How to Hide a Geocache

Geocaching.com Guidelines

The first thing that you should familiarize yourself with is the guidelines at geocaching.com. They can be found here: www.geocaching.com/about/guidelines.aspx

The following areas are off-limits for physical caches:
- Caches that are buried
- Caches that deface public or private property
- Caches placed in areas which are highly sensitive to the extra traffic that would be caused by vehicles and humans
- Caches hidden in close proximity to active railroad tracks (46 m) All local trespassing laws apply
- Caches near or on military installations
- Caches near, on or under, public structures deemed possible targets for terrorist attacks including highway bridges, dams, government buildings, elementary and secondary schools, and airports

Caches that Solicit
- Solicitations are off-limits. For example, caches perceived to be posted for religious, political, charitable or social agendas are not permitted

Commercial Caches
- Commercial caches will not be published on geocaching.com. The geocache is presumed to be commercial if the finder is required to go inside a business, interact with employees, and/or purchase a product or service, or if the cache listing has overtones of advertising, marketing, or promotion.
- Links to businesses, commercial advertisers, charities, political or social agendas, or the inclusion of their associated logos are not permitted on cache descriptions

Cache Saturation
- Caches may not be placed within 161m of an existing cache.
- Applies to all physical caches and stages of a multicache
- This is not only to avoid confusion between caches, but also to reduce cache saturation
- Within a single multicache, there is no minimum required distance between waypoints
- Exceptions can be made to this rule if you can prove there is a physical barrier between caches

Cache Permanence
- Temporary or event caches will not be approved

- All physical caches must have a logbook
- Use the "Additional Waypoints" feature for multicaches. Mark as "hidden" if you don't want the coordinates displayed on the cache page
- Caches that require the downloading, installing or running of data/executables may not be published
- Caches that require a geocacher to visit another website will not be published if the finder must create an account with the other website

Location, Location, Location!

Some of the most memorable caches are due to the locations they took you to. Often caches are hidden in locations that are significant to the hider:
- Favourite fishing hole/camping spot/hiking trail
- Scenic view
- Place where they (mis)spent their youth
- Unusual location

A True Manitoba Hideout (Ashern, MB)

Woody (Winnipeg, MB)

Cache container should be appropriate for the location:
- A nano in the woods can be frustrating when there is room to hide a full sized cache;
- An ammo can in a busy city park is likely to go missing (muggled).

A few other things to remember when hiding a geocache:
- Make sure it is hidden well enough that it won't be discovered by non-geocachers
- Seek permission of the land owner if necessary
- Respect the area around your chosen location. Keep in mind that others will be walking in these areas

Areas to Avoid

The following locations are ones that you should avoid when hiding a cache:

- Playgrounds, Schools
  - May cause undue concern as geocachers could be mistaken for child predators if they are lurking around these areas.
- Police stations
  - A geocacher once hid a cache outside a police station in Erie, PA. He had full permission from the Chief of Police there, but when a call came in from a concerned citizen, the other officers were unaware of what it was and called in the Bomb Squad to blow it up. (true story)
- Prisons, Millitary grounds
  - They carry guns – enough said.
- Airports
  - There is high security at airports, and having people milling around looking for a geocache can cause concern
- Bridges
  - Could be mistaken for a bomb
- Active rail lines
  - Railroad tracks are private property and there are fines for trespassing on them. It is also dangerous.
- Hydro boxes
  - Anything with signs that say "keep away" or "dangerous" are generally not good places to hide a cache.
- Historical Sites, Sensitive Areas
  - Remember the people seeking your cache will be walking around for a bit and searching in different areas before they find the cache. Caches should be hidden far enough away from historical sites and sensitive areas so that they are not damaged by the extra traffic.
- Cemeteries
  - You will require permission from whomever is responsible for maintaining the cemetery before you will be allowed to hide a cache there.
- Parking Lots
  - Store parking lots are actually private property as well. You should obtain permission from the store before hiding a geocache on their property.

Caches can be hidden on private property if you get the owners permission. If permission has been granted be sure to state that on the cache page so the people going to search for the cache will know it is ok to go there.

Cache Containers

Some important factors to consider when selecting a cache container:
- Must be waterproof
- Must be able to withstand the elements year-round, including the cold weather
- Should never have been used to store food or scented items
  - Animals have a keener sense of smell than we do and will chew through the container to see if there is food inside;
  - It doesn't matter how many times you wash the container, they can still smell that it contained food.

You can make an ordinary cache extraordinary by giving it a theme, or adding something unique to the container. 1Queenand4Jokers have many great examples of this.

Your geocache should be clearly identified as an Official Geocache on the outside of the container.
- Cache and Cary generously provides MBGA geocache stickers at the following locations:
  - Stick'em Down, Eh? (GCTPZ3) – Small Stickers
  - Stick 'em Up, Eh? (GCT9W4) – Medium Stickers

- Geocaching.com also sells cache stickers

Ideal Containers
- Ammo can with a good seal (can be purchased at Princess Auto)
- Tupperware
- Lock & Lock containers (the Lock & Lock brand is better than the knock offs)
- Decon container (available in the United States at army surplus stores)
- Waterproof match containers
- Bison Tube

| Ammo Can | Tupperware | Lock & Lock | Decon | Match Container | Bison Tube |

Mediocre Cache Containers

- Dollar Store Lock & Locks
  - Some have a good seal, but hinges seem to break off in cold weather
- PVC Pipes
  - can be mistaken for pipe bomb, so use caution where you hide them
- Nanos
  - The logbooks are small and fill up quickly, therefore you need to make frequent trips to replace the logbook

Poor Cache Containers

- Food Containers eg Peanut Butter Jars (attracts wildlife)
- Coffee Tins (not very waterproof)
- Lunch box or Tool Box (not waterproof)
  - Could work with a Lock & Lock inside to protect logbook
- Glad Disposables (Lids crack in cold weather)
- Altoids Tin (rust and do not seal out water)
- Hide-A-Key (get wet easily)
- Film Canisters (get wet easily)
- Ziplock bags (wears out quickly)
- Placing cache in a plastic bag (the bag just collects water making it worse)
- Pill Bottles (not very waterproof and can be harmful to animals if they chew through them)
- Cookie Cans (rust and also not waterproof)
- Cassette case (trust me, it.s been tried)
- Video Tape Case (does not keep the water out)
- Plastic Margarine Containers (not waterproof)
- Ice Cream Pail (same as above)
- Listerine Breath Strip packets (at least these don't rust, but they don't seal out water either)
- Glass Containers (breakable)

Wet Log Book

Dollar Store Lock & Lock

Altoids Tin

Film Canister

Cache Contents

- Log book in a Zip Lock Bag
- Stash Note www.geocaching.com/articles/geocachenote.doc
- The MBGA site has printable logbooks that include a stash note (in the Navigation box click Resources/Printable Logbook) http://mbgeocaching.ca/node/287
- Writing Stick (pencil for winter months & sharpener)
- Don.t put the writing stick in the Zip Lock Bag (pokes holes)
- FTF Certificate/FTF Prize (optional) http://mbgeocaching.ca/ftf_certificate
- Trade Items (Family Friendly)

Cache Camo

- Make sure camo is appropriate for your hide location
- Don't let the camo tape cover the seal, or it will no longer be waterproof
- Glue becomes unglued in cold weather
- Camo Tape, Stone Spray Paint is available at Canadian Tire
- Gorilla tape is stronger than duct tape
- Rare Earth Magnets available at Princess Auto, Lee Valley, or online
- Landsharkz, World Caching, GPSCentral, GPSCity – all sell an assortment of caching supplies – see their ads on the MBGA website
- Hidden in plain sight caches are always fun
- Z'tirnats and Z'ad have many great caches to give you some ideas

Marking Coordinates

- Allow your GPS to settle at the location for a few minutes especially after you just turn it on
- Check the estimated accuracy (<5m if possible)
- If you have a GPS that does averaging, let it average for at least a minute
- Otherwise take multiple readings and average the results (ideally at different times of day)
- Do **NOT** use Google Earth to determine your coordinates! (not accurate enough)

Waypoints

Add waypoints to your cache listing:

- Final Location (Multi or Puzzle Cache)
- Parking Area (especially if tough to find legal access)
- Question to Answer
- Reference Point (ex. Scenic Lookout)
- Stages of a Multicache
- Trailhead

Stages of a Multicache and Final Location must not be within 161m of an existing cache, and future caches will not be allowed within 161m of them.

If the stages in a multicache do not have physical caches placed (ie takes them to a sign where they need to get some information), then list it as a "Question to Answer". That way, other physical caches can still be placed near that location.

You have the option to hide the waypoint from view, or just hide the coordinates if necessary. The cache owner and cache reviewer will be the only ones that can view the hidden information.

Submitting Your Cache

- Fill out the online form: www.geocaching.com/hide/report.aspx
- It will be reviewed by a geocaching.com volunteer and usually posted within about 48 hours
- Add any notes to the reviewer such as if permission was granted if cache is located on private property
- Add descriptive attributes (Winter friendly, dogs allowed, recommended for kids)

Difficulty/Terrain Rating

- Difficulty/Terrain rating can be quite subjective
- ClayJar created a form to use as a guideline: www.clayjar.com/gcrs/
- Terrain of 1 reserved for Wheelchair Accessible caches
- Terrain of 5 means that special equipment is required to retrieve the cache
- Difficulty indicates how tough the hide is

Cache Maintenance

- You must be willing/able to maintain the caches you hide (replace log books when full, repair as needed)
- If you can no longer maintain your caches, they can be removed and archived, or adopted by a new owner by filling out the following form: www.geocaching.com/adopt/
- Make sure your cache is not having a negative impact on the surrounding area
- Caches can be temporarily disabled when in need of maintenance, but caches disabled for long periods of time will be archived by the cache reviewer

Parks Canada Policy

Parks Canada welcomes geocaching in the National Parks, but there are a few guidelines that must be followed to place a cache there. The full policy can be seen here: www.pc.gc.ca/docs/pc/guide/geocache/index_e.asp

To summarize:
- All caches have to be available from trails or other publicly accessible areas
- Trade items are not permitted in caches
- A message or story about the unique location where the cache has been placed is to be included in the cache for others to find
- Geocachers who want to place a cache must meet with a Parks Canada staff person to obtain an authorization seal prior to placing a cache.

Provincial Parks

Manitoba Provincial Parks are also looking at implementing a geocaching policy. This is currently in draft form. Further details will be posted on the MBGA site when available.