

Geocaching 101

Geocaching is an activity that will get you and your family outside and provide countless hours of adventure and enjoyment—in your local community, in Connecticut, throughout the United States, and even worldwide! If you still have questions after participating in our program and reviewing this information, we suggest you go to www.geocaching.com and search their Help Center. Membership on the geocaching site is free to all and offers plenty of opportunities to get you started on a lifetime hobby.

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 for latitude and longitude and then attempt to find the geocache (container) hidden at that location.

What is the meaning of the word “geocaching?”

“Geocaching” refers to GEO for geography, and to CACHING, the process of hiding a cache. The term “cache” is used in hiking/camping as a hiding place for concealing and preserving provisions.

Where are geocaches located?

Geocaches can be found 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. These locations can be quite diverse. They may be at your local park, at the end of a long hike, underwater or on the side of a city street.

What does a geocache look like?

Geocaches vary greatly in size and appearance. You will see everything from large, clear plastic containers to film canisters to a fake rock with a secret compartment. The first step is to get a general idea of the cache's size. The size is shown on each cache page. As you will see on www.geocaching.com, a general overview of the cache size graphic is found below. Please note that these are just examples; sizes can vary.

Micro - Examples: a 35 mm film canister or a tiny storage box typically containing only a logbook or a logsheet. Small - Example: A sandwich-sized plastic container or similar. Regular - Examples: a plastic container or ammo can about the size of a shoebox. Large - Example: A large bucket.

Small, Regular and Large containers typically contain trade items.

To learn more about what to look for on the cache page and in the field, check out the www.geocaching.com video *Selecting Your First Cache and Finding Your First Cache*.

What do you need to go geocaching?

The only requirements are a GPS device or a GPS-enabled mobile phone so that you can navigate to the cache and a Geocaching.com membership so you will be able to know where to search for a hidden geocache. Of course, a sense of adventure and a willingness to be outside are also necessary.

How is geocaching done?

At its simplest level, geocaching requires these 10 steps:

1. Register for a Membership at www.geocaching.com
2. Select a Username for yourself/your family—look at some of the other geocachers to get an idea of possible names
3. Visit the "Hide & Seek a Cache" page that you will find via the Home Page and then under the tab, Play.
4. Enter your zip code and click "search." If you do not know the zip code, you can type in the name of the city and state.
5. Choose any geocache from the list and click on its name.
6. Enter the coordinates of the geocache into your GPS Device.
7. Use your GPS device to assist you in finding the hidden geocache.
8. If you take something from the geocache, leave something of equal or greater value.
9. Sign the logbook with the date and your username, and return the geocache to its original location.
10. Share your geocaching stories and photos online and with your family and friends.

How do I find the cache and 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 (within 20+ feet of the cache), but there are a number of things to consider as you get closer to the cache location. The geocache will be hidden—see if anything “looks” out of place, i.e. stones or logs or rocks too neatly arranged; a well worn path; does the geocache listing have a “hint”—read it carefully and look around.

Can I hide a geocache and how do I do it?

Before considering your first geocache hide, it is suggested that you find a variety of caches in your area. Seeing caches in a variety of locations, in different containers and hidden by a variety of users will help you understand what makes a great cache hide. This makes it more likely that you too will hide an interesting cache that everyone will enjoy!

As you prepare to place your cache, review www.geocaching.com's *Guide to Hiding a Cache* and the *Geocache Listing Guidelines*. It is important that you understand these guidelines before submitting a cache for review.

Geocaching Using a Mobile Phone instead of a GPS?

Although geocaching has traditionally been played with a GPS device built for outdoor use, an increasing number of mobile phone manufacturers are now supporting GPS chips. Many of these new phones can support geocaching via Geocaching Live-enabled Applications. Real-time access to Geocaching.com information allows you to go geocaching at a moment's notice. The geocaching.com site will give you specific instructions and enable you to download GPS coordinates.

source: www.geocaching.com

Special thanks to Kathy Katz for compiling this information and allowing us to use it for our geocaching event.