

Two young girls with long brown hair and wide-eyed, open-mouthed expressions of surprise are looking into an open, dark wooden treasure chest. They are wearing matching floral-patterned dresses. The chest is open, showing its interior compartments and two leather straps with metal buckles. The background is dark, and the scene is lit from above, highlighting the girls' faces and the chest.

# Treasure Hunts

Team building, learning and fun!

**JESUS**  
all about life

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# Treasure Hunts

## The purpose

Treasure Hunts are a great way to introduce fun and challenge into an event or program.

They can serve different purposes:

- To introduce people to each other
- To get people working together and build trust
- To discover big ideas, one step at a time
- To introduce players to particular objects and get them thinking about them
- Or just to have fun!

## Easter

Easter is associated with treasure hunts in many cultures, often with children “hunting” for hidden eggs. Using a treasure hunt to explore and unpack the events of Easter is a great way to make the most of this common activity.

This booklet includes guidelines for running treasure hunts, as well as suggestions and ideas.

There is also information on running **digital** treasure hunts if your players or teams have access to phones or devices with GPS or internet connections.





# Types of Treasure Hunt

There are 3 common kinds of treasure hunt!

- **Free-for-all**
- **Scavenger**
- **Step-by-step**

You can choose according to the complexity level required to challenge players in a helpful way.



# The art of creating a helpful challenge

At the heart of a treasure hunt is the concept of 'challenge'. Children love a treasure hunt for this reason – the solution takes time to emerge.

If a hunt is too easy for players, they won't be challenged or engaged. If a treasure hunt is too difficult, players will want to give up. Designing a hunt with the ability of players in mind is essential.

As you design the activity also consider whether players will work alone, in pairs or in teams. There are benefits and limitations to each.

**Hint:** To make a hunt more broadly adaptable to a range of children, put the children into teams of 3 or 4 with a variety of ages in each team.



# 1. Free-For-All

*Best For: young children, families, large groups, individual players, festivals, ice breakers*

A **free-for-all** treasure hunt is where “treasures” are hidden throughout an area, and players can find them in any order.

A popular example is an Easter egg hunt!

## **Free-For-All Treasure Hunt Idea**

In free-for-all treasure hunts, it’s common for the “treasures” players find to become their prizes – such as when players are searching for hidden chocolates.

But you can change that! Players can search for anything, such as tokens they can use at the end of the game to choose rewards, or the clues required to solve a puzzle – like a list of words they must arrange to form a sentence!



## 2. Scavenger

*Best For: families, teens, teams, team building, fostering creativity*

A **scavenger hunt** is where players must find objects that you have **not** hidden for them.

They are given a list and must find an object that matches each entry on the list.

A list might ask them to find things like:

- Something blue
- Something that sinks
- Something that tells the time
- The letter “s”

Scavenger hunts are great ways for players to exercise their creativity in meeting the challenges.

Scavenger hunts are particularly good for building teams. They are excellent as team icebreakers or for established teams to work together competitively.





## 3. Step-By-Step

*Best For: teens, adults, competition, challenge, exploring a theme, telling a story*

A **step-by-step** treasure hunt is the hardest to set up but can be the most rewarding.

Players are given a clue that leads to the first treasure.

The first treasure gives a clue as to where to find the second treasure.

The second treasure gives a clue as where to find the third treasure, and so on.

Each “treasure” location needs to provide information. Sometimes the location has a poster or card stuck in place for players to read, and sometimes it has information sheets for players to take.

## Mixing Treasure Hunt Types

There are no rules, and you can combine treasure hunt styles if you want to!



For example, players could work through a step-by-step hunt and also be given a scavenger hunt list of objects to find on their way. Or players are given a scavenger hunt list at one of the treasures they uncover along the way. This allows the game to start simply but build as it plays.

A step-by-step treasure hunt can also use other treasure hunt types to direct players to the next treasure. Players could arrive at one treasure and discover that six letters revealing the location of the **next** treasure have been hidden in the room!



# Creating a Free-For-All Treasure Hunt

*Steps to create a free-for-all treasure hunt.*

## Decide your goal for the hunt

THINK: Are you wanting players to learn something? Experience something? Or just have fun by collecting as many prizes as possible?

If you are making the game into a puzzle, you need to plan the puzzle, including the information players will collect at each treasure and what puzzle needs to be solved.

You will need to decide:

- Are players expected to solve the puzzle during the game's "search" time? Or is the "hunt" time only for finding as many clues as possible, with players attempting to solve the puzzle once the group is back together?
- Do you want players to find **all** the clues? It is best if your puzzle can be solved with only **some** of the clues, even if that makes it harder. Otherwise, you must ensure players have enough time to find every clue, which can lead to those who find them quickly becoming restless.

## Free-For-All Examples

### 1. 17 Words

Players are told there are 17 words to find (including 2 repeated words). They search and find “all”, “all”, “and”, “good”, “has”, “he”, “his”, “is”, “is”, “LORD”, “made.”, “mercy”, “over”, “Psalm 145:9”, “that”, “The” and “to”.

Afterwards they see if they can arrange the words to figure out today’s verse (“The LORD is good to all, and his mercy is over all that he has made.” – Psalm 145:9). The more words a player collects, the easier it will be!

### 2. Sentences to tell a story

Players collect sentences that each tell part of a story. They search and find “Jesus is put to death on a cross”, “Peter denies Jesus three times”, “Jesus rises from the dead!”, “Jesus washes his disciples’ feet”, “Soldiers arrive to arrest Jesus” and “There is an earthquake, and the curtain in the temple tears from top to bottom”. Afterwards, they need to arrange the sentences in order. The more sentences a player collects, the more complete their result will be.

### 3. Find the names

3. Each treasure has the name of a leader who will NOT be running the next activity. Players search for as many names as they can. When the game ends, they are told to go to a leader. Players who found **all** the names will know exactly which leader to go to. Others will have to guess from the ones they didn’t find.

## More info on Free-For-All

### Decide what you'll be hiding

If it's just to have fun, it's usually best to hide the prizes players will collect as they do the hunt.

If the game is a puzzle or an experience, you might choose to hide objects or tokens or something players must collect that will be important for the broader game – like pieces of a jigsaw puzzle.

Based on what you're hiding, there are different approaches to what players will take when they find it.

- Sometimes you will hide each object on its own. The first player to find that object gets to take it (such as an Easter egg).
- Another approach is to hide lots of one object at each location, instructing players to take 1 when they find it. This is a good option for when you want players to solve a puzzle and they need to find as many clues as possible but is best played with mature players who can be trusted not to take all the objects.
- Another approach is that players never take anything! When they find a “treasure” it is a message (or a QR Code) that might be a clue such as a word or letter, and players must note it down and find as many as possible to help solve a larger problem.

### Important!

Make sure all the objects you hide can be clearly identified so if a player finds one, they know they've found a treasure!

This is easy when all the objects are the same (like Easter eggs) but if leaving notes or objects that are different from each other, you need to find a way for players to be sure it's a treasure.

You could draw the same picture or symbol on each one, or accompany each with a card that says “TREASURE!” or (for example) put all objects in red boxes.

## **Set it up**

Decide on a very clear boundary of where items can be hidden and try to spread items around in that area as much as possible.

Hide your objects just before the game is played to avoid anything being disturbed (or found) before you start!

## **Explain the rules clearly to players before you begin**

Players need to know:

- The boundaries for the treasure hunt
- How to identify an object as a ‘treasure’
- What puzzle needs to be solved (if any) and when they should move from searching for clues to solving the puzzle.

Players should also be told how long they will have to search, such as “you have 5 minutes” or “until I blow this whistle”.

## **Gather back and debrief**

It is good to gather back together afterwards. You may want to give a cheer or a prize for any players who did particularly well.

If any players have not done well, you might want to have some extra prizes or clues to help balance things up.

If players need to solve a riddle from the clues they have found, now would be a great time for that.





# Creating a Scavenger Hunt

*A scavenger hunt can be the easiest of all hunts to organise.*

## **Decide why you are playing**

Scavenger hunts are great for getting-to-know-you and team-building and are usually played in groups.

Are you:

1. Collecting items
2. Photographing objects
3. Finding people

Also, decide if you want existing groups to play as a way of working together and building trust, or if you are going to form new groups and use the scavenger hunt as a way for them to get to know each other.

### **Scavenger Hunt Idea**

Scavenger hunts can be used to explain or explore a theme.

For example: send players on a scavenger hunt for a lamp, a mirror, a knife, and a map. When they return, talk about how the Bible is like each of these objects!

## More info on Scavenger Hunts

### Decide how players will need to “collect” objects

There are different ways that players can “collect” objects in a scavenger hunt. The method you choose will have an impact on the sort of objects you ask people to find.

#### 1. Collecting Items

The most common approach is for players to physically “get” each object and bring them back at the end of the game. If doing this, ensure each team has a bag or a basket, or just a lot of players!

Examples of objects people might be challenged to collect:

Something you can write with	A leaf
Something metal	A twig
Something crooked	Water
Something you can wear	A band-aid
Something pink	Something with wheels
Something you can eat	The letter “p”
A boat	The number “5”



## Scavenger Hunt Idea

You can add a touch of creative fun to your scavenger hunt by having a theme for all the objects players must find.

For example, a simple theme is for all the requirements to start with the same letter, such as:

- Something green
- Something gigantic
- Something ghastly
- Something glamorous

## 2. Photographing Objects

If your players have access to devices with cameras, then a fun variation is to get teams to photograph the objects they need to find, rather than collect them and bring them in.

This allows you to ask players to look for bigger and more unusual things.

It also makes it easier for players if the list is lengthy.

### Important!

It's much harder to quickly check if players collected all their objects when they are collected through photographs.

Because of this, Photographing Objects is best played when you don't stress the competitive element of the treasure hunt, or if you are prepared to take your time afterwards to assess everyone's results. If so, get teams to upload or email their photos to submit them, and move on to the next activity whilst somebody checks the entries.

Sometimes players need to take a "selfie" of the object **with the team in the same photo**. This can make the game extra fun and build up an even better sense of team.



Examples of people to find:

- Has green eyes
- Has a “J” in their name
- Has eaten an egg today
- Has no brothers or sisters
- You have never met before today

## **Remember**

### **Create a list of things that players must find**

Write a list of objects players need to find.

Also explain any rules, such as how players need to collect the objects.

The list should be large print and easy to read.

### **Important!**

Don't ask players to bring back living creatures, however small. It's not necessary and the poor critter probably won't wind up living through the experience.

## **Think Safety**

Scavenger hunts sometimes have no boundaries. Players can go anywhere to find the challenges you have given them.

Decide if this is how you want to play, or if there should be limitations.

How old are the players? How safe is it for them to travel about? Should an adult accompany each group?

How will you contact any teams who don't return at the time the game is meant to end?

If children are playing you may need to get permission from parents and guardians first.

## Starting the game

Gather the players and go through the following:

- Explain any rules.
- Explain how players are expected to “collect” objects and make sure everyone understands.
- If there are any special instructions (for example, if you want players to dwell on each object as they find them), make these clear.
- If the game has any boundaries, make them very clear.
- Be **very** clear about when the game ends, and where players are expected to be at that time.
- Give players the list of objects to find.
- If players need to physically bring objects back, consider giving each team a bag or box.





# Creating a Step-By-Step Treasure Hunt

*Step-by-step treasure hunts require the most preparation, but can be the most engaging and memorable.*

## **Step-By-Step Treasure Hunt Idea**

Step-by-step treasure hunts are fantastic for telling a story or revealing information in order, because you know exactly the order in which players will find clues.

Each treasure can have a story or Bible verse to read or even a video that players can watch. These can be part of a larger story that gradually unfolds.

## **Decide how treasures will point players to the next one**

Each treasure in a step-by-step treasure hunt needs to direct players to the next treasure. This is usually done by sticking a note or information sheet up at the treasure point.



## Step-By-Step Treasure Hunt Idea

If your players have access to internet-enabled devices, step-by-step treasure hunts can feel extra creative if you use the devices as part of the game.

Instead of having an information sheet at each treasure point, you can just have a QR Code that players scan to find out what you want them to know and to get a clue to the location of the next treasure.

This allows you to include multimedia such as video as part of your treasure hunt.

You can even use a QR Code to a mapping app that will lead players to the next treasure!

There are many ways to direct players to the next treasure, and this will define how your treasure hunt plays out (and how long it takes to create).

### 1. Tell players where the next treasure is

This is the simplest and fastest approach. It's good for a quick treasure hunt where the fun is just going through the steps rather than being challenged by solving clues.

A treasure might have a simple instruction like "You'll find the next treasure in the mailbox".



## **Important!**

If each treasure directs players to the next treasure with no puzzle or searching required, players will move very quickly through the game, and players won't spread out much. If you have a lot of players in a small space, it could get very crowded around this constantly moving pack!

## **2. Tell players ROUGHLY where the next treasure is**

This is the simplest way to provide a challenge.

Choose where the next treasure will be, but only tell players roughly where to look. For example, "You will find the next treasure somewhere in the hallway".

You can make the game harder or easier by giving less or more specific detail in your clues.

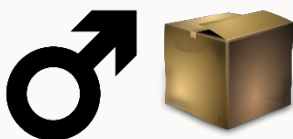
This is a challenge that works for all ages and will help spread your teams or players out if they all play at once.

## **3. Give players a riddle or puzzle to solve that will tell them where the next treasure is**

Here are some examples:

- Describe exactly where the next treasure is, but not very clearly. For example, "Your next treasure is where you will find letters". Players may have to explore different possibilities before they discover that it's referring to the mailbox.
- An activity sheet with a maze that has letters scattered throughout. When players solve it, the correct path goes through the letters "M – A – I – L – B – O – X" in order.

- A picture puzzle where the answer spells out the location of the next treasure.



- A series of pictures of the same sort of thing (people, movie posters, flags, landmarks) where the first letters of each spell out the next location.

### **Important!**

If you give players a riddle or puzzle to solve that will lead them to the next treasure, make sure the treasure is easy to spot when they get there!

The challenge should be in solving the puzzle, not in finding the actual treasure.

## **4. Have a map that leads players to the treasure**

Literally a treasure map!

This can be very clear, such as a map that shows where players currently are, and where the next treasure is (often marked with a big red cross) and a dotted line showing them how to get there.

Or it can just be a map showing the location of the treasure. This is best used with players who are very familiar with the area.

## Map Idea

If you are playing outdoors and players can bring electronic devices, you can provide a QR Code to a mapping site or app (such as Google Maps), with the location of the next treasure marked.

Mapping software only gets people close to the treasure, so you may need to tell them where to look when they get there.

For example, a note that says, “Go to the location at this QR Code, then look under the park bench.”

Or your “map” can be a set of instructions to guide players from their current location to the next treasure. For example: “Face the clock on the far wall. Now walk through the door on your left. Now walk down the corridor and walk through the 3<sup>rd</sup> door on the right. Now look behind the painting.”. You need to test your instructions thoroughly by following them yourself and by giving them to someone else to check. This is a fun way to play, and if players make a mistake they can usually go back and try again.



## **Car Rallies**

A car rally is a kind of step-by-step treasure hunt where players travel from location to location by car.

It is best suited for adults, or teens with adult leaders who will drive.

Players are often given full instructions at the beginning of the journey such as drive ahead, turn left at the first set of traffic lights, continue until you see a petrol station on the right, and so on).

But a car rally could also be played with new instructions and new things to discover at various locations along the way.

## **Decide what you want players to discover as they progress**

Is this just an exercise where players have fun moving from clue to clue, or do you want players to perform an activity or learn something with each step?

Either way, each treasure location should have an information sheet providing a clue to the next treasure location.

It should also include anything else you want players to discover at this point of their journey. For example, the next part of the story, the next Bible verse, or the next thing to think about.

The information sheet at a location can provide this, or it could be a QR Code that will send players to online content.

You might allow players to take a copy of the information sheet, particularly if it includes an activity. Be sure to clearly write something like “Take 1 of these (but leave the rest for other players)”.

If players are not meant to take the information sheet, make sure it's securely fastened. You may want to instruct players to "Do not take this – please leave it here for other groups".

### **Step-by-step treasure hunt idea**

Because you often know exactly what route players will take on a step-by-step treasure hunt, you can give them questions to answer along the way.

Questions could be as simple as "What is the name of the last shop you passed on the right?" or "There's something peculiar about the road you just crossed – what is it?"

They could also be thoughtful, such as: "Look at the big tree you are now passing. Imagine how deep and strong its roots are. How strongly connected do you feel to Jesus? Take some time to pray for him to take deeper root in your life."

### **Decide how players will be given the first clue**

The clue to the first treasure will be given directly to players. Decide how this will happen.

If players are gathered in the one location, you can simply hand out an information sheet to each player, or you can show some information on a screen to get them going.

If players have internet-enabled devices, you can display a QR Code they can use to get their first clue.

Either way, this needs to be created in advance and ready to give out or use when the game starts.

### **Set up your hunt and test it**

Set up all your information sheets, making sure they are in the right order and your starting information sheet leads to the first treasure, which leads to the second treasure, and so on.

Once you think it's all correct, play the hunt carefully yourself to check everything's in place and it's all in the right order.

Even better, ask someone else to test it. Other people will often discover problems you might not have noticed!

### **Decide if you have a time limit**

Decide if there will be a time limit for players to reach the destination so you can instruct players to arrive by then, even if they haven't finished.

It's often good to have an activity for players to arrive at or join into – such as a picnic or a game of frisbee.

### **Decide how you will help players who are stuck**

In a step-by-step scavenger hunt, if a player gets stuck on a particular clue, or they make a mistake then it's possible for them to be unable to continue without help.

Decide in advance how you will make help available to the players.

- They might be able to return to a central location for a clue.
- They might be able to send a text message to get a clue.
- You might send them out with a set of sealed envelopes containing different clues, and if they get stuck, they can open one of them.
- You might decide that no help is available, and players who get stuck are out!

## Starting your step-by-step hunt

### Make sure all players understand:

- What the clues or information sheets look like, so they can recognize them.
- What the time limit is, and where they must be at a certain time even if they haven't completed the hunt.
- How they can seek help if they need it.
- Any special instructions for your treasure hunt.

Then give them the clue for the first treasure and send them off!

### Important!

Players will often travel in a group, all following each other, if released from the same place at the same time.

It can be helpful to stagger the starting time of different players and teams. Or even start different teams from different locations!





# How to Use QR Codes



QR Codes are a way that players with internet-enabled devices can be directed to any kind of content you want. Video, audio, pictures, documents, websites, maps – anything that can be published online!

If using QR Codes for any purpose, make sure players are warned to bring their devices, which should be charged.

You should also check there is good phone signal or Wi-Fi in the area you will be playing. If the phone signal is bad, avoid using phones entirely. If there is phone signal but no Wi-Fi (common for outdoor treasure hunts) players will need to be told to bring actual phones or devices with their own sim card.

To create a QR Code, make sure your content is online and create a QR Code for the content's URL (web address). Print it or display it on a screen for players to read.

## Getting Content Online

If you make content and you need to get it online, ask yourself if there is an existing site or platform that hosts this kind of content.

<b>I want to share</b>	<b>Ideas for putting it online</b>
<b>A video</b>	YouTube, Vimeo
<b>An audio file</b>	SoundCloud
<b>A picture</b>	Imgur
<b>Words and pictures</b>	Create a document and export a PDF to a cloud storage site such as Google Drive
<b>Multiple videos, Multiple audio, Or Multimedia with words or pictures</b>	Create a document, with the words and pictures and clickable links to any video or audio. Save a PDF to a cloud storage site such as Google Drive.

## Generating the QR Code

Once your content is accessible online, you need to get the web address (URL) that will take users to it and create a QR Code for it.

### Important!

If you make a file available online by saving it to a cloud storage site such as Google Drive, when you create a link to share your content, make sure you give “View” access rather than “Edit” access!

Once you have the URL, you can use any QR Code generator to create the QR Code image. An example of an easy-to-use generator is [www.qrcode-monkey.com](http://www.qrcode-monkey.com).

Create and save your QR Code, and then include it in the information given to players.

### Important!

If creating a QR Code at QR Code Monkey, make sure “Statistics and Editability” is **off**. Otherwise, you will need pay for a subscription to keep your QR Code working after the free trial ends.

## Other Treasure Hunt Resources

### Our Treasure Hunt

***Our Treasure Hunt*** is – at time of writing – a free application that allows you to create a treasure hunt on their web site that players can play through an app.

The app can use GPS to show players where to go for the next treasure. Clues for the next treasure can be any combination of basic text, a picture and/or a pin on a map.

In ***Our Treasure Hunt***, every treasure must give players a code word which they enter into the app. Once they do so, it will start directing them to the next treasure.

The app does not currently support displaying any kind of media or document when players solve a treasure, so it's best used with a puzzle or story or activity at the location that players must find. They then engage with the material, which in turn leads them to learn or solve the code word which they enter to move on to the next treasure.

The GPS feature works well, although could be clearer. Typically, when you have your first clue that uses GPS, you may want to explain to players in the text (or even in the picture) that they need to press the Map icon to see the map, and then close it again once they have arrived at the location.

The GPS feature is best used for outdoor hunts, even if they are within a small outdoor area.