

**Geocaching IV: Cache & Munzee in the Emerald City  
2015 SHAPE America Convention  
Wednesday March 18, 2015**

**Sandi L. Feight, CPRP, Recreation Director Lower Gwynedd Township  
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## **Geocaching**

### **How To and What Not's**

What is Geocaching, simple definition, it's a modern day scavenger hunt. The cache manager finds an appropriate location, they use a GPS unit to determine the coordinates. The seeker uses a GPS unit to take them to the coordinates of the cache.

Devices Used: GPS unit (there are many makes and models), cell phones, tablets or any other device which has a GPS.

Traditionally, you would use a GPS unit to lead you to the cache, which is the final prize. However, you can also have fun and create a multi-stage cache and give participants the first set of coordinates, which will take them to a location and at that location take them to the next, you can determine how many stops occur before the end.

### **How to Start**

Everything we do in life we must begin at the start, however, there is considerable planning which much occur with Geocaching.

You must ask some questions:

1. What is the outcome I want the participants to achieve from this experience?
2. How much time do they have to accomplish?
3. Variety of cache types / styles?
4. How challenging?
5. Will you give them the coordinates and have them enter into units or will the units be preloaded?
6. Ages of participants?
7. What context am I developing this?
  - a. Lesson in the classroom?
  - b. Can you work with another school area for a co-lesson?
  - c. Part of a larger school event?
  - d. Part of a Community Event?
  - e. Do I need to obtain any permissions from property owners or notify a proper chain of command?

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## Equipment

### 1. GPS Units

There are many different makes and models. Think about the users when you are purchasing, and you who will be helping the users. Most units are really simple and easy to use, but make sure that you are the master of what you have.

### 2. Containers

This is what the participants are to find, but it doesn't need to be container (in the world view of this game there is typically a container). Depending on how you are setting up everything will determine the size of your containers. Depending on how much free range you have can really determine how creative you get with your container.



Above you will see a variety of containers. From left to right, a person decided to use a bird house, in the woods, yes it was attached to a tree and the bottom flipped open. The second image shows a simple sorbet container. The next image shows a very common container, old ammo box. These boxes are relatively water proof and you can paint them to blend in with the surrounding, which is commonly a forest. Last but not least, the Micro. Take a moment and find a penny and quarter so you can get a understanding as to the size of this container. A micro typically only has a small scroll.

### 3. Container Creativity

- a. Altoids make terrific little metal boxes, they come in various sizes; tiny, normal and long rectangular. They are easy to stash and dash, if you have a small nook you are looking to place it. You can easily paint them. You can get creative and add a magnet to the box and depending on the size; will hide in a channel of a sign post, on the back of a sign, on playground equipment (that is if your school has playground equipment).

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- b. Rubbermaid containers work great or any of those lock and serve containers. They come in various sizes, easy to see (if you are not making challenging), relatively inexpensive. The photo below shows a great cache disguised as a bird house, using a lock and serve container.



- c. Plastic Film Containers, if you can find any of these they are great as well. Will only hold a scroll of paper and a shortened golf pencil but another great little container.
- d. The classic large plastic water bottle, they can work as well.



- e. My all-time favorite container is pictured below. Yes, it is large, was most likely a condiment container that you get from a food warehouse store. This container was not in a, "you need to be stealth and sneaky" to grab, it was located in the woods on top of a mountain next to a radio tower. The only things that would see it was wildlife.

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**Searching out the Cache Sites**

1. Notify your department head, principal, and ground maintenance crew of your plan, what you will be hiding, time frame and where. Our society has become increasingly sensitive to packages left unattended and suspicious looking packages. The last thing you want is to have the Police Department show up at the school.
2. Walk the property and get ideas of where you can hide a container, place a magnet, get information from a message board, or dedication plaque.
  - a. Container make sure it is not obvious.
  - b. If you are using a magnet, make sure the surface can hold a magnet.
  - c. Avoid using anything that permanently adheres to a surface such as tape or a sticker.
3. Keep the participants safety in mind.

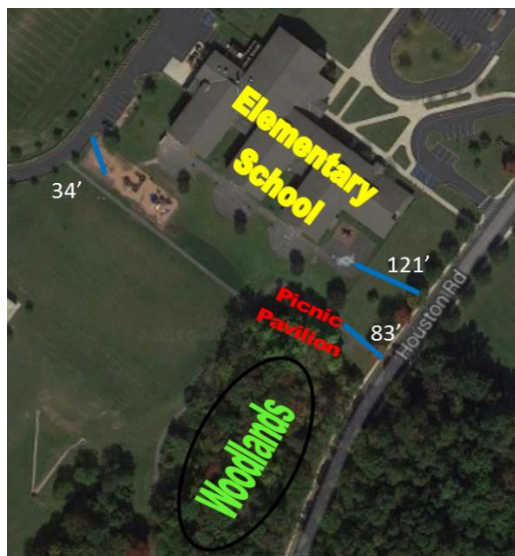
**Potential Locations:**

1. Cornerstone of the school
2. Memorial Plaque
3. Playground Equipment
4. Information Message Board
5. Metal Sign Post
6. Picnic Table
7. Bench
8. Bike Rack

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Look at what you have from above:



Things to consider:

1. Proximity to the road and parking lots
  - a. You will see that the picnic pavilion is 83' from the street
  - b. Playground the closest spot is right next to a drive way. I would use the equipment that is furthest away from the driveway.
2. Do you have any woods?
  - a. Can you use the woods?
  - b. Does the woods have any paths?
  - c. In my example here, an elevated path is in a small portion of the woods, however the area does sit with water the majority of the time, so I would not use.

You have chosen the location for the cache, What do you do now?

### **GPS Unit**

All units indicate where you are located, however an overcast day or trees will hinder the accuracy of the unit. If you do this on a clear day and with limited tree covering you should get an accurate reading. That being said the GPS unit should also indicate an accuracy. Just be aware if you are marking the locations be aware of your accuracy, this will throw your students off. Then again there is a point in time when seeking a cache you need to put down the device and use your eyes.

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**Safety Note:** I can't stress enough, if you are using a GPS Unit and it does indicate the accuracy take a minute and look around. Look at the number of feet accuracy and from where you are standing figure out how far from you is that number of feet. Does it have the potential of putting your participants: near the street, parking lot, train tracks.

You have found the location, and marked it in your GPS unit, make sure to name it, in the event you need to find it again.

Option two, you can simply write down the coordinates and not mark them in the unit.

GPS Units cost money, not every school has a budget which will allow for purchasing units. Think about where you live. Do you have an Eastern Mountain Sports (EMS), REI, L.L. Bean, Cabela's store in your area? If you do reach out to them. All of these companies sell GPS units and they may be willing to loan units. Your local Parks & Recreation Department, pick up the phone and call. Geocaching is happening in your communities, these professionals know it and encourage visitors to their facilities to engage in recreational opportunities and may be doing programs as well and they may have units to loan out. Last but not least, reach out to your State Park. In Pennsylvania, they have a variety of outdoor supplies that they have to loan out. Take a minute a make some phone calls, reach out into other professions. There is no need to reinvent the wheel, work smarter not harder.

**SMART DEVICE**

There are many applications that can be found in the Apple Store and Google Play Store; compasses. I have used a basic compass app, it will give you the coordinates. I have used this and when I am at a location simply taken a screen shot on my phone so I know the coordinates.



**Google Maps**

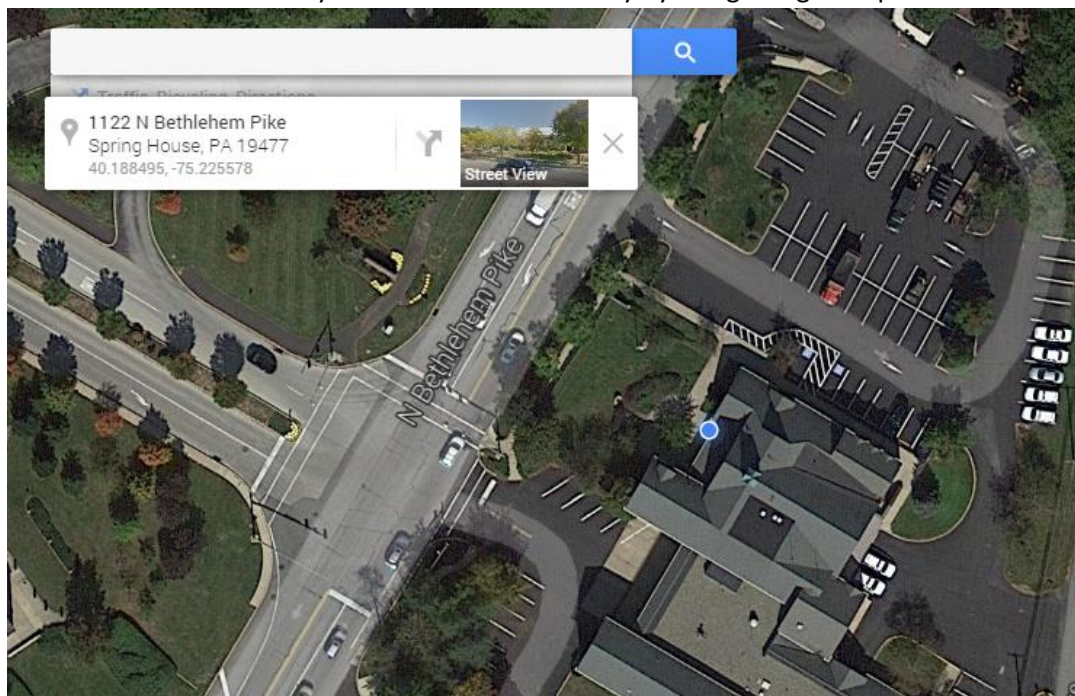
This is by far the simplest and most lazy way to obtain coordinates, and also a good way to check your coordinates.

Open up Google Maps on your computer. Find the location where you planned to place a cache. Click on that location. The image below, the blue dot indicates my locations and was the reference point

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which I clicked. You will see on the left side of the image a drop box with the address and below the address gps coordinates. If the blue dot was the location where you placed a cache and you had marked it with a GPS unit you can check for accuracy by using Google Maps.



**What Not's**

1. Keep safety in mind
  - a. Don't place caches near the school delivery entrance, dumpsters, parking lot, near the street
2. Communicate with your Supervisor, Principal and Maintenance Department
3. Remember who is participating and their skill level
4. If you are using containers, look at them first to make sure it won't be mistaken as a suspicious device and your entire school take part in Lock Down instead of Geocaching.
5. Don't make it too hard that is discourages the participants.
6. Make enough caches to keep the participants wanting more, they will do this fast, they are clever.

For more information please visit our website

<https://sites.google.com/site/shapea2015cacheemeraldcity/>