

# NATURE ROCKS FAMILY GAME

## Geocaching with Kids!



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If you love the outdoors, it is only natural to teach your children about its wonders. Geocaching offers you a great way to do just that. It's a high-tech treasure hunt that can help engage your kids in the natural world.



### What is Geocaching?

Geocaching uses handheld GPS units to find hidden "caches" in your neighborhood or out on the trails. These are containers of all sizes that may be camouflaged to blend into their surroundings. Inside there will be a logbook to sign, with larger caches also containing an assortment of inexpensive trinkets for trade.

### How Do I Start Geocaching?

Start by looking up caches in your area. Geocaching.com lists more than 1 million active caches around the world, so chances are excellent there will be several near you. Check the difficulty and terrain ratings on the web page before you go. A "1 star" difficulty and terrain rating are just about right for a young child. If your child is looking forward to finding and exchanging "treasure," be sure to select a cache that is "regular" size or larger.

### What Do I Bring Geocaching?

Treat a geocaching-hunt as you would any hike by dressing your kids comfortably for the outdoors and carrying essential supplies such as water and snacks.

To find a cache, you will need to enter its coordinates in a handheld GPS receiver. A GPS unit can cost hundreds of dollars, but there are also geocaching-specific units available for around \$70. Pick one that is simple to use so the kids can lead the way.

Caches often contain small trade items or trinkets. The rule of geocaching is that if you take something from the cache, you must replace it with something of equal or greater value. So, have the kids pack an assortment of trinkets for trading. For poking into dark cache-hiding places, bring a trekking pole or hiking stick and a flashlight. Lastly, you will want to sign the logbook in the cache to prove you found it, so don't forget to bring a pen.



### Once You Find a Cache

You found it! Congratulations! Now what? Take something from the cache. Leave something in the cache. Write about it in the logbook.

Make sure to reseal the cache carefully and place it back exactly where you found it. Hide it as well as you found it. Once you get home, go to geocaching.com and write a log to let the cache "owner" know you found it. Let them know the condition of the cache, your experiences on the trail and any trades you made. This can be a fun creative-writing experience for the kids.

Now off to the next cache... and the next one... and the next one. Hmm, kind of addicting, isn't it? After finding a variety of geocaches in your area, you may be ready to hide one of your own!

Get the full REI Expert Advice on Geocaching at <http://www.rei.com/expertadvice/articles/geocaching+kids.html>



Brought to you by REI, The Nature Conservancy, US Fish and Wildlife Service, American Heart Association, American Camp Association, ecoAmerica, and Children & Nature Network

[NatureRocks.org](http://NatureRocks.org)

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