



States and Capitals

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For my sixth birthday, my parents gave me a States and Capitals Puzzle. It didn't take more than a hundred times putting that puzzle together before every state and every capital was permanently embedded in my brain. Today, almost 70 years later, I still know every state capital and can name them all without ever missing even one. This small talent has won me more beers in bars than I can count.

For example, just imagine you and I sitting next to each other at the Mai Tai Bar located on the third floor of the Ala Moana Shopping Center. We are enjoying the scenery and knocking down a few cold ones. Then out of nowhere, someone at the bar wants to know the capital of Illinois? One loud mouth customer announces that everybody knows that the capital of Illinois is Chicago. Some of the other customers say, "yeah, that's got to be it." Finally, I decide it is time to set these people straight and issue a challenge. I tell them that the capital of Illinois is Springfield. Several people at the bar are on their cell phones trying to verify this fact. I then propose a little bet. I bet anybody at the bar a beer that they cannot write down all 50 states in 20 minutes. Four people take the challenge and I ask the bartender for 5 pieces of paper and 5 pens. We all write the numbers 1 through 50 on the paper before starting the timer.

I finish in 6 minutes and I not only write down all 50 states, I also write down all 50 capitals. My four friends at the bar were all struggling to think of the 50 states. At the 15-minute mark, one person says, "I'm done – you owe me a beer". I look at his list and see that he has two duplicate states. He could not figure out what two states he had missed. At the end of 20 minutes, I had four beers coming. Nobody got more than 48 of the 50 states.

It is harder than you might think. Try it sometime. Statistically, only 10% of the adult U.S. population can do it so the odds were greatly in my favor. Only 1% can write down all 50 states and capitals. So far I have not found anybody that can do it – besides me.

The following chart shows all of the Capitals by State:

U. S. STATES and CAPITALS – Study Chart				
Montgomery, Alabama	Honolulu, Hawaii	Boston, Massachusetts	Santa Fe, New Mexico	Pierre, South Dakota
Juneau, Alaska	Boise, Idaho	Lansing, Michigan	Albany, New York	Nashville, Tennessee
Phoenix, Arizona	Springfield, Illinois	Saint Paul, Minnesota	Raleigh, North Carolina	Austin, Texas
Little Rock, Arkansas	Indianapolis, Indiana	Jackson, Mississippi	Bismarck, North Dakota	Salt Lake City, Utah
Sacramento, California	Des Moines, Iowa	Jefferson City, Missouri	Columbus, Ohio	Montpelier, Vermont
Denver, Colorado	Topeka, Kansas	Helena, Montana	Oklahoma City, Oklahoma	Richmond, Virginia
Hartford, Connecticut	Frankfort, Kentucky	Lincoln, Nebraska	Salem, Oregon	Olympia, Washington
Dover, Delaware	Baton Rouge, Louisiana	Carson City, Nevada	Harrisburg, Pennsylvania	Charleston, West Virginia
Tallahassee, Florida	Augusta, Maine	Concord, New Hampshire	Providence, Rhode Island	Madison, Wisconsin
Atlanta, Georgia	Annapolis, Maryland	Trenton, New Jersey	Columbia, South Carolina	Cheyenne, Wyoming

Let's learn three interesting facts or statistics about each capital:

Alabama – Montgomery

- Located on the Alabama River in the Gulf Coastal Plain
- Population of 205,764 is the second-largest city after Birmingham
- Won several national awards including Best Historic City in the U.S.

Alaska – Juneau



Downtown Juneau, Alaska

- With a total area of 3,255 square miles, Juneau is the largest capital
- The population is only about 32,000 people
- There are no roads connecting the city to the rest of Alaska

Arizona – Phoenix

- Located in the Sonoran Desert - there are a lot of cactus and rattlesnakes
- Has a long very hot summer (107 days over 100°F) and a short mild winter
- Most populous state capital in the U.S. with about 1.6 million people



Saguaro Cactus



Diamond Back Rattlesnake

Arkansas - Little Rock

- The city derives its name from a rock formation along the Arkansas River
- Most populous city in Arkansas with a population of 195,000 people
- NBA players Derek Fisher and Joe Johnson were born in Little Rock

California – Sacramento

- Sutter's Fort - a massive adobe structure with walls 18' high and 3' thick is in Sacramento
- In 1848, gold was discovered by James W. Marshall at Sutter's Mill

- The Tower Bridge is a vertical lift bridge that crosses the Sacramento River



Colorado – Denver

- Denver's official elevation is exactly one mile (5,280 feet) above sea level
- Denver is the most populous city in the Mountain West with about 685,000 people
- Denver has about 115 clear days, 130 partly cloudy days and 120 cloudy days each year

Connecticut – Hartford

- It is nicknamed the "Insurance Capital of the World"
- The first Europeans to settle in the area were the Dutch in 1614
- The Connecticut River forms the boundary between Hartford and East Hartford

Delaware – Dover

- Dover is located on the St. Jones River in the Delaware River coastal plain
- Dover had a population of about 37,000 people – 48% white and 42% black
- Dover was founded in 1683 by William Penn

Florida – Tallahassee

- Tallahassee is home to Florida State University
- The name "Tallahassee" is a Muskogean Indian word translated as "old town"
- Location where General Andrew Jackson fought the Seminole Indian Wars

Georgia – Atlanta

- Most populous city in Georgia with a population of 465,000 people
- The Atlanta Braves won the World Series in 1995, and had 14 straight divisional championships from 1991 to 2005
- Global headquarters of The Coca-Cola Company, The Home Depot, Delta Air Lines, AT&T Mobility, and UPS

Hawaii – Honolulu

- Honolulu is the most remote city of its size in the world and is both the westernmost and the southernmost major U.S. city
- In 1794, Captain William Brown of Great Britain was the first foreigner to sail into Honolulu Harbor



- Race and ethnicity: 55% Asian, 18% White, 2% Black and 8% Native Hawaiian

Idaho – Boise

- The population of Boise is about 215,000 people
- Boise is located near the Boise River and the Oregon Trail
- Home to the Boise State Broncos football team

Illinois – Springfield

- Springfield is known as the "Birthplace of Route 66" – Chicago to LA
- The population of Springfield is about 168,000 – 89% white and 4% black
- There are 92 parks in the city of Springfield, including the Botanical Garden

Indiana – Indianapolis

- The city's nickname is the "Crossroads of America"
- Home of the largest single-day sporting event in the world, the Indianapolis 500 automobile race
- The largest city in Indiana with about 855,000 people – 13% of the entire state

Iowa - Des Moines

- Named after the Des Moines River – Population is about 205,000 people
- The capital of Iowa is home to the first caucuses of the presidential primaries
- The juncture of the Des Moines and Raccoon rivers has attracted humans for at least 7,000 years. Several prehistoric occupation areas have been identified in downtown Des Moines by archaeologists

Kansas – Topeka

- The name Topeka is a Kansa-Osage Indian sentence that means "a good place to dig potatoes"
- In the early 1850s, traffic along the Oregon Trail was supplemented by trade on a new military road stretching from Fort Leavenworth through Topeka to the newly established Fort Riley
- Topeka population is about 130,000 – 76% white, 11% black, and 2% Indians

Kentucky – Frankfort

- Frankfort has a population of 26,000 and is located along the Kentucky River
- The town of Frankfort got its name from an event that took place in 1780. American Indians attacked a group of pioneers who were making salt at a ford in the river. Pioneer Stephen Frank was killed, and the settlers called the crossing "Frank's Ford." This name was later put together resulting in Frankfort.
- Frankfort is located in the (inner) Bluegrass region of Central Kentucky

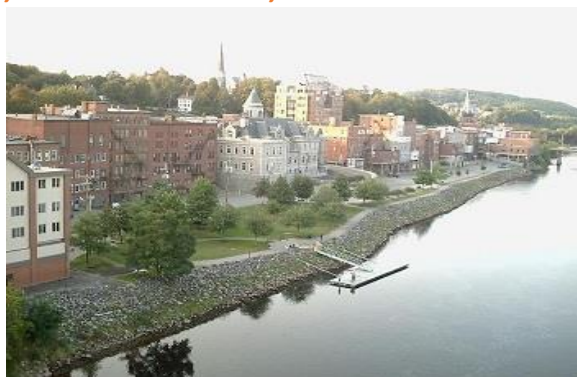
Louisiana - Baton Rouge

- French explorer Pierre Le Moyne named Baton Rouge for the "red stick" along a Mississippi River bluff.
- It is the second-largest city (population 230,000) after New Orleans
- Baton Rouge is the furthest inland port on the Mississippi River that can accommodate ocean-going tankers and cargo carriers

Maine – Augusta

- Augusta is the easternmost state capital in the United States
- Augusta has a population of about 20,000 – 94% white, 1% black and 2% Asian

- Augusta is located on the Kennebec River



Maryland – Annapolis

- Home to the United States Naval Academy that was founded in 1845
- Annapolis is the closest state capital to Washington DC – it is 30 miles away
- Annapolis has a population of about 40,000 and is situated on the Chesapeake Bay at the mouth of the Severn River

Massachusetts – Boston

- With an estimated population of 668,000, it is the largest city in New England
- One of the oldest cities in the United States, Boston was founded on the Shawmut Peninsula in 1630 by Puritan settlers from England
- The area's many colleges and universities make Boston an international center of higher education



Sailboats on the Charles River overlook the Boston skyline

Michigan – Lansing

- The city's population is about 116,000 – 61% white, 24% black and 4% Asian
- Climate is influenced by the Great Lakes - Winters are cold with moderate to heavy snowfall, while summers are very warm and humid
- The Lansing area is home to two medical schools, one veterinary school, two nursing schools, two law schools—including Western Michigan University and Michigan State University

Minnesota - St. Paul

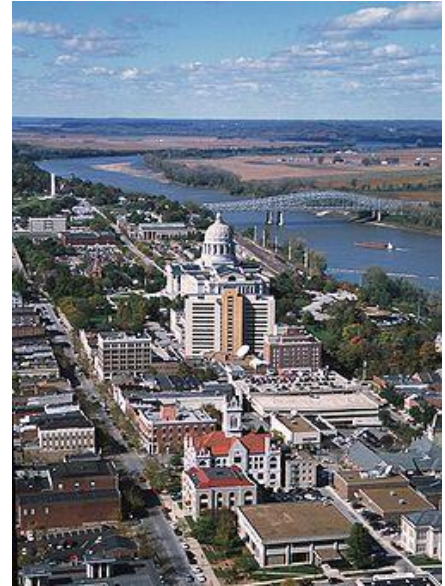
- The city lies on the east bank of the Mississippi River in the area surrounding its point of confluence with the Minnesota River, and adjoins Minneapolis
- The earliest known inhabitants from about 400 A.D. were members of the Hopewell Tradition Indian Tribe who buried their dead in mounds (now Indian Mounds Park) on the bluffs above the river
- St. Paul is made up mostly with people of European ancestry - 26% German, 14% Irish, 8% Norwegian, 7% Swedish, and 6% English

Mississippi – Jackson

- Jackson sits on the Pearl River which drains into the Gulf of Mexico
- The city is named after General Andrew Jackson
- The region that is now the city of Jackson was historically part of the large territory occupied by the Choctaw Indian Nation

Missouri - Jefferson City

- Jefferson City is located on the northern edge of the Ozark Plateau on the south side of the Missouri River
- In 2013, Jefferson City was named America's "Most Beautiful Small Town" by Rand McNally
- The population is about 44,000 people - 78% white and 17% black



Montana – Helena

- The population of Helena is about 29,000 people – 94% white
- Helena has been the capital of Montana Territory since 1875 and the state of Montana since 1889
- Being located near the mountains, Helena is a great place for outdoor recreation, including hunting and fishing

Nebraska – Lincoln

- Lincoln's population in 2015 was estimated at 278,000
- The city is the home of the University of Nebraska (25,000 students) and the Nebraska Cornhuskers football team
- The city is located near Salt Creek on flat saline wetlands

Nevada - Carson City

- Carson City is located about 30 miles south of Reno and developed into a city after the Comstock Lode silver strike in the mountains nearby
- The population is about 57,000 people – 91% white
- The city limits today extend west across the Sierra Nevada to the California state line in the middle of Lake Tahoe

New Hampshire – Concord

- Estimated median annual income for a household in the city was \$52,695
- Concord population is about 43,000 people – 92% white
- The highest point in Concord is 860 feet above sea level on Oak Hill

New Jersey – Trenton

- The settlement that would become Trenton was established by Quakers in 1679
- It is located on the Delaware River



Downtown Trenton – Looking across the Delaware River

- Trenton population is about 85,000 people – 52% black and 27% white

New Mexico - Santa Fe

- The city of Santa Fe, founded by Spanish colonists in 1610, is known as the oldest state capital city in the United States and the oldest city in New Mexico
- Santa Fe is located at 7,199 feet above sea level, making it the highest state capital in the United States
- Santa Fe (meaning "holy faith" in Spanish) has a population of about 70,000

New York – Albany

- Albany is roughly 150 miles north of New York City – Population is 100,000 people
- The city was developed on the west bank of the Hudson River
- Albany is the oldest surviving European settlement from the original thirteen colonies

North Carolina – Raleigh

- Raleigh is an early example of a planned city and was chosen as the state capital in 1788
- The city's population is about 452,000 and is one of the fastest-growing cities in the country
- Raleigh is known as the "City of Oaks" for its many oak trees

North Dakota – Bismarck

- Bismarck is on the east bank of the Missouri River
- The city's population is about 62,000 and is 93% white
- Before the white settlers come, Bismarck was inhabited by the Mandan Indians

Ohio – Columbus



- Columbus is the largest city in Ohio with about 850,000 people
- Named for explorer Christopher Columbus - the city was founded in 1812
- Located at the junction of the Scioto and Olentangy rivers

Oklahoma - Oklahoma City

- OKC is in the center of what is colloquially referred to as Tornado Alley and is prone to especially frequent and severe tornadoes
- OKC population is 632,000 – 63% white, 15% black, 14% Mexican and 4% Indian
- OKC features one of the largest livestock markets in the world

Oregon – Salem

- Salem is nicknamed the "Cherry City" because of the importance of the local cherry-growing industry
- Salem get about 40 inches of rain per year
- Salem is located next to the Willamette River – Population is 160,000 people

Pennsylvania – Harrisburg

- Harrisburg is located on the east bank of the Susquehanna River
- It was a population of about 50,000 people – The largest ethnic group in the city is German with 15%
- During the Civil War, it was the primary training center for the Union Army

Rhode Island – Providence

- Providence is one of the oldest cities in the United States – population is about 180,000 people
- Providence was first settled in June 1636 by Roger Williams - They were greeted by the Narragansett Indian Tribe
- Providence is geographically very compact, characteristic of eastern seaboard cities that developed prior to use of the automobile

South Carolina – Columbia

- **Largest city in South Carolina with a population of 135,000 people**
- **Columbia is near the geographic center of South Carolina where the Saluda River and the Broad River merge to form the Congaree River**
- **The Southern Baptist Church has 241 congregations and 115,000 members in the Columbia area**

South Dakota – Pierre

- **There are about 14,000 people in Pierre – 85% white and 11% Native American**
- **Pierre was founded in 1880 across the Missouri River from Fort Pierre**
- **Lake Oahe is located near Pierre and is one of the largest manmade lakes in the world and a very popular fishing destination**

Tennessee – Nashville

- **Nashville is the second largest city in Tennessee (behind Memphis) with 660,000 people – 61% white and 28% black**
- **Nashville is the center of the country music industry, earning it the nickname "Music City U.S.A."**
- **Nashville has several professional sports teams including the Predators of the NHL, the Tennessee Titans of the NFL, and Nashville Sounds of the Pacific Coast Baseball League**

Texas – Austin



Downtown Austin – View from across Lady Bird Lake (on the Colorado River)

- **Austin had a population of 932,000 and is one of the fastest growing big cities**
- **Austin is a major center for high tech - thousands of graduates each year come from the engineering and computer science programs at the University of Texas**
- **Austin's live music scene in the downtown entertainment district hosts the most alcohol-serving establishments (bars) in the U.S.**

Utah - Salt Lake City

- **Headquarters of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (LDS Church) and Temple Square, Salt Lake City is historically considered a holy city by members of the church - Brigham Young called it the "Kingdom of Heaven on Earth"**



Mormon Temple



Downtown looking toward the mountains

- **The Days of '47' provides an extra summer holiday for the people of Utah - It is celebrated in much the same way as the 4th of July with picnics, parades, rodeos, concerts and fireworks**
- **Salt Lake City ski resorts (Alta, Brighton, Snowbird, and Solitude) are all located in beautiful, steep canyons with spectacular views of the Salt Lake Valley, each just minutes from downtown Salt Lake City**

Vermont – Montpelier

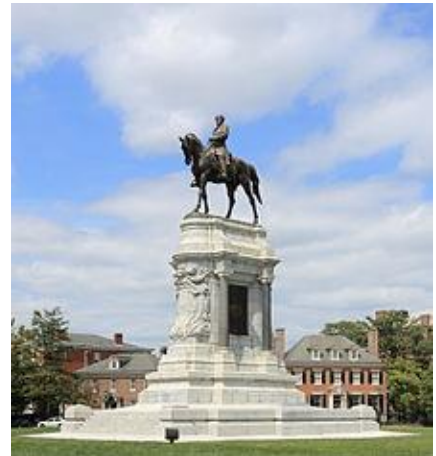
- **Montpelier is the least populated state capital in the United States with a population of about 8,000 people – 94% white**
- **General Parley Davis started the first settlement 1787 and named the town after the French city of Montpellier**
- **The Winooski River flows west along the south edge of the downtown village**



The Winooski River in Montpelier

Virginia – Richmond

- Richmond is located next to the James River and has a population of 221,000
- In 1775, Patrick Henry delivered his famous "Give me Liberty or Give me Death" speech in St. John's Church in Richmond
- As the former Capital of the Confederate States of America, Richmond is home to many museums and battlefields of the American Civil War



Confederate Army General
Robert E. Lee

Washington – Olympia

- Olympia is a major cultural center of the Puget Sound region and is located 60 miles southwest of Seattle
- Population is about 48,000 people – 84% white and 6% Native American
- Home to Lushootseed-speaking peoples for thousands of years, including Squaxin, Nisqually, Puyallup, Chehalis, Suquamish, and Duwamish

West Virginia – Charleston

- Charleston is the largest city in West Virginia and is located at the confluence of the Elk and Kanawha Rivers
- The population is about 52,000 people – 78% white and 16% black
- The production of coal is central to the economic prosperity in the city and the surrounding area



Wisconsin – Madison

- The population of 250,000 make Madison the second largest city in Wisconsin - after Milwaukee
- The city has a total area of 94 square miles, of which, 77 square miles is land and 17 square miles is water
- Madison is called the City of Four Lakes, comprising the four successive lakes of the Lake Mendota ("Fourth Lake"), Lake Monona ("Third Lake"), Lake Waubesa ("Second Lake") and Lake Kegonsa ("First Lake")



Downtown Madison Skyline

Wyoming – Cheyenne

- Most populous city of the state of Wyoming with 63,000 people
- It was named for the American Indian Cheyenne nation
- Ranching and cowboys are a big part of life in Cheyenne and the State of Wyoming



So, did you write down all 50 states? I doubt it. But if you stayed with me this far, I'm going to show you the secret to remembering all 50 states. Yes, I use this system so I don't miss any states. If you don't do it on a regular basis it is easy to mess up and miss a state – especially when you are in a hurry. Take a look at the U.S. Map below.



I have sectioned it off in the following matter:

- 13 western states
- 13 middle America states
- 12 southeastern states
- 6 northeast states
- 6 New England states

1. Always start in the west and don't go any further until you have all 13 states. These are the easy ones and it should only take a couple of minutes.
2. Next, go to middle America and don't go any further until you have all 13 of these states. You must remember that Illinois, Arkansas, and Louisiana are mid America states.

3. Now do the 12 southeast states. Remember that Delaware and Maryland are south of the line. So is West Virginia – the others should be easy.
4. Let's do the 6 northeast states next. The only hard one there is New Jersey.
5. Most of us know that there are 6 New England states. They should be easy but they are usually the hardest ones for many people to remember.

Practice using this system a few times and you will get good at writing down all 50 states in about 10 minutes. You might even win a couple of beers.

Writing down the corresponding state capitals is not so easy. You must know them by heart. I suggest you get a States and Capitals Puzzle and put it together 100 times.

bigdrifter44@gmail.com