

# STRATEGY GUIDE

Interested in diving into the strategic side of the TerraCaching game? This guide provides a little insight into the strategies that can be employed when playing the games available. There are several aspects to the accumulation of points on TerraCaching, in addition to having fun finding TerraCaches. There are three main point games that are related to each other- the TPS, MCE and UCR. If you would like an overview of the formulas or a more detailed mathematical formula view, check out some of the other resources on the Community page.

## TERRACACHING POINT SYSTEM (TPPS, LTPS, CTPS)

Please note- the TPS of a cache is not a measure of its quality, but rather its difficulty. It includes many attributes of difficulty, such as hiking distance, percent off trail, hide difficulty, and several other factors. Here are some strategies that can be employed when playing this part of the game. The theory behind TPS is that the harder a cache is to find, the more difficult it must be. The system uses the nearest 100 caches to help gauge the difficulty of traditional caches. The system uses a sliding scale for Locationless and Cyber Caches.

### TIP #1

The first and most important thing to remember is that time and the number of finders play a major role in the TPS formula. As caches age, their points will gradually reflect their true difficulty (or lack thereof) more accurately. So, be patient! Your points will eventually reflect the difficulty of your cache as your local community grows. The score can grow to 200 and be as low as 1. Having a TPS of 1 if it is a quality cache is a good thing for the community.

### TIP #2

The range of points that a cache is eligible to be worth is based on the nearest 100 caches. In areas where TerraCaching is getting started, some difficult caches could be undervalued simply because there aren't enough other caches in the area to compare them to. So, if the number of caches within 100 miles of yours isn't at least 100, you may want to place more caches and encourage growth in your community. They don't have to, and in fact shouldn't, all be hard caches, or all be extremely challenging caches. City and State parks are often excellent places to hide easy & good caches to get your community up to that "100 in 100" cache density. Once that density is reached, TPS will more accurately reflect the difficulty in your community.

### TIP #3

TPS will fluctuate with activity. The points a particular cache is worth is dependent on the highest and lowest "raw scores" of the 100 nearest caches. This means that if you go find the cache with the highest area raw score, you'll drop it's raw score, which can often raise the points of almost every other cache within 100 miles (depending on what other caches are within 100 miles of them). Sometimes this can momentarily help the area TerraCachers you're competing against more than it helps you.

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However, avoiding high point caches simply for this reason is usually a losing strategy in the long run. If you find the cache with the lowest raw score, you'll drop its raw score even further, which can also often raise the points of the nearest 100 caches. So, just because one particular cache is only worth 1 point itself, doesn't mean finding it wouldn't be worth a lot more to you (and everyone else in your community). For Locationless and Cyber Caches the system uses a sliding scale based on the number of hides to find the offsetting raw score instead of the nearest 100 caches.

Also, if your community hides nothing but very challenging caches, then even the lowest raw score in your area will be high, and a 5 point cache in your area could be much more difficult than a 50 point cache in a community that has a good variety of easy and difficult caches. This is one of several reasons why comparing your TPS points to those of people in distant communities is often not as useful as you might expect it to be.

## TIP #4

How should families sign up and log TerraCaches? Should they do it as a family or sign up individually and each member has their own account? The correct answer is it depends on your preference. Yes, more finders will temporarily lower the TPS, but having a quality cache for the community could offset this. It is perfectly acceptable to sign up as a family caching team. If the members of your family are going to actually find and rate the caches it is acceptable for them to all have their own accounts. One of our goals is to get outdoors and learn to navigate, find quality places that inspire, and have fun. A benefit of each person having their own account to log a cache would be that when they go out on their own, their counts and points stay with them. If they become premium members, they will enjoy the benefit of personalized cache recommendations.

## TIP #5

The site depends on users having active caches. If you archive or have the system archive your cache, the TPS of these caches will gradually decline based on their MCE. So it is better to repair your cache than to archive it.

Another goal of TerraCaching is to place high quality caches. We depend on the community of TerraCachers to help us judge how good the caches are in each specific community. We do this using the MCE or Measure of Cache Excellence (more in the next section). TerraCaches that have  $MCE > 7$  will gain 50 bonus TPS points.

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## MEASURE OF CACHE EXCELLENCE (MCE)

Please note- the MCE of a cache is not intended to measure cache difficulty. Instead, the focus of this formula is to exclusively calculate the cache quality. The cache quality is determined by the finders of each cache. Since the majority of the finders will most likely be from the local community of TerraCachers, this should represent that communities' MCE of the cache and won't necessarily translate how another community views caches. A good acceptable cache will average between 4 and 6. In fact most caches will fall in this range which is perfectly acceptable.

### TIP #1

The system uses only finders of the cache to determine the MCE. If there is less than 10 finders, then the system auto generates ratings of the cache that may be higher or lower than the actual finder. So if you have one finder and your MCE drops from 5.0 to 4.9, don't assume that the finder did not like your cache; that finder may have actually rated it superb. We do this to protect the anonymous grading of the initial finders. We want them to be honest and judge the cache the way they would if they were the first finder or the hundredth. If you think about it, so do you.

### TIP #2

The way your votes apply to caches depends on how you typically vote. Giving a lot of "Superb" and/or "Should be Archived" ratings will dilute the significance of those ratings coming from you. The system will place much greater significance on a "Superb" that comes from a user who very rarely gives this rating, than it will from someone who gives it to every other cache they find. Be Honest, Be Critical, Be Fair.

### TIP #3

Although difficult (especially in areas that don't have many TerraCaches yet), try not to compare apples to oranges, or in this case, TerraCaches to other caches. Those other caches aren't getting rated here, so it's meaningless to consider them when rating TerraCaches. If you find it impossible not to think of other caches when rating TerraCaches... then at least be consistent and always consider them.

### TIP #4

If you believe the cache is illegally placed please notify the hider of the issue so that they can archive or explain the reason behind the cache. If the hider does not respond please seek help from their sponsor, and if this fails please send an email to [support@TerraCaching.com](mailto:support@TerraCaching.com).

## USER CONTRIBUTION RATIO (UCR)

Where MCE attempts to measure the quality of a specific TerraCache, the UCR attempts to measure each User's contribution to TerraCaching. The higher the member's UCR, the greater the contribution from that user to the community. Some players desire to have the highest UCR and don't worry about the TPS. Their goal is to be known as TerraCaching Experts.

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The way a TerraCacher accumulates UCR points is by hiding unique, quality TerraCaches that are measured by the members of the community that found their caches. It uses the MCE of the caches that they hide to determine their UCR. So simply, caches with MCE less than 3.5 will have a negative impact on their UCR and caches with MCE greater than 5.5 will have a positive impact. The equation is not linear, so the difference between 5-6 is not comparable to the difference between 8-9 on the MCE scale.

## TIP #1

Even average caches (a MCE of 4-5) that you own will have a slight positive effect on your UCR. Caches with an MCE of 4 won't help or hurt your UCR, but anything below 3.5 will. So, don't be afraid of posting caches that are simply average. They have their place here too.

## TIP #2

Although average caches will slightly help your UCR, one cache with an MCE of 9 will be worth much, much more to you than 20 average caches (assuming that based on Tip #1, you own at least a couple high MCE caches). So, trying to get ahead just by placing a ton of average caches isn't necessarily time well spent. You'll usually be better off working on a couple phenomenal caches. However, there's nothing wrong with placing an average cache here and there in the mean time.

## TIP #3

If you have a low MCE cache with many finders, you should consider picking this cache up or making a modification to the cache so that future finders from the community will grade the cache higher. Low MCE caches and their impact on UCR are meant to be a learning tool to help you understand if this is the type of cache that the community wants to hunt and considers quality. It is not meant to be punitive; the common goal is quality TerraCaches. Most members will note on their cache detail page if they made modifications for future finders. Also, the initial finders of the cache are not always representative of the community as a whole. If you don't have at least 10 finders you might hold off until a better sample of the community is obtained. Be patient, be willing to take some constructive feedback, and strive to place a cache that people would consider high quality.