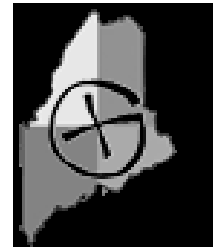


# ⊕ GEOCACHING 101



## **What is Geocaching?**

Geocaching refers to a form of hi-tech treasure hunting made possible by Global Positioning Systems (GPS). Anyone with a sense of adventure, a GPS unit, and internet access can play. People geocache to get exercise, explore new places, and get off the “beaten track.” Teachers and youth leaders also use geocaching as a fun and engaging way to teach students about math, science, and technology and to get them active outdoors. Geocaches are hidden around the world in rural and urban environments alike. Geocache type, placement, terrain, and placement difficulty all contribute to the variability of the game.

A traditional geocache consists of a waterproof container, which might range in size from an old ammunition box to a film canister (or smaller!). Most geocaches contain a logbook for successful geocachers to sign. Many geocaches also contain a range of inexpensive trade items (trinkets, patches, toys). Some geocaches have specially coded items, called travel bugs or geocoins, which get deposited by geocachers in new caches.



Many different kinds of geocaches and lots more information about geocaching can be found at: [www.geocaching.com](http://www.geocaching.com). Different forms of geocaching that involve searching for “virtual caches,” can be found at [www.waymarking.com](http://www.waymarking.com) and [www.earthcaching.org](http://www.earthcaching.org).

## **How does GPS work?**

Whether in the woods or in a car, GPS units can also be used as a navigational aid to determine one’s position on Earth’s surface, or to make one’s way to a known location. The GPS system includes a network of at least 24 operational satellites orbiting nearly 11,500 miles above the earth’s surface. GPS works in any weather conditions, anywhere in the world, 24 hours a day. There are no subscription fees or setup charges to use GPS. GPS units receiving at least three strong satellite signals are able to determine (via triangulation) the user’s position on the surface of the earth.



Before 2000, GPS units in the civilian world were uncommon. The U.S. Department of Defense launched the first satellites in the 1980s. While available, the military degraded the signal for national security reasons so civilian units were imprecise. On May 1, 2000, the White House issued a statement concerning the decision to discontinue the degraded signal (called Selective Availability). By the end of 2000, geocaching had taken off.

## ***Finding Your First Cache***

As with many outdoor activities, preparation is essential when you head out to find your first geocache. Consult maps of the area so you know where you are going. Dress appropriately. Travel in pairs. Etc, etc.

Here are some useful tips from [www.geocaching.com](http://www.geocaching.com) when you get close to the hidden cache and have to rely increasingly on your senses and not the GPS unit:



- When you get close to the geocache (within 300 feet, which is the length of a football field), make sure to check your GPS unit signal. Sometimes the signal will have an error between 25-200 feet. Don't concentrate as much on the arrow as the distance decreasing, as you get closer to the site.
- For the last 30 feet, use a compass or direct your partner in the direction of the cache. In some cases you may want to circle the site with the GPS unit to make a good area to search.
- The final 30-100 feet is the hardest. It helps to think like the person who hid the cache. If there are stumps around, investigate around the base. Check for a pile of rocks. Some stashes, especially in people-trafficked areas, are pretty ingeniously hidden, so it helps to know the container they used.

## ***Placing Caches: The Geocachers Creed***

When placing or seeking geocaches, I will:

1. Not endanger myself or others
2. Observe all laws & rules of the area
3. Respect property rights and seek permission where appropriate
4. Avoid causing disruptions or public alarm
5. Minimize my and others' impact on the environment
6. Be considerate of others
7. Protect the integrity of the game pieces

- From [www.geocreed.info](http://www.geocreed.info)



## ***Cache In – Trash Out***



Many geocache containers are hidden in parks, nature preserves, and other wilderness areas. People that enjoy going to these locations are usually concerned with the environment. To coincide their love of the geocache hobby with their respect for nature, many take part in something known as 'Cache in - Trash out.'

The concept of 'Cache in - Trash out' is simple. When you enter an area with the intent to find a geocache, you should also keep an eye out for any garbage and litter. In your geocaching backpack or your pocket, simply carry along a garbage bag and pick up any litter that you see along the path. It is easy to pick up empty bottles, scraps of paper, and other debris as you walk along.

- From [www.associatedcontent.com](http://www.associatedcontent.com)