

Geocaching Explorer

Five steps from curious kid to real treasure hunter.

3M+

ACTIVE CACHES

191

COUNTRIES

7

CONTINENTS



Geocaching is a real-world treasure hunt. Hidden in parks, along trails and even in cities are millions of containers called **geocaches**. With a GPS receiver or the free Geocaching app, you'll use coordinates to track one down, sign its logbook, and put it back for the next explorer. Part detective, part adventurer. Ready?

Your 5 steps

- 1 Prepare for your adventure**
- 2 Learn to use a GPS receiver**
- 3 Make a trade item**
- 4 Go on a geocaching adventure**
- 5 Help a trackable travel**

EXPLORER ID

Screen name (not your real name)

Date I started

My grown-up buddy

MY GOAL

When I finish this booklet, I'll know how to go on a safe, fun geocaching adventure.



What to find out first

Tips before takeoff

You need a GPS receiver. Most explorers use a phone with the free Geocaching app (ask a grown-up first) or a handheld GPS. No device? Ask to borrow one.

Pack your explorer kit

- Water and a snack
- A pencil and your trade item
- A trash bag for litter
- Sturdy shoes, plus a hat or rain jacket
- A charged phone or GPS, and a whistle

Three golden rules

- 1 **Sign the logbook** every time.
- 2 **Trade fair:** leave something as good or better.
- 3 **Hide it again** exactly where you found it.

Fun fact

GPS means **Global Positioning System**. Your receiver needs signals from at least four satellites, about 12,500 miles up, to find you.

STEP 1 OF 5



Prepare for your adventure

A **geocache** is a hidden container with a logbook inside. You'll use GPS to get close, then use your eyes to spot what most people walk right past. First, do some research.

CHOICES: DO ONE



Explore the official site or app with a grown-up.

Visit geocaching.com or open the Geocaching app. How many geocaches are within 2 miles of home? Which ones have the lowest difficulty and terrain stars?

FOR MORE FUN Crack the code of geocaching slang: FTF, DNF, TFTC, CITO, GZ and muggle. Answers are on page 7.

----- OR -----



Interview a geocacher.

Ask a local geocacher or a geocaching club about their adventures. What's the coolest cache they've found? What's their best tip for beginners?

FOR MORE FUN Invent a new game that uses a GPS. Make a poster that invites others to play.

----- OR -----



Go to a geocaching event.

Search geocaching.com for Event Caches near you, such as a meetup or a Cache In, Trash Out cleanup. Chat with the explorers there and ask what they love about it.

FOR MORE FUN Draw a map of your neighborhood. Mark 3 places a cache could be hidden and 3 places one should never be.

Pick ONE per step. Inspired? Do more!

2

Learn to use a GPS receiver

To find a cache you need its **coordinates**: two numbers that name an exact spot on Earth. **Latitude** measures north and south. **Longitude** measures east and west. Where the two cross, X marks the spot.

TRY READING THIS ONE: THE STATUE OF LIBERTY

N 40° 41.352 W 074° 02.670

N means north and W means west. Each number is degrees, then minutes with decimals. The more digits, the more exact the spot.

CHOICES: DO ONE

☐ Find the coordinates of three things.

Record the coordinates of a stop sign, a mark on the sidewalk and your favorite tree. Then walk 20 steps north. Which number changed?

OR

☐ Hide an item for a friend to find.

Give your friend the coordinates and help if they get stuck. Then they hide something for you.

FOR MORE FUN You'll both end up a few steps off the mark. That's normal GPS wobble. Your eyes finish the job.

OR

☐ Go on a photo hunt.

A grown-up photographs three things along a safe route, like a mailbox, a flower and a street sign, and writes down each one's coordinates. Find them in order.

FOR MORE FUN Make two photo sets for the same route. Who finds all their targets first?



Latitude: north / south

Longitude: east / west

X: where they meet

Try this on your GPS

Ask an expert for help the first time. Learn how to:

- Save your spot (a waypoint)
- Read your coordinates
- Type in coordinates and follow the arrow to them
- Zoom the map to where you are

Close enough?

Within about 30 feet, look up from the screen. In open sky, GPS is usually good to around 16 feet. Tall buildings and thick trees make it wobble more.

3

STEP 3 OF 5

Make a trade item

Many caches have room for a swap. Take something, leave something as good or better. Your item should be small, safe and cheap. Trading cards, stickers, keychains and small toys are common.

CHOICES: DO ONE

☐

Make something that represents your group.

Your team, club, class or family. Try a pin, a bookmark, or a little card with a few good recycling tips.

OR

☐

Make a piece of jewelry or a charm.

Knot a friendship bracelet, string some beads, or make a keychain. A prize someone would be glad to wear or carry.

FOR MORE FUN Make a signature item: something you leave in every cache so people know you were there.

OR

☐

Make something that represents you.

Draw a picture, make a collage from magazine pages, or paint a smooth rock or seashell.



What do caches look like?

Not every cache has room to trade. Some hold only a log sheet. Here are the sizes:

- **Micro:** tiny, often just a rolled log sheet. A film canister is a classic.
- **Small:** sandwich-box size. A tiny logbook and a few small items.
- **Regular:** about shoe-box size, like a metal ammo can. Room to trade.
- **Large:** bigger than regular, like a 5-gallon bucket.
- **Other:** something unusual that fits no other size.

Never leave in a cache

Food, candy or drinks
Knives or anything sharp
Matches or lighters
Medicine
Anything scary or unsafe



Safety tip

Never put personal information on a trade item or in a logbook: no real name, phone number, address, school, or photos of people.

4

Go on a geocaching adventure

Now go find a geocache! With a grown-up, make a free account at geocaching.com or in the app. Pick a screen name that isn't your real name, then search near home for a cache with low difficulty and terrain stars.

CHOICES: DO ONE

☐

Make it a hiking adventure.

Find a cache along a trail. Check the weather and trail rules first, and pack a picnic.

OR

☐

Take a multi-cache adventure.

Twice the work, twice the fun. Every stop hints at the next one. Pack a snack for each stop.

OR

☐

Go on a themed or EarthCache adventure.

Some caches have a theme, like a movie or an animal. An EarthCache has no container. You visit a place and learn how nature shaped it.

FOR MORE FUN Dress for the theme, as long as it's safe for the trail.



Stay safe out there

- Bring a grown-up buddy
- Tell someone your plan
- Stay on the trail
- Skip private property
- Watch for roads and water
- No digging or climbing

Kinds of geocaches



Traditional: a container at the coordinates. Easiest to start with.



Multi-cache: two or more stops, each with clues to the next.



Mystery: solve a puzzle to find the coordinates.



EarthCache: no container. Visit a spot and learn how nature made it.

Read the stars

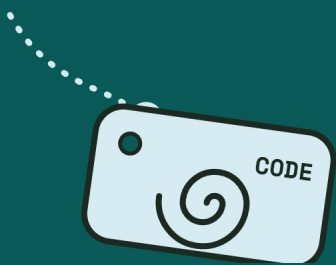
D is difficulty: how tricky it is to find. **T** is terrain: how rough the path is. Both run from 1 to 5. Start with 1s and 2s.

More to explore: CITO

Cache In, Trash Out. Pick up litter as you go and bin it. Join a CITO event near you.

Log your find

Sign the logbook with your explorer name and the date, then log it online or in the app. No luck? Log a DNF. It happens to everyone.



Start a trackable on its travels

Ask a grown-up to help.

- 1 Get a trackable from a geocaching shop.
- 2 Activate it on geocaching.com using the code on its tag.
- 3 Write its mission: where should it go?
- 4 Place it in a cache big enough to hold it.
- 5 Watch its map fill up.

Trackable talk

Discover: you saw it and left it where it was. Log it so the owner knows it's safe.

Retrieve: you took it to help it travel.

Drop: you put it in a new cache.

Never keep a trackable. Move it along soon!

STEP 5 OF 5



Help a trackable travel

A **trackable** hops from cache to cache, sometimes all the way around the world. Travel Bug® tags and geocoins are two kinds. Each has a code you can log online to see everywhere it has been. Its owner gives it a mission, like “Visit a volcano.”

CHOICES: DO ONE



Help a trackable finish its mission.

Find one in a cache and read its mission. If you can help, take it to a cache that moves it closer to its goal. Log every step.

----- OR -----



Send your own trackable on a trip.

With a grown-up, activate a trackable and give it a mission. Try “Take me to the Great Wall of China” or “Help me visit every state.”

FOR MORE FUN Attach it to a small stuffed animal or a doll you made.

----- OR -----



Follow a trackable's journey.

Find one that has visited at least four places. Mark each stop on a map. What can you learn about each place?

FOR MORE FUN Find a cache with a trackable inside and log your discovery.

Explorer Log

Check off each step, then log every cache you try.

1 ☐ Prepare _____ I chose	2 ☐ Use GPS _____ I chose	3 ☐ Trade item _____ I chose	4 ☐ Adventure _____ I chose	5 ☐ Trackable _____ I chose
---	---	--	---	---

DATE	CACHE NAME AND KIND	RESULT	WHAT I TRADED
		☐ Found ☐ DNF	
		☐ Found ☐ DNF	
		☐ Found ☐ DNF	
		☐ Found ☐ DNF	
		☐ Found ☐ DNF	

Slang decoder

FTF	First To Find a new cache
DNF	Did Not Find. It happens to everyone.
TFTC	Thanks For The Cache
CITO	Cache In, Trash Out
GZ	Ground Zero: where your GPS says the cache is
Muggle	Someone who doesn't know about geocaching
Waypoint	A location saved on your GPS
SWAG	Trade items. Stuff We All Get.

Explorer pledge

- Go with a grown-up buddy
- Trade fair and hide it again
- Leave places cleaner
- Keep my information private

Explorer signature

Grown-up

Date