

Geocaching 101 (www.geocaching.com/guide/)

The Game

What is geocaching? Geocaching is a real-world, outdoor treasure hunting game using GPS-enabled devices. Participants navigate to a specific set of GPS coordinates & attempt to find the hidden geocache.

What do I need to go geocaching?

- GPS device or a GPS-enabled mobile phone so that you can navigate to the cache (see last page).
- Geocaching.com Membership (<https://www.geocaching.com/login/>).

How is the game played?

1. Register for a free www.geocaching.com/login/.
2. Visit www.geocaching.com/seek/.
3. Enter your postal code & click "search."
4. Choose any geocache from the list & click on its name.
5. Enter the coordinates of the geocache into your GPS Device.
6. Use your GPS device to assist you in finding the hidden geocache.
7. Sign the logbook & return the geocache to its original location.
8. Log online.

What are the rules of geocaching?

- If you take something from the geocache, leave something of equal or greater value.
- Log your experience at www.geocaching.com (recommended)
- Disclaimer: Cache seekers assume all risks involved in seeking a cache.

Where are geocaches located?

All over the world. It is common for geocachers to hide caches in locations that are important to them, reflecting a special interest or skill of the cache owner. Never buried.

Are there different types of geocaches?

Here are a few:



Traditional Cache

The original consisting of, at minimum, a container & a log book or logsheet. Larger containers may have items for trade. "Micro" caches are tiny containers that only hold a logsheet. The coordinates provide the geocache's exact location.



Multi-Cache (Offset Cache)

Involves two or more locations. The final location is a physical container. Most Multi-Caches have a hint to find the 2nd cache, & the 2nd cache has a hint to the 3rd, & so on. An offset cache hints to the actual cache.



Mystery or Puzzle Caches

The "catch-all" of cache types, may involve complicated puzzles that you will first need to solve to determine the coordinates.



Event Cache

A gathering of local geocachers or geocaching organizations to discuss geocaching. The Event Cache page specifies a time for the event & provides coordinates to its location. After the event, the cache is archived.



Cache In Trash Out Event

While searching for caches, geocachers collect litter along the trails & properly dispose of it. CITO Events are larger gatherings of geocachers that focus on litter clean-up, removal of invasive species, revegetation efforts or trail building.



EarthCache

A special place that people can visit to learn about a unique geoscience feature of our Earth. Include a set of educational notes along with cache coordinates. Visitors to EarthCaches can see how our planet has been shaped by geological processes, how we manage its resources & how scientists gather evidence to learn about the Earth. <http://www.earthcache.org/>.

Grandfathered Cache Types

These are cache types that are no longer available for creation on geocaching.com. Visit the [Waymarking web site](#) for other GPS hunting activities.



Virtual Cache

A Virtual Cache is about discovering a location rather than a container. The requirements for logging a Virtual Cache vary—you may be required to answer a question about the location, take a picture, complete a task, etc. You must visit the coordinates before you can post your log. Should be out of the ordinary.



Webcam Cache

These are caches that use existing web cameras placed by individuals or agencies that monitor various areas like parks or business complexes. The idea is to get yourself in front of the camera to log your visit. The challenging part is that you need to call a friend to look up the web site that displays the camera shot. You will need to have them to save the picture in order to log the cache. If you're a tech-head you could save the image yourself by using a wireless modem & a laptop. [QCA's Most Wanted; GC Code: GCP8EV](#)

How did geocaching start?

A Very cool story that it deserves its own page: <http://www.geocaching.com/about/history.aspx>.

Getting Started

What kind of cache should I look for on my first adventure?

Cache Type: Traditional  Difficulty Rating: 1      Cache Size: Regular or Large  

Check to see that other geocachers have recently logged finds on the cache page. This indicates that the geocache is most likely still in place & findable. Find logs are indicated with a smiley face. 😊

Searching for geocaches

You can search for geocaches by location or by GC Code (a unique code associated with each cache listing) from the homepage, the Hide & Seek page or the advanced search page. Premium Members can sort search results by caches with the most favorite points, difficulty of find, terrain rating & more.

Loading coordinates onto your GPS device

The method of loading coordinates onto your GPS device varies depending on what type of device you have.

Inputting Coordinates by Hand

If your device does not connect directly to the computer via an interface cable, you will need to enter coordinates by hand. This process will be different for each device. Check your device's manual.

Send to GPS

If you have a DeLorme, Magellan or Garmin that connects directly to your computer through an interface cable, you can use the "Send to GPS" functionality to send a cache listing directly to your GPS device. The first time you use this functionality, you will be instructed to download the appropriate plugin for your GPS device.

Download LOC or GPX file


If you have any model of GPS device with an interface cable, you can download the cache listing as a LOC file (Basic Members) or GPX file (Premium Members). **LOC files** contain basic information about a cache, including coordinates, cache name & difficulty & terrain ratings. **GPX files** are available for Premium Members & include all of this data as well as the cache description, hints & the 20 most recent logs. Premium Members can also download up to 1000 caches in a single GPX file using the **Pocket Query** feature.

For most GPS devices, you will need to download third-party geocaching software to read LOC or GPX files. Some devices, like the Magellan Triton & Garmin Colorado, support & read Geocaching GPX files directly.

Finding Geocaches

What does a geocache look like?

Please note that these are just examples; sizes can vary. Small, Regular & Large typically contain trade items.

 Micro - Less than 100ml. Examples: a 35 mm film canister or a tiny storage box typically containing only a logbook or a logsheet. A nano cache is a common sub-type of a micro cache that is less than 10ml & can only hold a small logsheet.

 Small - 100ml or larger, but less than 1L. Example: A sandwich-sized plastic container or similar.

 Regular - 1L to 20L. Examples: a plastic container or ammo can about the size of a shoebox.

 Large - 20L or larger. Example: A large bucket.

 Other - See the cache description for information.

What should not be placed in a cache?

Explosives, ammunition, knives, drugs, alcohol, food, or heavily scented items. Respect local laws at all times.

How do I find the cache & what should I do once I've found it?

There are many things to know about searching for a cache. For instance, did you know that there is a slight "error" to every GPS device due to technological limitations? Your device can get you close to the cache, but there are a number of things to consider as you get closer to the cache location.

What should I do if I discover that a cache has gone missing or I can't find it?

Make sure to log the cache with a "Didn't find it" log so that the cache owner is notified. Cache owners who repeatedly receive "Didn't find it" logs should check to see that their cache has not been removed.

How do I log my find or DNF?

1. Visit geocaching.com & log in using your username & password.
2. Visit the geocache detail page for the geocache you found.
3. In the top-right corner of the page, click 'log your visit'.
4. From the 'Type of log' drop-down menu, select 'Found it'.
5. Enter the date of your geocache find.
6. Enter any comments you wish to share with the owner &/or community regarding your find.
7. Select any trackable items (from the inventory box) that you dropped off in the geocache with your find.
8. Click 'Submit log entry'.

Trackables

What are Trackables?

A Trackable is a sort of physical geocaching "game piece." Each Trackable is etched with a unique code that can be used to log its movements on Geocaching.com as it travels in the real world. Some of these items have traveled hundreds of thousands of miles thanks to geocachers who move them from cache to cache! **3 kinds:**

A Travel Bug Trackable tag attached to an item that geocachers call a "hitchhiker." Each Travel Bug has a goal set by its owner. Goals are typically travel-related, such as to visit every country in Europe or travel from coast to coast. Travel Bug Trackables move from cache to cache with the help of geocachers like you.

Geocoins Customizable coins created by individuals or groups as a signature item or calling card. Function like Travel Bugs & should be moved to another cache, unless otherwise specified by owners.

Other Trackable items come in various forms including patches, keyrings & more. A common feature of Trackable items is that they bear a unique ID code & text noting that they are trackable at Geocaching.com.

What should I do when I find a Trackable?

You are not required to do anything, but if you would like to interact with it, you have two options.

Move the Trackable

1. If you would like to move the Trackable to another cache, take it with you. You do not need to leave anything in its place as long as you are willing to help it on its journey. You can look up the Trackable's goal by entering its unique Tracking Code at www.geocaching.com/track.
2. **IMPORTANT:** Log the movement when you take a Trackable from one cache & drop it into another.

"Discover" the Trackable

When you have seen a Trackable in person, but have not moved it, you can log that you have "discovered" it. To do so, you will need to write down the Trackable's Tracking Code (the unique series of letters & numbers etched on the item).

How do I log a Trackable?

Instructions on logging a Trackable can be found www.geocaching.com/track/howto.aspx.

What does...mean?


What does this word or acronym mean?

www.geocaching.com/about/glossary.aspx will help you translate this "geocaching speak".

What do you think they mean? BYOP - GZ - TFTC -

There are a number of unique terms in geocaching that you may not know if you're still a "muggle."

What does this icon mean?

 **Favorite Points** - The blue ribbon identifies how many Favorite Points a cache has received. Favorite Points are awarded by Geocaching.com Premium Members to the caches they have enjoyed most.

GPS

What is a GPS device?

A GPS device is an electronic unit that can determine your approximate location (within around 6 - 30 feet) on the planet. Coordinates are normally given in latitude & longitude. You can use the device to navigate from your current location to another location. Some devices have their own maps, built-in electronic compasses, & voice navigation, depending on the complexity of the device.

How does GPS work?

Each GPS device is a computer that receives signals broadcast from GPS satellites. A device needs to read signals from at least three satellites at a time to calculate its general location by a process called trilateration. With signals from four satellites, a GPS receiver can get a more accurate fix that includes altitude & the exact time, as well as latitude & longitude. The more satellite signals the receiver reads, the more accurate the position it reports to you.

What features should I look for in a GPS device & where can I buy one?

Check out our Guide to Buying a GPS device (<http://www.geocaching.com/about/buying.aspx>) for a list of features to consider when purchasing your device & information about where to purchase. Prefer to go geocaching using your smartphone & a geocaching application? Check out our list of Geocaching Live-enabled applications (<http://www.geocaching.com/live/default.aspx>).

More Information & Answers to Questions:

Geocaching.com - www.geocaching.com

Help Center - support.groundspeak.com/

Forums - <http://www.geocaching.com/forums/default.aspx>

Facebook Search for QC Area Geocachers or go to: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/360224187402482/>