

## INTRODUCTION

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Toponymy is the science that studies geographical names or toponyms (see [Ormeling, 1989](#)). As all other names, toponyms belong to languages. Names in general are only rarely randomly chosen, and this is especially true in the case of geographical names. Whether they carry a physical meaning like Mont Blanc ('White Mountain'), or they were coined to honor someone (Washington, District of Columbia), to commemorate some historic event or to make clear to whom the named object belonged (Paris, from Latin 'Lutetia Parisiorum' = 'Lutetia of the [Gallic tribe named the] Parisians'), in all cases they once used the vocabulary and followed the grammatical and orthographic rules of a certain language.

Languages are the subject of the science called linguistics. Therefore, anyone handling geographical names needs to have some basic linguistic knowledge, both in general terms and specifically pertaining to the language situation of the area of survey. In the following these basics are described.

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