



Get in the Game! with Geocaching

Take Membership Recruitment High-Tech

We know the saying that Scouting is “a game with a purpose,” but what do you do when that “purpose” is membership recruitment? By coupling technology with the outdoors, Get in the Game! geocaching events offer a great way to recruit new youth members ... and Scouting volunteers.

For our 100th Anniversary Celebration, we’re tapping into the fun and excitement of geocaching to impact important council goals like membership and volunteer recruitment. What better way is there to get kids to join Scouting than to show just how much fun it can be?

Through Get in the Game! geocaching events, Scouts and non-Scouts alike will participate in fast-paced, high-tech treasure hunts. This is a great way to share Scouting skills—and outdoor adventure—with a generation captivated by technology. It also provides a great way to share the excitement of the 100th Anniversary Celebration while highlighting core Scouting values.

About Geocaching

Geocaching is a relatively new sport, started in 2000 by an engineer in Portland, Oregon. In less than a decade, it has grown to over six million active players. The premise of the game is simple: Players hide and seek containers—called “caches” or “geocaches”—outdoors. Then, they go online to report what they’ve found and give clues to others that might want to seek what they just hid. For more information about this exciting sport, read “A Guide to Geocaching” by the experts at Geocaching.com. A copy is available in the Get in the Game! toolkit on *YourSource*.

Geocaching is extremely popular. People who try it, love it! And geocachers are often outdoor-enthusiasts with Scout-age children—exactly the kind of people we try to reach time and again. In fact, a lot of geocachers are themselves Scouting alumni. The synergy, and the opportunity, is tremendous.



How to “Get in the Game!”

There are basically two ways to construct a Get in the Game! event: public and private. You don’t have to choose one or the other. In fact, we recommend you try both.

For public events, you’ll hide a cache, post its location and details online on the official geocaching Web site, Geocaching.com, and watch the log to see how many visitors it gets! Joining the nationwide game allows you to play with millions of people and really raise public awareness of Scouting. You can also use Geocaching.com to move “Travel Bugs®” across the nation. These are trackable items that players pick up from one cache and move to another, logging the movement online. Think of how fun it could be to start a travel bug on the West Coast and have it make its way to the National Jamboree!

It’s also easy to set up a private, unit-run geocaching course with four to five caches. You just need an outdoor area, a game, some containers, and a few GPS units or other navigation devices. With the new Groundspeak geocaching app, it’s even possible go geocaching with an iPhone! The pack, troop, or crew can invite schools groups, sports teams, church groups, and others to join. After the game, point out how much fun it was, talk about upcoming unit activities, and ask who wants to join!

The Get in the Game! toolkit is complete with ideas, game pieces, prize options, rules, and instructions on how volunteers can set up themed cache activities. You can hide the caches in locations that show off local Scouting landmarks. Or, add pieces of your council's Scouting history—and, of course, recruitment information—to the caches. This program can go in a lot of different directions. Have fun with it!



Benefits for Councils

We know that council, district, and unit leaders are always looking for fun new activities to engage Scouts. Get in the Game! offers that and more. Geocaching can help your council:

- **Increase membership.** Get in the Game! can increase contact with interested non-member adults, families, and youth allowing you to reach people who are active in geocaching, but not Scouting. You can also build your recruitment effort by asking Scouts to bring non-Scout friends along to events.
- **Reconnect with Scouting alumni.** Include information in the caches about BSA Alumni Connection, and ask alumni to get involved with Scouting programs again.
- **Find new volunteers.** Grow your current volunteer base by reconnecting with Scouting alumni and others who are interested in outdoor activities.
- **Teach your community about your council's contributions!** Again, this program offers you a great opportunity to talk to people that you might not reach otherwise. Let them know what you're doing to improve your community. As an example, leave a note in the cache container saying something like, "You reached this cache today on a trail built by Scouts. Scouts from [LOCATION] build and maintain [NUMBER] of miles of trails every year!"
- **Highlight Scouting values.** Both through your event programming and cache contents, you can demonstrate the values that Scouting teaches youth and generate parent interest.
- **New service opportunities.** There are a lot of opportunities to build community service into a Get in the Game! event. And that will help build goodwill with the geocaching community. You could easily join the Geocaching.com "Cache In. Trash Out" initiative or build a program that helps units work towards the "Year of Celebration" Service ribbon.
- **Celebrate our 100th Anniversary!** Promote some of the other 100th Anniversary programs in the caches to get people in your area excited about the celebration! Invite people to your Pitch for Scouting day at the ballpark. Inform Scouting alumni about how to earn the Year of Celebration patch. Promote your Adventure Base 100 tour stop. Ask people to plant an official BSA 100th Anniversary tree through Generations Connection or place a cache at the site where you hold a tree planting. And more!

Equipment

Get in the Game! doesn't require a huge financial investment. In fact, it might cost you nothing at all.

Navigation

Instead of purchasing GPS units, you can borrow them from volunteers, geocachers, or geocaching clubs. In fact, you don't even need to use GPS devices. Navigation features on some cell phones—like the iPhone and others—work too. It's also possible to participate using Google Earth maps or the old Scouting standby of a map and compass, although these methods do detract a bit from the high-tech appeal.

Some councils might already have GPS handsets to loan out to districts and units that they use in National Youth Leadership Training courses and other council activities. If not, you might want to consider purchasing a few that units to check out for a nominal fee. They would serve you well in the future for many programs, and pay for themselves quickly. Several councils have discount programs in place already with retailers that carry GPS devices like REI, Cabela's, and Bass Pro Shops.

Containers and Contents

In addition to the navigation device, you'll need cache containers and contents. Containers can be made from almost anything that will keep the contents dry, like old peanut butter jars or coffee cans with tight fitting lids. Try to pick containers large enough to hold a Pinewood Derby car — in case a Race to 2010 Travel Bug zooms by.

For contents, you'll want to add a logbook for people to sign and some prizes. The best logbooks are the small spiral notebooks that can be bought for about a dollar. You can also staple pieces of paper together — it just needs to be something people can sign. Also include materials that help you reach your membership and volunteer recruitment goals like "Join the Adventure" recruitment cards, BSA Alumni Connection cards, information about your council, and maybe even a few photos. These caches are living advertisements for Scouting. Recently, a Scouting alumnus wrote in a geocaching log, "Wow. Didn't know the BSA is getting into geocaching. Makes me wish I had contact with a troop or pack again." If that cache had included an alumni card, he could have learned how to reconnect.



We'll get you started with a small kit of highly coveted prizes that you can use to hold drawings or contests, including custom, trackable 100th Anniversary geocoins. Quantities will be limited. To get your prize package, send a request to Get in the Game! Volunteer Lead Mary Stevens at bsagetinthegame@gmail.com. Prizes can be re-ordered for a minimal cost if you run out. And, you'll want to fill caches with some council-relevant prizes like patches, paper tokens, and other inexpensive items.

Groundspeak

The geocaching authorities at Groundspeak, creators of Geocaching.com, have partnered with the BSA to take Get in the Game! to a new level. In addition to helping promote the Get in the Game! programs, Groundspeak has offered a free 30 day premium membership to Geocaching.com for every Scout and Scouter (a \$5 per person value). The standard membership is free.

A premium membership comes with some useful bells and whistles. It allows players to directly contact each other more easily. It also allows for "pocket queries" that let players make a database of all the caches of any certain type in a certain area to download into a GPS device — a handy feature when you create a series of caches. It also allows players to cache along a route. Purchasing the premium membership after a trial is \$30, and well worth the price for a very active geocachers, but you can still participate fully in Get in the Game! without it.



Next Steps

To get started, you'll want to form your Get in the Game! committee, read through the rest of the materials in the toolkit on *YourSource* and Geoscouting.com and participate in one of the Webinars (live or recorded).

The "work" of setting up the program is minimal and can be done by volunteers or even older Scouts. Find out if there are volunteers in your council with geocaching experience. If not, reach out to local geocachers or geocaching clubs, and ask them to join your planning committee. Just e-mail bsagetinthegame@gmail.com, and the national team will provide you with information to help you connect.

Get in the Game! will reward your council long past 2010. Get started today!