Counselor Guide for Geocaching Merit Badge

The Geocaching merit badge's requirement 8 has 4 options. This document provides guidance on how to guide the Scouts on choosing and completing one of those choices.

Note that if you have a local geocaching group, those people may be able to help you with creating Travel Bugs and learning how to get good coordinates for geocache placement. Check with your council to see if the council has an active geocache account. Connect with other local Geocaching merit badge counselors. One aspect of geocaching is being part of a loose-knit community. Caches are placed and maintained by local individuals.

Geocaching has searchable Help pages at geocaching.com/help

Scouts (and other geocachers) can "watch" a listing for a geocache or a Travel Bug. Owners automatically receive email notifications of actions on their items without watching. But watching will allow Scouts (or counselors) to monitor logs for items.

Cache to Eagle

In 2010, to celebrate Scouting America's 100th Anniversary, there was a geocaching promotion called "Get in the Game". It promoted both geocaching and Scouting. As part of that promotion, councils across the country created geocaches highlighting Scouting and especially Eagle Scout projects. These were public geocaches that brought attention to Eagle Scout projects in local communities. But that was over 15 years ago, and many of these caches have been archived. But some councils have continued to create Cache to Eagle caches. And some were well-created caches that have survived.

To find Cache to Eagle caches near you, sign in to geocaching.com and choose Play > Search > Filters (sliding knob icon next to search field). The mobile version of the site has the filter icon as well. In the Filters, use the "Geocache name contains" field to search for "Cache to Eagle". Choose Apply. Some of these may not be close to you. Tap the map icon (looks like a folded map) to see the results on a map. Try different variations of Eagle or C2E to perhaps find additional caches.

If there are not any Cache to Eagle caches nearby, perhaps reach out to your council or local geocaching group about creating a few at Eagle Scout project sites.

Travel Bug

A Travel Bug (TB) is an item with a private trackable code connected to its page on the geocaching.com website. Geocachers find the item in a cache and move it to another cache. Geocachers log each movement using the trackable's code. But many of the items are picked up and kept as treasure. And the codes are not free because they support their web pages.

Note that each TB has two codes. One is its public code on its web page. The other is the code on the TB or its attached tag. That code is only for people who have seen the TB and either discovered it or moved it.

However, because TBs disappear, local geocachers may have a tag they will repurpose for Scouts. They might allow a Scout to adopt the code or they might rename it with the name the Scout wishes. The Scout could create the TB with the private code included and watch the page accessed by the public code to meet the requirement.

Hide a Public Geocache

Hiding a geocache is a responsibility. That geocache is available to the public and represents Scouting. Over the years, many such caches have been abandoned without being archived or cleaned up. The requirement says to clean it up, but there is no enforcement.

Placing a public geocache requires:

- a good waterproof container and log
- an interesting location to bring people to
- permission from the landowner to hide it there
- accurate coordinates
- publication by the local reviewer
- a maintenance plan

Having an experienced geocache owner as a mentor is helpful if this is the option the Scout chooses. Perhaps they could create a new Cache to Eagle cache for the council. The requirement does not say that the Scout must be the cache owner. Scouts (and other geocachers) can "watch" a listing to meet the requirement after publishing.

Cache In, Trash Out (CITO)

Learning about CITO (cleaning up around caches) and holding a private CITO event for their unit is probably the easiest option to complete this requirement. It is a service project for the community. It could be combined with requirement 9 where the Scout plans and holds a geohunt for a youth group. Another part of this option is creating CITO materials (small trash bags in a slightly larger bag marked CITO) that can be left at local caches. The requirement does not say that the CITO materials must be placed. This is vastly easier than placing a public geocache and yet has a positive effect on the community.

Requirement 8 for reference:

(a) If a Cache to Eagle® series exists in your council, visit at least three of the locations in the series. Describe the projects that each cache you visit highlights, and explain how the Cache to Eagle® program helps share our Scouting service with the public.

(b) Create a Scouting-related Travel Bug® that promotes one of the values of Scouting. Release your Travel Bug into a public geocache and, with your parent or guardian's permission, monitor its progress at www.geocaching.com for 30 days. Keep a log, and share this with your counselor at the end of the 30-day period.

(c) Set up and hide a public geocache, following the guidelines in the Geocaching merit badge pamphlet. Before doing so, share with your counselor a three-month maintenance plan for the geocache where you are personally responsible for those three months. After setting up the geocache, with your parent or guardian's permission, follow the logs online for 30 days and share them with your counselor. You must archive the geocache when you are no longer maintaining it.

(d) Explain what Cache In Trash Out (CITO) means, and describe how you have practiced CITO at public geocaches or at a CITO event. Then, either create CITO containers to leave at public caches, or host a CITO event for your unit or for the public.