

Which north is north?

Latitude and longitude lines are measured from “true north,” the North Pole, but compasses point to “magnetic north,” a point in the Arctic that shifts based on changes in the Earth’s magnetic field. That means there is a difference between “north” on a nautical chart and “north” on your compass. The difference is called **magnetic declination**, and it differs from place to place. Nautical charts include a local declination value that helps sailors account for this difference as they plot a course. Without it, they could end up miles off course!

