



*Daisies are permitted when working with older girls and adults as part of another outdoor activity.

About Geocaching

Geocaching is a recreational outdoor activity that centers on the use of a global positioning system (GPS) device and maps. Geocachers seek out caches (waterproof containers containing logbooks and/or trinkets) that have been hidden just about anywhere in the world, whether in urban areas, in the wilderness, in tree roots, and so on. As treasure hunters in an international game of hide-and-seek, participants use geocaching to select cache locations and communicate with other geocachers.

Connect with your council to see if there are caches on council sites. When on private or government property, follow all posted rules, guidelines, and etiquette. Geocaching routes should outline locations that are prohibited for placing a cache, so check for those.

“Cache in, trash out” is the motto when practicing Leave No Trace—geocachers are encouraged to leave caching sites cleaner than they found them and pick up garbage left by others. Geocachers are invited to participate in International Cache In, Trash Out events, which are worldwide cleanup efforts.

Girl Scouts develop skills about GPS use, latitude, longitude, and reading maps based on grade level. Ideally, each member uses their own smartphone or GPS device, or two to three cachers can share one. When more than three participants share a device, it becomes more difficult for everyone to actively participate in the geocaching activity. Keep in mind that a GPS device provides a direct line measurement from the starting point to a destination; a GPS does not include the distance around path obstructions such as bodies of water.

Finding a benchmark is key to geocaching. Visit Geocaching.com to learn more. Using a smartphone, GPS device, or directions provided by the [National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's National Geodetic Survey \(NGS\)](http://National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's National Geodetic Survey (NGS)), you can seek out NGS survey markers and other items that have been marked in the United States.

Learn More

- Join Geocaching.com
- Terracaching

Include Girl Scout Members with Disabilities. Talk to Girl Scout members with disabilities and their caregivers. Ask about needs and accommodations. Always be sure to contact the location and/or the instructor in advance to ensure they are able to accommodate those with disabilities. See HandiCaching.com to find out about geocaching for people of all abilities.

Equity. Geocaching requires a smartphone or GPS device. Be mindful about ways to make it more accessible. Encourage Girl Scouts to share resources, such as by working in small groups, renting from a library, etc. Consider the history, culture, and past experiences of the Girl Scout members in your troop that could affect their ability to equally participate in an activity. Work with members and families to understand how an activity is perceived. Ensure that all Girl Scout members and their families feel comfortable and have access to whatever is needed to fully participate, such as proper equipment, prior experiences, and the skills needed to enjoy the activity. See the Equity section of the Introduction to Safety Activity Checkpoints for general advice about expense,

Emergency Action Plan (EAP). Review and document your Emergency Action Plan (EAP) before starting any activity and review it so all are prepared. Think through scenarios of what can go wrong such as an accident,

physical injury, missing person, sudden illness, or sudden weather or water emergencies. All Troops must provide one adult certified in Adult and Pediatric CPR/First Aid/AED.

Geocaching Checkpoints

Cachers should learn and understand terrain difficulty ratings. As appropriate for their grade level, Girl Scouts can plan and have input about where to cache and which caches to locate by reading descriptions of the caches as well as ratings about difficulty and terrain. Explain about the terrain of a geocaching site by learning about the Difficulty/Terrain (D/T) Rating ahead of time. The ratings, which range from 1/1 to 5/5, measure the level of difficulty for finding a cache and for navigating the terrain to the cache. A terrain rating of one typically means the cache is accessible for people with disabilities.

Dress appropriately for the activity. Avoid wearing dangling earrings, bracelets, and necklaces that may become entangled in underbrush in wilderness areas. Make sure footwear is appropriate to the location(s) in which you will be geocaching; closed-toed shoes are required.

Be on the lookout for sharp edges, branches, cliffs, animals, insects, or anything else that may pose a safety hazard or detour for the group. Be sure to practice Leave No Trace while geocaching so as not to disturb wildlife, trample vegetation, or cross onto private property. Remove all garbage and discard, as appropriate.

Practice safe geocaching. To prevent injury when searching for caches, inspect areas with care before trekking into potentially dangerous locations or placing hands into unknown nooks and crannies such as ground holes, ponds, creeks, or urban buildings and structures.

Safety Gear. The gear you will need depends on the length of your trip, the location, and weather.

- Smartphone with geocaching app, or GPS device
- Compass (for emergencies if going to an unknown or wilderness area)
- Map (for emergencies if going to an unknown or wilderness area)
- Cache coordinates/details uploaded to the GPS device or written out
- First aid kit
- A working cell phone for emergencies (carried by an adult) or a specific backup plan
- Whistle for wilderness areas
- Clothing appropriate for the activity and weather
- Reusable water bottle
- Swag (or “stuff we all get”), which are the items that geocachers place into caches—usually small plastic toys, key chains, sunglasses—for other geocachers to take once they’ve located a cache
- Topographical and/or standard map of geocaching area if going to an unknown area
- Daypack to carry personal belongings
- Hiking boots for wilderness areas or comfortable and sturdy walking shoes for urban environments