

by jok church

Dear Beakman,
Is there a place that
is as far east as you
can go – like the
North Pole is as far
north as you can go?

Hattie Haffey
Arlington, Virginia

Beakman or Jax
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Questions, name & address

A Field Trip

Talking about maps on a flat newspaper page is tough because to make a flat picture of a round thing like our planet, you need to stretch stuff. It gets all messed up. So, you'll need a globe. Since school is out, visit your library and spend some time with the globe there. If there isn't

a globe at your library, organize a bake sale to buy it one. Soon. Look at the globe from the top, bottom and sides and read the words next to the lines. The biggest reason there isn't an East Pole, or a West Pole, has to do with those lines and differences between latitude and longitude. Between what? Well, read on.

Dear Hattie,

The simple answer to your question is, no, there is no East Pole.

There are big differences between *north & south* and *east & west*. And it has to do with maps and how we figure out where we are on this planet.

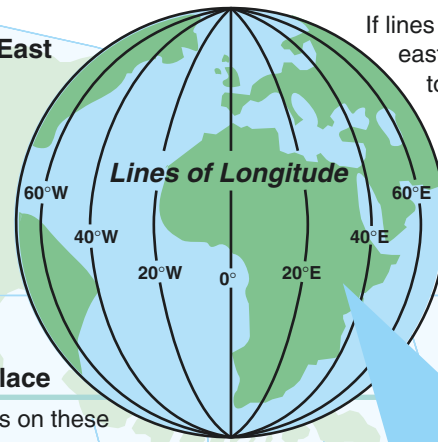
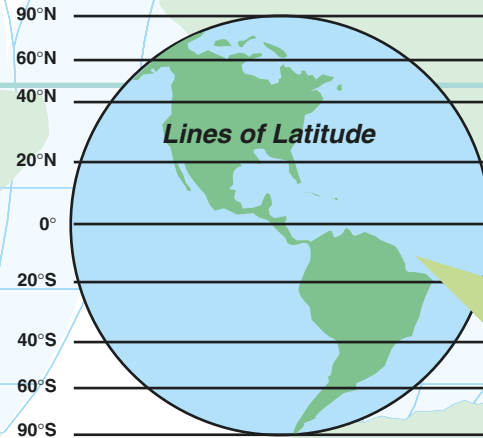
It's also good to remember that things like *north* or *east* were invented by people, and they exist only because we all agree on them.

Beakman

Beakman Place

We use the numbers on these lines to say where we are on the planet. Your city, Arlington, is at about 38°N 77°W.

Imaginary lines that run sideways, and *do not* touch each other, are called *latitude*, and are measured in degrees. Some lines of latitude have special names, like the *equator*, at 0° (zero degrees).



If lines that go from east to west did touch, we'd have an East Pole and a West Pole. But maps would be really hard to read, and we might all get lost.

Imaginary lines that run up and down *do* touch each other. That's the big difference I mentioned earlier. The places the lines touch are the North Pole and the South Pole. The lines are called *longitude*, and are measured in degrees. The measuring begins at the prime meridian (0°), which marks the location of an observatory in Greenwich, England.