

EXPLANATION OF THE “FRIENDS FROM...” MAPS

Bryce Hedstrom

I use these maps almost daily to quickly get students into pairs so they can review information or retell a story, but the biggest benefit may be the physical movement and the social interaction involved in this activity.

The "Friends from..." Study Buddy map activities are target language-oriented geographical versions of the "clock buddy" or "learning partner" pairing technique that uses maps of the world instead of clocks. It is a way to pair up students quickly and to acquire geography concepts at the same time. Elementary school teachers tend to use these more than middle and high school teachers, but I like using them with older students, and even adult students. Who says only elementary school kids need to get up and move?

Here is how to set it up:

- Each student has a map. They write their own name at the top to keep track of it.*
- All students stand up and find someone for each labeled country to be their "study buddy".*
- When they find someone that also has a blank space for a country, they trade maps. Each student will write his/her name on the other person's paper in that space and then hand the map back to the owner. No duplicate names on a map. That way each student has only one other person to work with when the teacher later calls out a country.*

Of course, students will tend to go to their friends first, and that is OK--it gives them a certain amount of control and more buy-in for the activity. But it is almost impossible to fill up an entire map with only one's friends and soon enough they have to venture beyond their comfort zone and ask other students with blanks to be their "buddy".

Tell the students to sit down once their map is complete and full of names so it is easier for those that still have blanks to identify one another.

Towards the end of this initial partner finding time, not every student will have found a partner for every country. Some students will have blanks on their maps. That is OK because they can be partners with someone whose "study buddy" is absent on another day. It works out. Students keep the maps for three weeks or until the teacher decides to issue a new map.

Here is how it is used daily in class:

Once everyone has their maps mostly filled with names, the teacher will describe a task the students are to do with a partner such as re-telling a story, acting out a story, or coming up with a story or review. It is a good way to get them up and out of their seats as a brain/body break. I also like it because they also passively learn/review the Spanish speaking countries in Latin America while they are focusing on another activity.

Say in the target language: "Take out your maps of South America, please. I want everyone to look for your friend from Venezuela. Look for your friend from Venezuela. ("Saquen los mapas de Sudamérica, por favor. Quiero que todos busquen a sus amigos de Venezuela. Busca a tu amigo de Venezuela".)

All of the students will get out their maps and pair up with their "Venezuela buddy" and go do the assigned task with that person. Just rotate around the map with a different country each time it is used. Students will pick up and/or review the countries as this activity is used.

It is a good brain break from teacher talk and it is a fun way to get the students up and moving once a class period or so. I use it mainly to review information or stories, but the uses are limited only by your imagination.

Let me know how it works for you and how you change it to better fit your needs and the needs of your students. We all get better when we share!