

# Geocaching Instructions

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## Step 1: Research

Your outdoor geocaching adventure starts indoors with preparation and online research. Search [www.geocaching.com](http://www.geocaching.com) for a geocache that meets your immediate goals and interests, or an adventure for the entire family.

Review the cache [attributes](#). These icons are a helpful when selecting your first geocache hunt.

As you select a geocache, keep in mind the following:

- Have you considered the [difficulty and terrain ratings](#) of the cache?
  - Choose a 1/1 difficulty and terrain rating for your first geocache find so you can learn how geocaches are placed.
  - Remember, geocaches are hidden but not buried.
- Consult the surrounding maps of the area.
  - Is this an urban or rural cache, and how will this change your preparation?
  - Do you have the right maps to help support you in the cache search?
  - Road maps may be more than adequate within a city, but topographical maps, which show land and water features, may be more useful elsewhere.
  - Topographical maps will tell you the type of terrain you will encounter.
- Keep in mind, distances can be deceiving.
  - According to the GPS device, you may be a mile from the cache, but there may be a river or other obstacles in the way. It is up to you to find the best route to the cache.
  - Remember, respect the environment and practice [Cache In Trash Out](#) along the way.
- Once you are close to the cache location, you can navigate using your GPS device.
  - For instance, if you are in a small park, try to simply follow the GPS arrow.
  - In a large park, this method may be challenging. Follow established trails as much as possible while keeping the GPS arrow heading the general direction of the cache.

Preparation and research will vary for each cache. Many people find that they begin with the online maps to get an idea of the area, and then decide to bring a detailed paper map. The cache page is a big source of information and may include hints. Previous finders may have uploaded photos, or may have included clues in their online log.

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## Step 2: Safety Tips

It is important to be prepared. Here are a few helpful hints:

- Tell someone where you are going and when you intend to return.
  - Going into a forest or remote locations without a partner is dangerous.
  - Geocaching is fun. Plan a group hike with family or friends around the adventure.
- Pay attention to your surroundings.
  - It is easy to focus on your GPS device and forget to look around you. Being aware of where you are will ensure your personal safety and respect the environment.
- Bring along a compass, map and extra batteries in case your GPS device fails.
  - No matter the terrain or time on the trail, bring extra clothing, food and water.
- Be mindful of the local environment, especially during seasonal changes.
  - Is the area prone to poison ivy or poison oak?
  - What about bugs or dangerous animals?
  - Not sure of the area? Ask a question in the [regional geocaching forums](#). Local geocachers are happy to support you.



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## Step 3 - The Hunt

Now you are ready to find a geocache!

- As you leave your car or a well-marked trail, make sure to mark its location as a waypoint!
  - Once you get focused on the cache hunt, it's easy to get disoriented.
  - Use the waypoint to guide you in your safe return.
- It should be pretty straightforward to get within a mile or so of the cache location.
  - If you have done your research, you should also feel good about knowing the best method of getting to the cache location.
  - Keep your GPS device on the entire time even if you occasionally lose signal from overhanging trees, mountains, large concrete structures, etc.
- Nearing the geocache (within 300 feet - the length of a football field).
  - Check your GPS device's signal strength.
  - Sometimes there will be a signal error between 25 - 200 feet.
  - Concentrate on the distance decreasing and less on the arrow as you get closer to the final location.
- The final 30-100 feet can be the most difficult.
  - If there are stumps around, investigate around the base.
  - Check for an unnatural pile of rocks.
  - Some geocaches, especially in highly populated areas, are cleverly hidden with camouflage. It helps to know something about the container used.
  - Is it bigger than a shoebox or small like a film canister?

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## Step 4 - The Actual Find

Hurray! You found a geocache

- Now what?
  - Sign the log book with your name, date, and a few words about your experience.
  - If you trade for items, remember to trade for something of equal or greater value.
  - Seal the cache and place it back exactly where and how you found it.
  - If it had some rocks covering it, replace them.
  - Use the waypoint you created as a helpful guide for your return.
  - When you get home, log your experience online by going back to the cache page and using the links provided.
  - The cache owner is automatically notified of your log and is happy to know about your adventure, the condition of their cache, and any environmental factors.

**Still have questions?** Please reference the [Getting Started](#) page or [Resources](#) page for additional details. For more information call Lambton Public Health at 519-344-2062 ext. 2119 or toll free 1-800-387-2882.