

LEARN IT. LOVE IT. LETTERBOXING!

What is Letterboxing? A combination of treasure hunting and puzzle solving, letterboxing is fun for all ages! Participants get clues on the internet, then follow them to hidden letterboxes placed in inconspicuous, scenic locations, containing a log book and [usually hand-carved] rubber stamp.

Where can I find letterboxes? There are at least 80,000 letterboxes hidden in the U.S. alone, but there are others worldwide! They are hidden in publicly accessible places (such as parks) and there are probably some in your area or perhaps where you will be traveling. You can search for clues by county, city, state, or even what highway you'll be traveling on! Visit letterboxing.org or atlasquest.com to get started. Find a clue in your area, then go to the starting point. Some clues are straightforward while some require puzzle solving.

If you create a login on these sites, you can first check to make sure a box has not been reported missing.

How do I get started? Once you've targeted a letterbox from one of the websites mentioned above, check your gear. Use our "What You Need" checklist to help. Then, follow the clues and find your letterbox! Be discreet! You don't want to ruin the surprise for other letterboxers in the area or to attract attention from others who might vandalize the box. Once you find it and stamp in, make sure you follow the code of the letterboxer and Leave No Trace - don't disturb nature, and re-hide the letterbox better than the way you found it.



LETTERBOX LEXICON

Trail name: The nickname a letterboxer chooses to sign in logs.

Muggles: Non-letterboxers; use stealth so that they won't see what you're doing!

Logbook: a book found inside the letterbox for finders to stamp in; sometimes containing greetings or stories for other letterboxers.

Personal logbook: books kept to collect images made by stamps found.

Stamp in: On finding a letterbox, the finder inks his/her stamp and stamps it in the log; then puts the stamp image of the letterbox in his/her personal journal.

Leave No Trace: the code of the letterboxer—avoid disturbing nature, never litter, and re-hide letterboxes better than how they were found.

Pace: two steps, not one!

Hitchhiker: a surprise letterbox, found inside of another. The finder moves it to another letterbox or just leaves it there..



CHECKLIST: WHAT YOU NEED

- 1. **Rubber stamp.** You need your own "signature stamp" to represent yourself in the logbooks you stamp in to. Buy one or make your own! Some families use one "team" stamp to make the process faster.
- 2. **Ink pad.** Bring ink for the stamp in the letterbox as well as your signature stamp. Or you can color stamps with the side of Crayola markers.
- 3. **Pen.** Sometimes letterboxes have their own pens, but many don't.
- 4. **Personal logbook.** - You will want to keep a book for the images of all the stamps you've found. Some families use separate journals for each person while others keep one "team" journal. It should have thick, BLANK pages. An easy logbook is 4x6 blank index cards from an office supply store that can be inserted into cheap, small photo albums.
- 5. **Extras.** Water, snacks, bug repellent, flashlights, tissues, comfortable shoes—anything to make an adventure hike easier. It's also nice to have a paper towel to wipe off the stamps (don't use wet wipes!)
- 6. **Compass (optional).** A few letterboxes are located with direction and degree readings that must be found by compass or GPS system.



MAKE YOUR OWN RUBBER STAMP!

1. Find a simple black & white image such as the one below.
2. Color the solid part of the picture with a #2 pencil.
3. Turn the picture over onto a rubber eraser and rub back of the picture with something smooth (like the back end of a Sharpie marker). This will transfer the reverse image to the eraser. Reinforce the drawing with a Sharpie if you need to.
4. Using a craft knife (Xacto, carving tool, etc.), cut away the light areas of the eraser (a parent's job!). Kids can use a pencil with the eraser pulled out and the metal part squished into a V.
5. Glue a plastic bottle cap, small piece of wood, or piece of foam door-hanger to the un-inked side of the eraser to use as a handle.



IS THERE MORE TO IT?

If you want there to be! The websites have discussion groups and tutorials so that you can learn more about stamp carving, log book making, hiding letterboxes and more!