Atlas Cards: how to play

2–6 players
ages 8 and up · 20 minutes

What's in the deck

54 countries from every inhabited continent. Each card shows the country's flag, its outline (not to scale), its capital and three numbers:

- **Population** (World Bank, 2025)
- **Land area** (World Bank, 2024)
- **Capital from the equator** (degrees, north or south)

Higher number wins, in every category. For the capital, the number is how far it lies from the equator, north or south: Reykjavík at 64.15° N beats Canberra at 35.29° S.

Get ready

1. Cut out the cards (and glue or print the backs on, if you like).
2. Shuffle and deal all the cards face down. Some players may get one more card than others.
3. Hold your cards in a pile, face down. Only ever look at your top card.

Play

1. The player to the dealer's left looks at their top card, chooses a category and reads out its value, for example "Land area, 357,000 square kilometres".
2. Everyone else reads out the same category from their own top card.
3. The highest number wins: that player takes everyone's top card and puts them, with their own, at the bottom of their pile.
4. The winner chooses the category for the next round.

A tie? All the top cards go into the middle. The same player chooses again, and the winner of the next round takes the middle cards too.

Out of cards? You are out. The last player holding cards wins. For a shorter game, stop after 15 minutes: the most cards wins.

Quiz game (2 or more players, or teams)

A quizmaster draws a card and covers the name and capital with a finger, showing only the flag and the outline. The first to name the country wins the card. Harder: show the outline only. Most cards after ten rounds wins.

Which is bigger? (classroom)

Hold up two cards and ask the class: "Which has more people?" or "Whose capital is further from the equator?" Pupils vote, then read the values aloud. Quito, Ecuador, is the capital nearest the equator in this deck.

Free to print for personal, classroom and library use. Please don't sell or republish the cards.

Teacher notes

What pupils practise

- **Reading and comparing large numbers:** place value up to the billions, and rounding ("about 1.4 billion").
- **Geography:** continents and regions, capitals, flags and country shapes.
- **Latitude:** degrees north and south of the equator, and why a city at 64° N has long summer days.
- **Ratios:** people per square kilometre (population ÷ land area) to see which country is most crowded.

Suggested lesson (30 minutes)

1. Pick two cards and ask which country has more people. Vote, then read the numbers.
2. Play the classic game in groups of three to five for 15 minutes.
3. Each group picks three cards and works out people per square kilometre for each, then orders them.
4. Pupils make their own card for a country not in the deck (blank cards are on the next page).

Questions to ask

- Which country is biggest by land area, and which by population? Are they the same?
- Which capital in your hand is furthest from the equator? Find it on a globe.
- Why might a big country have few people?

Where the numbers come from

Population: The World Bank, World Development Indicators, total population (SP.POP.TOTL), estimates for 2025. **Land area:** the World Bank's land area (AG.LND.TOTL.K2) for 2024, in square kilometres: the country's area without inland water such as big lakes and rivers. Both CC BY 4.0. **Capitals:** the coordinates are from Wikidata (CC0), checked against Natural Earth. For a country with more than one capital, the card names the one listed first in our data and says what kind of capital it is.

Flags are drawn in one 4:3 shape (from flag-icons, MIT), so some proportions differ from the official ones. **Outlines** are made with Natural Earth (public domain); each shows the country's main land, and the outlines are not drawn to the same scale.

Printing

Print at 100% ("Actual size") on thin card (160–200 g/m²) if you can. For backs, print the double-sided file and flip on the long edge, or print the backs page on the reverse of each card sheet. The cards work in black and white too: every number has its label.

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Atlas Cards · blank cards to make your own

REGION: ... Atlas Cards

Country

Flag | Outline

Capital:

Population
World Bank, 2025

Land area
World Bank, 2024

Capital from the equator
degrees, north or south

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