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## CHAPTER 2

# Getting Started: Geocaching Basics for Educators

**L**ike any famous explorer, before embarking on a geocaching expedition you must first prepare for adventure. It goes without saying that you should be thoroughly familiar with the world of geocaching before you hit the trail or lead a group of students into the wild (or at least out onto the school grounds). Consider this chapter as your first big step into that world. Read on to:

- ▶ Get familiar with handheld GPS receivers
- ▶ Learn how to create a free account at [Geocaching.com](http://Geocaching.com)
- ▶ Discover the types of caches near you

Fortunately, learning the geocaching basics is not too difficult—and it's also a lot of fun.

- ▶ Real-world advice for identifying and remedying problems, because every geocaching adventure should be an enjoyable experience

## In Detail: Types of Geocaches

Geocaches come in a dizzying array of officially recognized types, many of which I touched on in the previous chapter. From traditional caches to puzzle caches, virtual caches to interactive caches—plus a variety in between—there’s a cache type designed to appeal to you and every one of your students. That said, not all cache types are suited to classroom education. The types of caches outlined in this section are, at the very least, classroom-friendly. The extent to which you bring these cache types into your classroom is, of course, up to you.

### Other Geocache Types

Cache types not covered in this section include bookcrossing and letterboxing. These cache types, as compelling, interesting, and classroom-friendly as they are, require unique preparations and props. To learn more about these geocaching activities refer to the section, “The World Wide Web: Finding Caches Near You” (page 34).

## **Traditional Cache**

A traditional geocache consists of a few basic elements: A container (of any size, though preferably weatherproof), a logbook or log sheet, a pencil, and Stuff We All Get (SWAG). Traditional caches can be placed anywhere on Earth (they may not be buried) and are hidden in every imaginable way.

### ***Container***

Geocache containers are categorized by size: micro, small, regular, and large. (See pages 42–45 for a description and illustration of each.) A container is necessary only because a cache needs to contain a logbook. Anything with a watertight seal can be used as a container: film canister, breath mint box, plastic storage container, paint can, lawn gnome, ammo box, 55-gallon drum. ... You name it.

### ***Logbook/Log Sheet***

This is the only item that really must be included in a geocache. A logbook or log sheet allows players to prove they found a cache—a posting on Geocaching.com is not enough. A logbook doesn't need to be a fancy, leather-bound artifact. It can be as simple as a scrap of paper. If the cache size allows, the hider of the cache should also include a writing instrument of some kind. Pencils are preferred because pen ink freezes in cold weather. A conscientious geocacher will tell players ahead of time to bring their own pen or pencil to the cache if it is too small to hold a pencil. Players who find a cache and sign its logbook still need to log the find on Geocaching.com to officially get credit for the find.