

## An Introduction to Geocaching

### *What is Geocaching?*

Geocaching is essentially a giant treasure hunt – with GPS devices! Players use the geocaching website and/or app to locate geocaches near them then follow clues and their GPS/smartphone to a certain set of coordinates where they hunt for a geocache that another player has hidden at that location.

### *How Do You Start?*

1. Go to [www.geocaching.com](http://www.geocaching.com) and register for a [free basic membership](#). If you'll be using a smartphone to geocache, you'll also want to buy the [app](#) for your smartphone (there is a free version).
2. Visit the [“Hide & Seek a Cache”](#) page (under the “Play” tab). Enter your zip code or address then click “search.” (The app does this automatically by calculating geocaches closest to you.)
3. Choose any geocache from the list and click on its name. You'll be directed to a Details page, which includes information such as the coordinates where the geocache is hidden, the difficulty and size of the geocache, notes from other players who have found it, and more.
4. Enter the coordinates into your GPS device (see [GPS reviews](#) if you plan to purchase a device) or use the map and compass to navigate on your smartphone. When you get close, you'll want to start looking around. Check under trees, under the bases of lampposts, under cement parking bumpers, on outdoor seating at restaurants, near dumpsters outside businesses, etc.
5. Once you find the geocache, sign the logbook, leave a treasure if you take a treasure (*never* leave food) and return the geocache to its original location. Be sure to log your find on the website too.

You can also visit [Geocaching 101](#), which covers more of the basics and even has how-to videos!

### *What Does a Geocache Look Like?*

- Geocache containers come in a variety of sizes and shapes, from Nano caches the size of a button to Large caches the size of a suitcase or larger. See [examples](#). Unusual geocache containers also include fake rocks (like those used to hide keys), hollowed stumps, etc.
- There are also many different types of geocaches, from traditional caches to multicaches to virtual caches and more. Find out more about [different types](#) of geocaches.

### *What Can You Find Inside a Geocache?*

- In addition to inexpensive treasures like plastic toys, stickers, key chains, etc., you can also find:
  - Travel Bugs – Trackable tags that are attached to another item. By logging the number of the tag, you can follow the item's progress on the geocaching website. The owner of the bug may give it a certain task, such as to get to a certain city, to visit a certain monument, etc.
  - Geocoins – Large, metal coins with individual tracking numbers. They are created by individuals or groups of geocachers. Like travel bugs, they can be tracked on the geocaching website.
  - Pathtags - Small, metal coins with individual tracking numbers. Their design is customizable, and they are left as signature items by some geocachers. They can be tracked at [www.pathtags.com](http://www.pathtags.com).

### *Geocaching Tips*

- Bring a pen or pencil to sign the logbook.
- Try not to let “muggles” (people not actively geocaching) notice what you're doing.
- Watch out for bees (especially on light poles) and poison ivy. Also, be kind to the area around the geocache. You should never have to dig or disturb plantings or animals to find a geocache.
- If you're having trouble finding a geocache, you can try the following:
  - See if there is an encrypted hint at the bottom of the Details page.
  - Read the logs of previous geocachers to see how they have described the terrain, if they have had problems finding it, etc. If several have not found it recently, the geocache may have been stolen.