

## Geocaching.

Field trips are always fun for school children. The typical trips are to museums, parks, and science centers. Of course, it depends on where you live. You have an advantage if you live in a city because there is more variety and entertainment. In a rural area, a school may have to be more creative to keep their field trips interesting. One activity that my kids took part in recently was geocaching. It has very quickly become popular globally, even in this small, rural area. So, what is it? Geocaching is considered an outdoor sporting activity in which players use some kind of navigational device (1). Coordinates (2) of a certain place are given, and the participants have to find their way there. Once they reach the exact spot, they search and find a container of some sort (3). Inside are inexpensive items such as toys, nicknacks (4), or items of interest or meaning. These can be taken and kept by the person doing the geocaching, but it is expected that the finder replace these items with something else. Also, inside the container will be a logbook where the geocacher will write the date and his or her personal geocaching code (5). You can receive a code by registering on-line as a geocacher. So, basically, this sport is like hide and seek, except that you're not hiding yourself but a cache, a treasure of some kind. As long as the container of the cache is waterproof, it will be safe until someone finds it. Geocaching started in Oregon in the United States in May of 2000, when a man by the name of (6) David Ulmer hid a cache and posted the coordinates on-line on the international Usenet newsgroup. Since then, geocaching has taken off (7), and is currently in 100 countries, even in Antarctica. People continue to register on-line at sites like 'Geocaching.com' where you can find coordinates of caches in your area, and the rules of the game. So, it sounds like fun, doesn't it? It's a great, free activity that you can do with friends and family. Schools, of course, are taking advantage of this as well. When we went geocaching, my children's school split up into several groups and hunted around in the parks. While they walked from one cache to another, they picked up litter. As they came to the spots where the coordinates met, there was a lot of excited hunting, looking in bushes and trees, until someone would shout out excitedly, "I've found it!" One cache was tiny. We wouldn't have found it without the help of the teacher who had been there before. The container was a tiny, metal cylinder, about a third of the size of (8) a pencil. It had a screw top, and was inserted into a hole in a sign post. The logbook was a very small rolled up paper, and the cache was a sticker. The students were fascinated. After finding that cache, they discussed the possibilities of creating tiny and unusual caches that they could plant. I'm forming a list of activities to do this summer, and I think I have found one more thing to add to it: geocaching.

1. 'A device' is a general word for a useful tool. It can range from a simple pair of scissors, to an iPad.
  - a. When scissors were first invented, they must have been considered incredible devices.
  - b. To geocache properly, it is best to have a navigational device.
2. 'Coordinates' is an unusual word. Two 'o's' together usually create the 'ooo' sound, but not in this case. A similar word is 'cooperate'. Let's practice.
3. 'Of some sort' is the same as saying 'of some kind'; the two expressions are interchangeable.
  - a. When you plant a new tree, you should use some sort of support for it for the first year.
  - b. He contracted some kind of skin disease, and had to use antibiotics to get rid of it.
4. 'Nicknacks' has the same meaning as 'trinkets'. They are usually small items of little value such as collectibles, ornaments, fridge magnets, and memorabilia from vacations.
  - a. After lunch, we walked around the town and looked at the trinket shops. We bought a few nicknacks.
  - b. I wish you'd buy something decent, and not all of those cheap nicknacks.
5. 'Geocaching' is the topic for today. One point to remember is the pronunciation of the 'ch': it sounds like 'sh'.
6. 'By the name of' is used instead of 'called' or 'is called'.

- a. A woman by the name of Elizabeth Brown established this line of ceramics.
- b. A man by the name of Rodger Snoops informed the police about the suspect.
- 7. 'To take off' is used in several contexts. A plane can take off (when it first leaves the airport). Also, a hobby or sport can take off, as in become very popular.
  - a. Geocaching has taken off over the past twelve years because everyone likes to hunt for treasure, and it is inexpensive.
  - b. Reality shows took off about ten years ago, and are now in every country.
- 8. When comparing sizes using fractions, we use expressions like 'half (of)the size of' or 'three quarters (of) the size of'. The first of is usually included in British English, whereas in the U.S it is missed out.
  - a. The dog is half (of) the size of the cat.
  - b. The museum is three quarters (of) the size of the bus station.