

## LESSON 1

# The Fifty States

As you will learn in this book, the United States began as a group of English colonies. When these colonies declared and won their independence from England, they became the first 13 states in the Union, or the United States. As more states joined the Union, the United States became larger. There are now 50 states in the Union, which means that there are 50 states in the United States.

The central government headquarters for the United States is in Washington, D.C., or the District of Columbia, located adjacent to Maryland and Virginia. The United States Capitol, the place where Congress meets, is located in Washington, D.C. The White House, the President's official home, is also located in Washington, D.C.

The United States is a large country on the continent of North America. Canada touches its northern border, and Mexico touches its southern border. The United States reaches from the Pacific Ocean on the West Coast to the Atlantic Ocean on the East Coast. There are 48 states that are joined together in the continental United States, and there are two other states that do not geographically border the other 48 states. Alaska is a very northern state that borders Canada, and Hawaii is a group of islands in the Pacific Ocean. Although disconnected from the rest of the country, Alaska and Hawaii are still states. Alaska and Hawaii were the 49th and 50th states of the Union.

Ten states border Canada: Alaska, Washington, Idaho, Montana, North Dakota, Minnesota, Wisconsin, Michigan, New York, Vermont, New Hampshire and Maine. Four states border Mexico: California, Arizona, New Mexico, and Texas.

The United States is very diverse. It has many different climates, geological formations, agricultural products, and natural resources. The United States has a great variety and abundance of vegetable and mineral products, excellent transportation systems, and one of the best organized governments in existence. Each state is unique.

The people of the United States are also very diverse. They work in many different types of industries and businesses and live in different kinds of homes and communities. Many people immigrated recently to



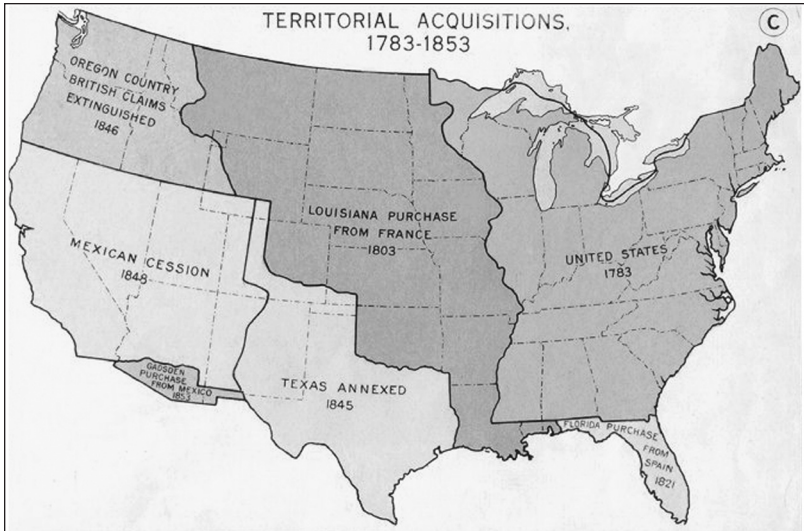
This map shows the current 50 United States.

the United States, while other people have ancestors who immigrated hundreds of years ago. Diversity is one of the finest attributes of the Union and its 50 states. Despite these distinctions, every citizen living in the United States is still entitled to the same rights and responsibilities.

## Fun Facts about the United States

**Number of States:** 50

**Order that States Entered the Union:** Delaware, Pennsylvania, New Jersey, Georgia, Connecticut, Massachusetts, Maryland, South Carolina, New Hampshire, Virginia, New York, North Carolina, Rhode Island, Vermont, Kentucky, Tennessee, Ohio, Louisiana, Indiana, Mississippi, Illinois, Alabama, Maine, Missouri, Arkansas, Michigan, Florida, Texas, Iowa, Wisconsin, California, Minnesota, Oregon, Kansas, West Virginia, Nevada, Nebraska, Colorado, North Dakota, South



The United States' acquisitions of territory in the 18th and 19th centuries made the country what it is today.

Dakota, Montana, Washington, Idaho, Wyoming, Utah, Oklahoma, New Mexico, Arizona, Alaska, and Hawaii.

**U.S. Territories:** In addition to the 50 states, the United States also has several territories, including Puerto Rico, the US Virgin Islands, American Samoa, the Northern Mariana Islands, and Guam.

### Key Territorial Acquisitions:

1783 Treaty of Paris  
U.S. agreement with Paris defined U.S. boundaries.

1803 The Louisiana Purchase  
The U.S. bought the Louisiana Territory from France.

1842 Webster-Ashburton Treaty  
Defined boundary between the U.S. and Canada.

- 1845 Annexation of Texas  
The U.S. annexed Texas, which became the 28th state.
- 1846 Oregon Treaty  
The U.S. gained control of the area of North America west of the Rockies to the Pacific Ocean from Britain.
- 1848 Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo  
Mexico gave the U.S. parts of what is now Texas, Colorado, Arizona, New Mexico, and Wyoming and all of California, Nevada, and Utah and recognized the Rio Grande as Texas' southern border.
- 1853 Gadsden Purchase  
The U.S. purchased the rest of what is now New Mexico and Arizona from Mexico to build the transcontinental railroad.
- 1867 Alaska Purchase  
The U.S. purchased Alaska from Russia.
- 1898 Annexation of Hawaii  
The U.S. annexed Hawaii.

**National capital**     Washington, D.C.

**Maximum elevation** Mt. McKinley, Alaska  
—20,320 feet above sea level

**Minimum elevation** Death Valley, California  
—230 feet below sea level

**Longest rivers in the United States**  
Mississippi River (2,340 miles) and the Missouri River (2,540 miles)

**Names of the Great Lakes**  
Huron, Ontario, Michigan, Erie, and Superior

**Natural wonders and attractions**  
Grand Canyon, Niagara Falls, Mammoth Cave, the Painted Desert, Glacier National Park, Yellowstone National Park, Yosemite Valley, Death Valley, Mt. Rainier

**Location of the Statue of Liberty**  
Liberty Island, New York Harbor

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## From the USCIS Questions

**Question:** Name one of the two longest rivers in the United States.

**Answer:** The Mississippi River or the Missouri River.

**Question:** What ocean is on the West Coast of the United States?

**Answer:** Pacific Ocean.

**Question:** What ocean is on the East Coast of the United States?

**Answer:** Atlantic Ocean.

**Question:** Name one U.S. territory.

**Answer:** Puerto Rico, American Samoa, U.S. Virgin Islands, Northern Mariana Islands, Guam.

**Question:** Name one state that borders Canada.

**Answer:** Alaska, Washington, Idaho, Montana, North Dakota, Minnesota, Wisconsin, Michigan, New York, Vermont, New Hampshire, or Maine.

**Question:** Name one state that borders Mexico.

**Answer:** California, Arizona, New Mexico, or Texas.

**Question:** What is the capital of the United States?\*

**Answer:** Washington, D.C.

**Question:** Where is the Statue of Liberty?\*

**Answer:** Liberty Island, New York Harbor.

**Question:** What territory did the United States buy from France in 1803?

**Answer:** The Louisiana Territory.

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## For Further Study

**Question:** What are the names of the Great Lakes?

**Answer:** Lakes Huron, Ontario, Michigan, Erie, and Superior.

**Question:** Name one of the natural wonders in the United States.

**Answer:** The Grand Canyon, Niagara Falls, Mammoth Cave, the Painted Desert, Glacier National Park, Yellowstone National Park, Yosemite Valley, Death Valley, or Mt. Rainier.