



## Personal Geography Coach (PGC) Program

Hexco Academic – Updated June 21, 2019

Potential students to participate in our Personal Geography Coach (PGC) program include students aiming to reach the higher rungs of the **National Geographic Bee, North South Foundation, the GeoOlympiad, and other geography competitions**. Ideally, students will have studied beyond the basics of geography and are ready to address higher level skills. Our head coach, Jonathan Horton, has been working with students at these high levels for years and understands the workings of the National Geographic Bee and knows the best methods for learning facts and synthesizing knowledge in order to field questions with multiple embedded facts. Our goal is to teach serious geography students not just to work harder, but to work smarter as well, and our coach has compiled a wealth of materials to guide students in this endeavor.

### How the Program Works

**Step 1** is an assessment of your student's proficiency in geography. The assessment phase may take up to two weeks as tests are given and evaluated for learning style, basic skill level, and areas of expertise.

**Step 2** involves the study plan and coaching. Our coach will create challenging assignments tailored to the student's definitive strengths, weaknesses, and unique interests.

### Details and Examples of the Geo Coaching Study Plan

- The coach will provide some categories of information for the student to research, to compile onto flash cards or into a spreadsheet, and to memorize in preparation for the session. Examples of such categories to master for an assignment may include facts such as the two longest rivers in each Asian country, the largest industries in each Canadian province, European capitals ranked by GDP, terminology describing features of physical geography, and many other relevant types of information that are often used as clues within the official questions written for geography contests. We find that the act of actively researching, recording, and reviewing this information tends to lead to better long-term retention, and once the student has looked up and memorized these assigned facts, they will then be more capable of identifying these clues within the more complex questions that the coach will ask during the session.
- The coach will then provide a quizzing session for one hour via telephone (or Skype, if preferred) to review assignments and to provide detailed explanations about complex topics. For instance, if part of the student's assignment was to locate each country on a blank political map of Africa, they may receive a question about a current event that took place near the Malawi-Tanzania border, in which case they could arrive at the correct answer by recalling that Tanzania borders Malawi to the northeast. Questions are calibrated to the experience and learning style of the student, and strategies for approaching each question are discussed in a conversational manner.
- After each session, the coach will send an email to the student and parent evaluating the student's progress in order to identify and address problem areas. All communications with the student are conducted in a positive, encouraging manner. The coach is NEVER there to grade, only to teach, motivate, and help your student stay on task.
- The coach will then assign new material contingent upon the progress of the student.



**Step 3** will consist of your student compiling his/her own geo cards, notebook, or spreadsheet of information about each continent, state, and country of the world. Students will receive assignments requiring them to look up questions of a specific nature and are encouraged to create a collection of oddities that they may find along the way.

**Step 4** requires parental involvement. A parent, guardian, or primary tutor or teacher will be needed to quiz your student on the information found in their notes and flash cards on a regular basis to constantly refresh and review the voluminous bank of information expected of successful contestants. Share interesting news articles and trivia with them. Most importantly, encourage and support your student.

## Student Resources

### Required:

- Hexco's Geo eMentor and/or Geo/Tests in the following levels: Foundations, Intermediate, and Advanced
- Internet access for using various approved websites, such as PBS and BBC
- Computer with access to Google Sheets

### Recommended:

- Hexco's *CI&E Notes (Current Issues & Events Notes)*
- Subscription to MyGeoTrivia (approximately \$15 per year)
- Subscription to *Encyclopedia Britannica* (approximately \$50 per year)

## Distribution of Responsibilities

### Responsibility of the coach

- Provide a safe and encouraging learning environment and use positive reinforcement and motivation without grading a student
- Prepare assignments to be completed by a student which cover bite-sized, manageable segments of geography
- Prepare challenging questions to quiz students that are related to the segment of geography currently being studied
- Continually refresh and review students over previous information
- Keep student and parents apprised of student's progress after each session
- Teach the student techniques for fielding complex questions by separating the parts of a question, breaking the question down, using process of elimination, etc.

### Responsibility of the student

- Maintain a data collection on each major segment of geography being studied
- Spend at least 1-2 hours daily working to complete all assignments, including researching assigned topics and searching for additional facts to add to their data collection
- Connect with the coach in a timely manner when a session is scheduled



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### **Responsibility of the parent**

- Spend time quizzing students over the current focus of study and reviewing previous material
- Participate in scheduling sessions at mutually appropriate times
- Encourage the student to complete all assignments

### **About the Coach**

Our coach, Jonathan Horton, is exceptional and has been working with students at these high levels for several years in the spelling coach arena. He participated in the National Geographic Bee early on making him well-versed in the workings of the National Geographic Bee and understanding the best methods for learning facts and synthesizing knowledge. As the co-author of our Geo Foundations product, Jonathan is adept and laying the groundwork to help students field questions with multiple embedded facts.

Jonathan also participated in the National Spelling Bee in 2005, 2006 and 2007 achieving a nationwide placement of 22nd, 6th, and 8th place in each respective year. Since then, he has been coaching for Hexco for several years and has successfully coached several students to the upper echelons of the National Spelling Bee. He has obtained a Bachelor of Science from George Mason University as a double major in Applied Mathematics and Computer Science. He is currently working as a developer with a prominent company in Champaign, Illinois while coaching students for Hexco in his time off. His love and knowledge of words and their languages is deep. He enjoys working with his students by sharing his knowledge base and teaching them effective strategies that will help them build theirs.

### **Tuition**

- Assessment plus 8 sessions of quizzing via phone/Skype of 1 hour with a personal coach plus email follow-up and assignments \$1900. Sessions may be weekly or every other week.
- Assessment plus 16 sessions via phone/Skype of 1 hour each with a personal coach plus email follow-up and assignments \$3100
- Note that the 16-session version provides a significant discount. Before the third session of an 8-session program, a student may extend to the 16-session program by paying the \$1200 difference to take advantage of the discount. After 16 sessions, each student can extend their coaching for 8 sessions at a time at \$1550 as long as the student continues to participate in the program without a significant break.
- Payment in full is required at beginning of the session by personal check, Visa, MasterCard, American Express, Discover, or Paypal.



## Other Important Information

- We do make allowances for vacations, up to about 4 weeks at a time, and this is not considered a break in the continuation of the program.
- Most students start with 8 sessions and extend to 16 sessions before the third session. Some stop after 8 sessions, but most participants begin in the summer and remain in the program throughout the school year, and many stay in our coaching program for several years.
- PGC is conducted on a "first-come, first-serve" basis and placement in the program is dependent on our coaches' availability.
- We cannot guarantee increased placement within any bee. Ultimate placement, as you probably already know, is dependent on a variety of factors, including luck of the draw, level of study, willingness to study, student error, nervousness on stage, other competitors, etc.
- We do not offer unlimited, unscheduled, around-the-clock attention from a coach or Hexco Academic.
- Information provided to PGC students is for their use only, even when the program has been completed. All lesson plans, study lists, and guidance are provided solely for one student, and siblings may not use the lesson plans or lists.
- We ask for 24-hour advance notice in the event that a PGC student needs to reschedule or cancel an appointment. If a session is simply missed without notice, it cannot be made up without charge. Exceptions can be made in the case of a serious emergency on the student's or coach's part.
- For additional questions or more information on the background of our coaches, write **hexco@hexco.com** or call Hexco at **830-367-3825**.