and each has its specific geographical, political, historical or archaeological implications. (1) “The British Isles” is a geographical term that includes Great Britain, the whole of Ireland, and many offshore islands. (2) “Great Britain” or its shortened form “Britain”, is very often, but in the strict sense incorrectly, used as a synonym for the sovereign state properly known as the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland. It can be a geographical term referring to the island on which the greater parts of England, Wales and Scotland are situated, together with numerous smaller islands. It can also be a political term





1. Names for Britain



that describes the combination of England, Scotland, and Wales, the three nations which together include all the land on the island. (3) “England” is sometimes wrongly used in reference to the whole United Kingdom, the entire island of Great Britain (or simply Britain), or the British Isles. This is not only incorrect but can cause offence to people from other parts of the UK. The diverse history of England, Scotland and Wales has led to very different cultural traditions. The Scots and the Welsh have right to feel aggrieved whenever the term “English” is wrongly used to mean all three. When it is always correct to call people from England, Scotland, or Wales “British”, people from

England





1. Names for Britain



England may also properly be called “English”, people from Scotland “Scottish”, and people from Wales “Welsh”.



Map of the British Isles





2. The Commonwealth of Nations



The Commonwealth of Nations, normally referred to as the Commonwealth and formerly known as the British Commonwealth, is an organisation of fifty-four independent member states. All but two (Mozambique and Rwanda) of these countries were formerly part of the British Empire. The member states co-operate within a framework of common values and goals as outlined in the  [Singapore Declaration](#). These include the promotion of democracy, human rights, good governance, the rule of law, individual liberty, egalitarianism, free trade, multilateralism and world peace. The Commonwealth is not a political union, but an and





2. The Commonwealth of Nations



intergovernmental organisation through which countries with diverse social, political and economic backgrounds are regarded as equal in status.



Commonwealth flag





3. Union Flag



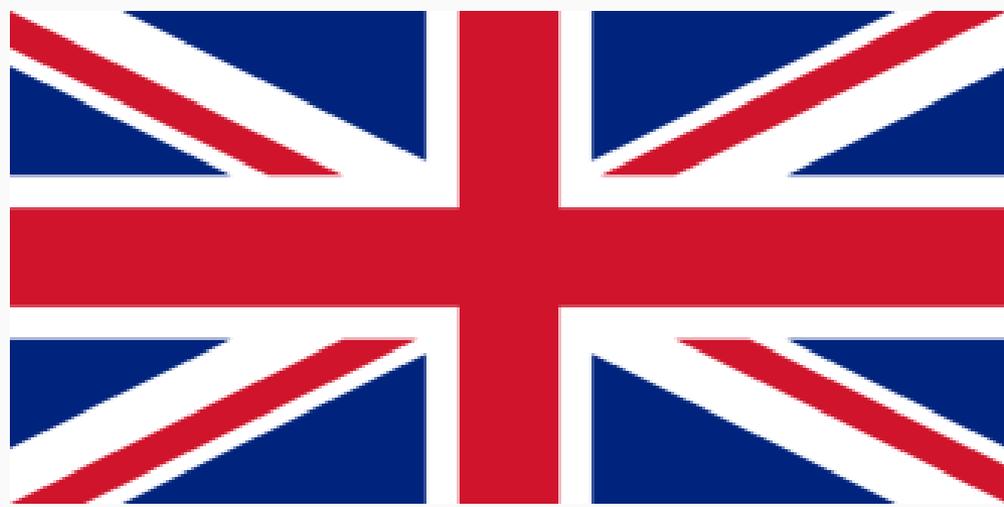
The United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland uses as its national flag the royal banner known as the Union Flag or, popularly, Union Jack. The current design of the Union Flag dates from the union of Ireland and Great Britain in 1801. It consists of the red cross of Saint George (patron saint of England), edged in white, superimposed on the Cross of St Patrick (patron saint of Ireland), which are superimposed on the Saltire of Saint Andrew (patron saint of Scotland). Wales, however, is not represented in the Union Flag by Wales' patron saint, Saint David.





3. Union Flag

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The UK flag





4. “God Save the Queen”



“God Save the King / Queen” is the national anthem of the United Kingdom. In general, only one or, on rare occasions, two verses are ever sung. The first verse reads, “God save our gracious Queen, / Long live our noble Queen, / God save the Queen! / Send her victorious, / Happy and glorious, / Long to reign over us: God save the Queen!”





Singapore Declaration



Have you heard of “Singapore Declaration”?

The Singapore Declaration of Commonwealth Principles was a declaration issued by the assembled Heads of Government of the Commonwealth of Nations, setting out the core political values that would form the main part of the Commonwealth’s membership criteria. The Declaration was issued in Singapore on 22 January 1971 at the conclusion of the first Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting (CHOGM). Along with the Harare Declaration, issued in 1991, it is considered one of the two most important documents to the Commonwealth’s uncodified constitution.





Where is the UK located?



The UK's geographical position is marked by latitude 50° N in Southern England and by latitude 60° across the Shetlands. The UK is bordered on the south by the English Channel, which separates it from the continent of Europe. It is bordered on the east by the North Sea separating it from Belgium and Holland, and bordered on the west by the Irish Sea and the Atlantic Ocean separating it from Ireland. Its only land border with another nation is between Northern Ireland and Ireland.





Where is the UK located? ← Prev | Back ↻



Political map of the British Isles





Four components



Politically, the UK is a union made up of four constituent countries: **England** (London), **Scotland** (Edinburgh), **Wales** (Cardiff) and **Northern Ireland** (Belfast), plus several overseas territories.



Map of the United Kingdom





England



England is the most well-known of the individual components that make up the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland. In the past, England ruled over many lands throughout the world that came to be known as the British Empire. England is the largest, most populous, and wealthiest division of the United Kingdom. This English dominance is such that many people use “England” to refer to the whole United Kingdom. London, the capital of the United Kingdom, is located in England.



Flag of England





Scotland



A land of rugged cliffs and heather-covered hills, Scotland is a place of wild natural beauty. The capital of Scotland is Edinburgh. Scotland is the second largest of the four nations both in area and population. Before Scotland formally joined the Union with England in 1707, it had been a unified state independent of the UK for a long time.



Flag of Scotland





Wales



Wales is the smallest among the three nations on the island of Great Britain. Wales has been dominated by England since its union with England in 1536. Though a part of the United Kingdom, Wales has retained a character of its own — the result of its Celtic culture and its rugged landscape. In the Welsh language, Wales is called Cymru. Much of Wales is still a land of picturesque mountains and valleys, but the existence of large coalfields in the south brings industry and urbanization. The capital and largest city is Cardiff.



Flag of Wales





Northern Ireland



The island of Ireland is divided politically into two parts. Northern Ireland occupies about one sixth of the island, in the northeastern corner. It is the smallest both in area and population among the four nations of the UK. It is a region of the United Kingdom, along with England, Scotland, and Wales. The republic of Ireland takes up the rest of the island. It has been a separate country since 1921. The capital of Northern Ireland is Belfast.



Flag of Northern Ireland





Northern Ireland



For about 400 years, the people of Northern Ireland have been divided into two main groups — the Roman Catholics and the Protestants. Since 1801, Ireland had been part of the United Kingdom. In 1921, the Irish Free State declared its independence, leaving only six northeastern counties inside the Union to be called Northern Ireland. Violent conflicts persisted between these two groups during most of the late 1900s. Under an accord in 1998, a semi-autonomous government was established in mid-2000 in this region.



Peaceful settlement of the Northern Ireland issue in 1998





Highland and Lowland



The traditional division of Great Britain is into two major natural regions — a **Highland** and a **Lowland** zone. They are divided by an imaginary line running through England from the River Exe on the southwest coast to the mouth of the River Tees on the northeast coast.



Map of UK Topography





The highland zone



The highland zone is an area of high hills and mountains in the north and west that are frequently broken by valleys and plains. Scotland, Wales and parts of England are located in this zone.



Ben Nevis

The highest point here as well as in Britain is Ben Nevis at 1,343 metres.

The Pennine Chain, “Backbone of England”, is a massive upland area extending north to south across England, starting on England’s border with Scotland and ending in the central England.





The lowland zone



The lowland zone in the south and east consists mostly of rolling plains.

Most of Britain's population lives densely in the lowland zone, which covers most of England. The metropolis of London and most of Britain's large cities are located in the lowland zone.





Rivers and lakes



The UK's longest river, the Severn, is 338 km in length, beginning in Wales and entering the Atlantic Ocean near Bristol in England.

The second largest but the most important river is the Thames, which flows through Oxford and London.



Thames in London





Rivers and lakes



Lough Neagh in Northern Ireland is the largest lake in the country.

 The Lake District comprises 15 major beautiful lakes and has become a popular tourist destination.



The Lake District





Lake Poets



Have you heard of the “Lake Poets”?

The Lake Poets are a group of English poets who all lived in the Lake District of England at the turn of the 19th century. As a group, they followed no single “school” of thought or literary practice then known, although their works were uniformly disparaged by the *Edinburgh Review*. They are considered part of the Romantic Movement. The three main figures of what has become known as the Lakes School are William Wordsworth, Samuel Taylor Coleridge, and Robert Southey. They are associated with several other poets and writers, including Dorothy Wordsworth, Charles Lloyd, Hartley Coleridge, John Wilson, and Thomas De Quincey.





What is the weather like in the UK?

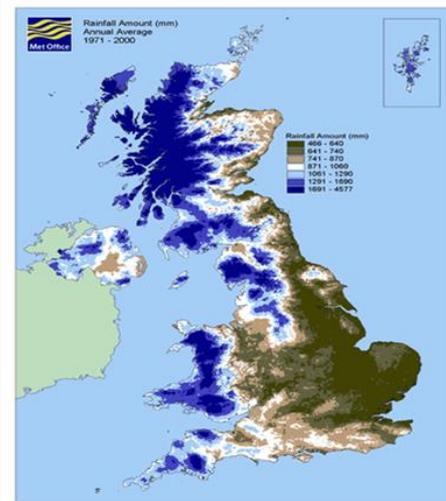


The overall climate in the UK is called temperate maritime. This means that it is mild with temperatures not much lower than 0°C in winter and not much higher than 32°C in summer. It also means that it is damp and is subject to frequent changes.

The changeability of weather makes the British more adaptable, and the frequent drizzles and gloomy skies make them tend to suffer



Seasonal Affective Disorder (SAD).



Rainfall distribution in the UK





SAD



Have you heard of “SAD”?

Seasonal Affective Disorder (SAD) is a mood disorder in which people who have normal mental health throughout most of the year, experience depressive symptoms in winter or, less frequently, in summer, spring or autumn, repeatedly, year after year.





True or False

Multiple Choice

Discussion





True or False



- (F) 1. The United Kingdom is located in northern Europe.
- (F) 2. The United Kingdom consists of four political divisions — England, Scotland, Wales and Ireland.
- (F) 3. England is one of the two large islands in the British Isles.
- (F) 4. The British Isles are made up of three large islands and hundreds of small ones.
- (F) 5. Wales lies on the east coast of the island of Great Britain.
- (F) 6. The Commonwealth of Nations is a free association of independent countries that all used to be colonies of Britain.





True or False



- (T) 7. In Scotland, rugged mountains, green valleys, and deep, blue lakes provide some of the most beautiful scenery in Europe.
- (F) 8. The longest river in Britain is the Thames.
- (F) 9. The largest lake in Britain is the Lough Neagh in northwest England.
- (T) 10. Britain's climate is influenced by the Gulf Stream, a warm ocean current that sweeps up from the equator and flows past the British Isles.





Multiple Choice



1. The British Isles are made up of _____.

-  A. three large islands and hundreds of small ones
- B. three large islands and dozens of small ones
- C. two large islands and hundreds of small ones
- D. two large islands and dozens of small ones





Multiple Choice



2. Which of the following is NOT a political division on the island of Great Britain?



- A. England.
- B. Scotland.
- C. Northern Ireland.
- D. Wales.





Multiple Choice



3. Britain is separated from the rest of Europe by the English Channel in the _____ and the North Sea in the east.



- A. east
- B. south
- C. west
- D. north





Multiple Choice



4. The Republic of Ireland was totally independent in the year _____.



A. 1920

B. 1945

C. 1918

D. 1949





Multiple Choice



5. The highest mountain in Britain, Ben Nevis, lies in

_____.



- A. the Highlands
- B. the Southern Uplands
- C. the Central Lowlands
- D. the Lake District





Multiple Choice



6. The British Empire was replaced by the British Commonwealth or the Commonwealth of Nations in _____.



A. 1921

B. 1931

C. 1945

D. 1950





Multiple Choice



7. The mountain system the Pennines is often called the backbone of _____.



- A. England
- B. Scotland
- C. Great Britain
- D. Ireland





Multiple Choice



8. The regional capital of Northern Ireland is _____.



A. Glasgow

B. Edinburgh

C. Cardiff

D. Belfast





Multiple Choice



9. Which of the following statements about the climate in Britain is NOT true?
- A. Britain's climate is of the maritime type.
 - B. Winters in Britain are extremely cold.
 - C. Summers in Britain are cool.
 - D. Britain is warmer than Harbin in winter.





Discussion



Discuss with your classmates the international influence which the UK exercises on today's world stage.



- British Empire and British Commonwealth
- World's first industrialised country
- A developed country
- A nuclear power
- A member state of the European Union
- A permanent member of the United Nations Security Council





Next



William Hague:

UK Must Extend Influence or Face Decline

1 July 2010

William Hague has said the UK must have more “global reach and influence” or face decline in a fast-changing world.

In his first major speech as foreign secretary, he said the UK must be much “more clear, focused and effective” in achieving foreign policy goals.

The UK must build its influence in Europe, he argued, with more British officials in senior posts in Brussels.





He also called for stronger links with new economic superpowers such as China, India and Brazil.

Speaking at the Foreign Office in London, Mr Hague said the UK's global influence had waned under 13 years of Labour rule and had not taken advantage of new opportunities and its unrivalled links with different parts of the world.

In his speech, Mr Hague stressed that the UK's relationship with the US remained the country's most important, describing the alliance as "unbreakable".





“Ad hoc and patchy”

But he said that the UK needed to look further afield, respond to changes in economic power around the world and develop strong relationship with emerging powers in Asia, the Middle East and Latin America.

“In recent years, Britain’s approach to building relationships with new and emerging powers has been ad hoc and patchy, giving rise to the frequent complaint from such governments that British ministers only get in touch when a crisis arises or a crucial vote is needed,” he said.





“This weakens our ability to forge agreement on difficult issues affecting the lives of millions around the world and overlooks the importance of consistency and personal relationships in the conduct of foreign policy.”

The foreign secretary said British diplomacy must be more pro-active and agile, promoting the national interest but one that was not “selfishly defined”.

“A distinctive British foreign policy that is active in Europe and across the world; that builds up British engagement in the parts of the globe where opportunities

as





as well as threats increasingly lie; that is at ease within a networked world and harnesses the full potential of our cultural links,” he said.

In doing so, the UK needed to be more aware of public perceptions about its role in the world, particularly in countries such as Pakistan in the frontline in the fight against terrorism, and use new forms of technology to communicate.

“We overlook international opinion at our peril,” he said. “We must try harder to get our message across.”





New initiatives could involve using new means of communication such as text message and Twitter, strengthening personal relationships with other countries' ministers, and exploiting the appeal of British culture.

“Playing politics”

On Europe, Mr Hague said it was “unsustainable fiction” that the last government had put the UK at the heart of Europe, saying it had mistaken “institutional change” for progress on developing better relationships with individual members.





The UK must work closer with groups of smaller states in areas of mutual interest as well as maintaining its central relationships with Germany and France.

He said UK representation in Brussels had declined, with 200 fewer British officials at **the European Commission** now than in 1997. Although it represented 12% of the EU population, the UK has just 1.8% of staff in entry-level positions at the commission, he noted.

“It is mystifying to us that the previous government failed to give due weight to the development of British influence in the EU,” he added.





“They neglected to ensure that sufficient numbers of bright British officials entered EU institutions, and so we are now facing a generation gap developing in the British presence in parts of the EU where early decisions take place ... As a new government, we are determined to put this right.”

Shadow foreign secretary **David Miliband** accused Mr Hague of “playing politics” with foreign policy, adding, “The idea of him lecturing the Labour Party about joined-up government, when the defence secretary and prime minister can’t go more than two days without disagreeing about our most important foreign policy objective, is risible.”





He went on, “The idea that he is going to bring a new dynamic to our relationship with China, when on my last visit as foreign secretary I secured a strategic dialogue without compare, is a non-starter.”

“And the idea that this coalition will bring renewed influence to the European Union, when the prime minister is not even in the room with the key decision-makers because of his political alliances, is just plain wrong.”

Former Liberal Democrat leader **Sir Menzies Campbell** said that in the post-colonial period, the UK had “withdrawn almost completely” from parts of the world.





“We have missed out and it is time to redress the balance,” he told the BBC’s *Daily Politics*.

But former Labour minister **Denis MacShane** told the same programme the UK must avoid being seen to “lecture” countries like India and Pakistan on the state of relations or “patronise them with aid”, instead focusing on trade and cultural links.





William Jefferson Hague: As a British Conservative politician, he served as Leader of the Conservative Party from June 1997 to September 2001 and is currently the British Foreign Secretary and First Secretary of State under David Cameron.





The European Commission: The executive body of the European Union, responsible for proposing legislation, implementing decisions, upholding the Union's treaties and the general day-to-day running of the Union.





Shadow (Cabinet): A senior group of opposition spokespeople in the Westminster system of government who together under the leadership of the Leader of the Opposition form an alternative cabinet to the government's, whose members shadow or mark each individual member of the government. Members of a shadow cabinet are often but not always appointed to a Cabinet post if and when their party gets into government. It is the Shadow Cabinet's responsibility to pass criticism on the current government and its respective legislation, as well as offering alternative policies.





David Miliband: A British Labour Party politician who has been the Member of Parliament (MP) for South Shields since 2001, and was the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs from 2007 to 2010.





Sir Menzies Campbell: The Member of Parliament (MP) for North East Fife, and the Leader of the Liberal Democrats from 2 March 2006 until 15 October 2007. He is currently the Chancellor of the University of St. Andrews.





Denis MacShane: A British Labour politician, who has been the Member of Parliament (MP) for Rotherham since the 1994 by-election, and served as the Minister of State for Europe from 2002 until 2005.

