



## Geocaching: Safety Activity Checkpoint

**Council Approval:** Not Required

**Activity Permitted For:** D B J C S A

**Note:** Daisies are only 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 Girl Scout of Northern California (GSNorCal) to see if there are caches on council sites. When on private or government property, follow all posted rules, guidelines, and etiquette. Geocaching outlines locations that are prohibited for placing a cache.

“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.

Finding a benchmark is key to geocaching. Using a GPS device or directions provided by the [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:](#)

- [Official global GPS cache site](#)
- [Navicache](#)
- [Terracaching](#)

### Include Girls with Disabilities

Talk to girls with disabilities and/or their caregivers to assess any needs and accommodations.

#### Additional Resources:

See [HandiCaching.com](#) to find out about geocaching for people of all abilities.

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Girls develop skills about GPS use, latitude and longitude, and reading maps based on grade level. Ideally, each girl is able to use her own GPS device, or two to three girls can share one. It becomes more difficult for girls to actively participate in the geocaching activity when more than three participants share a GPS device. 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.

**Girls should learn and understand terrain difficulty ratings.** As appropriate for their grade level, girls can plan or 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.** Make sure girls and adults avoid wearing dangling earrings, bracelets, and necklaces that may become entangled in underbrush in wilderness areas. Make sure footwear—consider sneakers versus hiking boots—is appropriate to the location(s) in which you will be geocaching.

Be on lookout for sharp edges, branches, cliffs, animals, or insects or anything 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. Carry out 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.

- 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 closed-toe walking shoes for urban environments