

Speaking Card 23 – Basic Facts about the USA

● Where is the United States?

The United States / US is a country in North America. It has 50 states plus the District of Columbia, where you can find the capital, Washington, D.C. Two states, Alaska and Hawaii, are not next to / connected to the rest of the country. Hawaii is an island in the Pacific Ocean and Alaska is in the north between Canada and Russia. The people who live in the US are called Americans and they speak English. The currency is the American dollar. The American flag has thirteen red-and-white stripes and 50 stars which represent / stand for the 50 American states.

● What does the countryside look like?

In the US, you can find many national parks and different landscapes / climates. There are mountains / deserts / forests / redwood forests / rivers / lakes / swamps / beaches. Some of the most famous places are the Grand Canyon / the Rocky Mountains / the Mississippi River and national parks like Yosemite / Yellowstone. The highest mountain in the US is Mount McKinley (6,194 m) in Alaska.

● What is the capital of the United States?

The capital city is Washington, D.C. on the east coast of the United States. Here you'll find the three branches / parts of the US government. The US President lives and works at the White House. Congress / the Senate / the House of Representatives are at the Capitol Building.

● What are some other famous cities?

New York City has the most people and it is the center (AmE) / centre (BrE) of business, arts and fashion on the East Coast. The biggest city on the West Coast is Los Angeles, famous for Hollywood films and actors. Other big cities include Boston / Miami / Chicago / Atlanta / San Francisco / Seattle / Las Vegas / Houston / Philadelphia.

● What are the cities like?

American cities are very big / large. There are a lot of people living there and the buildings are tall. Many cities have skyscrapers. A few cities have public transportation (AmE) / transport (BrE), like subways

(AmE) or underground systems (BrE), buses / street cars (AmE) or trams (BrE). There are also a lot of cars. Most people drive a lot because their home and their office / school / supermarket / families / friends are far away from each other.

● What are the different regions like?

The Northeast is very historical. There are many old buildings / universities there, like Harvard, Yale or Princeton. When people say "The South", they really mean the southeast. There are a lot of farms there / they get a lot of hurricanes. The people are often more conservative / religious than on the coasts. The Midwest is really in the center and east of the country. There are a lot of corn (AmE) / maize (BrE) farms and many people are religious there. The Southwest has deserts, mountains, and beaches. There are often earthquakes / fires there. The Pacific Northwest is very green with lots of forests / lakes / rivers / mountains.

● What are American schools like?

Children start school when they are five years old. They go to elementary (AmE) / grade (AmE) / primary school (BrE) from kindergarten to the fifth grade (AmE) / class (BrE). Sixth through eighth grade is called middle school (AmE) / junior high (AmE). There are four years in high school, where all students study subjects like English, math (AmE) / maths (BrE), history, science and languages. School lasts the whole day / students don't go home between classes.

● What do students do in their free time?

Many students do extra-curricular activities. Sports are very popular and many students play soccer (AmE) / football (BrE) / (American) football / basketball / baseball / volleyball / track and field (AmE) / athletics (BrE) / lacrosse for a school team. Most schools also have drama clubs / math clubs / chess clubs / media clubs / book clubs / debate (AmE) / debating (BrE) teams and groups like the student council / government or the school newspaper / yearbook. Students who are over 16 years old can also get a part-time job. Common jobs include working at a fast food restaurant / clothing store / a supermarket / an animal shelter / delivering pizza / babysitting.



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