

Checklist Guide for Quest-building

✓ Identify an outdoor place that has a special significance to you. What do you notice and wonder about? Develop some initial questions you have about the place.

✓ Think about how others will use your Quest.

- Will the Quest be open to the public?
- Will the Quest be available year round?
- Is an entrance fee or special equipment required?
- Will the Quest be handicap/stroller accessible?
- Do you anticipate particular size groups using the Quest (families of 1-5, classrooms of 15 - 40)?

The answers to some of these questions will determine whether your Quest is suitable for inclusion in The Oregon Coast Quests Book.

✓ Obtain permission from the landowner to make a Quest on the property and to invite your intended audience (general public, classroom, etc.). At the same time, find out if the person from whom you gain permission can help with the Quest in some way: Act as an educational resource for Quest-builders, coordinate public education goals, serve as a box monitor, etc.

✓ Determine who will serve as box monitor, maintaining the Quest and clues on a regular basis throughout the year.

✓ Walk or work in the space and gather more discoveries and questions. Take notes! Remember to schedule at least as much time for “breathing in” (gaining an understanding of the place and its story) as you do for “breathing out” (generating an interpretive Quest). What questions do you have about this place, and who can you contact to find out answers to your questions?

✓ What is the story you want to tell? Quests with themes may be most effective for learning. Determine a theme for your Quest. How does the place support the theme in various locations?

✓ Research your place and the theme. Interview experts and ask them your questions. For example, walk the area with a ranger or community elder who can share perspectives of the place. Visit the local historical society. Take notes!

✓ Sketch out some clue ideas. Remember to include three types of clues: 1) movement, 2) teaching, and 3) letter.

✓ Experiment with rhymes and verses. Not all directions have to rhyme.





✓ Find a place to hide the Quest Box. Boxes should not be buried, but should also not be accidentally discovered by someone not doing the Quest. You may wish your endpoint to be at a climax (neat gnarled tree, a spectacular view, the museum entrance, etc.) but beware of high traffic areas and potential vandalism issues. Also, think about how easy it will be access the box for monitoring.

✓ Things to Avoid:

- Avoid hiding your Quest box near someone else's hidden box. Check geocaching.com and letterboxing.com to find out if there are other caches hidden in the area. If you find any, hide your Quest box far away from them.
- Don't require Questers to enter buildings, since they may be inaccessible at certain times of the day or year.
- Strive to keep Quests commercial-free. For example, instead of naming a particular business, you could focus on the building's history or architecture.

✓ Draw a rough map of the area and outline a route. Do you want to take people in a complete circle that ends with the box where you began? Or would you rather take people deep into the place, have them find the box, and then they return on their own to the starting point? How long do you want the Quest to be? About 45 minutes may be optimal.

✓ Most (but not all) Quests involve collecting letter clues along the way. Come up with a short clue phrase that describes the location of the box (average: 5 – 10 letters). This will determine the letters that you need to get on the rest of the route. Example: UNDER BENCH has between 8 and 10 clues to collect (since N and E appear twice) and tells you right where to look.

✓ Alternatively, you may choose to use clues that do not directly indicate the location of the hidden box but instead reveals another secret of the Quest. For example, collected letters may spell out the answer to a question posed at the start of the journey. In this case, the location of the box will have to be described in the text of the Quest. Be sure that finding the Quest box location is dependent on actually having followed the route, and cannot be determined by reading through the Quest directions while sitting in your car.

✓ Write up the Quest directions in rhyming verse or in prose. Additional information about the area may be included in text boxes off to the side of the directions, or placed in the Quest Box itself (or both).

✓ Draw participants' attention to things en route that have nothing to do with collecting Quest clues. Encourage active participation ("Drop a leaf in the water and count how long it takes to move to the other side of the bridge"), and the use of all senses ("What do the crab pots smell like?" "What do you hear?"). These often become the memorable "treasures" of the Quest.



- ✓ You may wish to pose additional “Questions for the Curious” and place the answers in the Quest Box. These questions are usually too difficult to be answered by direct exploration, but pique the interest of Questers who want to know more (For example: “How much water goes through this treatment plant every day?”)
- ✓ Finish drawing your map of the area. Don’t forget a North arrow and legend. Indicate distance and whether the map is drawn to scale. The map will be reprinted in **black and white**, so simple high-contrast black lines on a white background is easiest to read.
- ✓ Hide a temporary box and clues and invite friends and family of all ages (and especially your target audience) to try out your Quest while you watch. Resist the urge to tell them when they are going the wrong way, but instead hang back for a while and note if your directions are confusing or misinterpreted. Adjust your Quest accordingly and test again with a new group.
- ✓ Make your clues and box permanent. Carve a stamp with an image that represents the Quest. The box should be watertight, and contain Ziploc-type bags with the stamp, washable ink pad, guest book, pencil and sharpener and/or pen, Accidental Finders Note, answers to any Questions for the Curious, and any additional information about the site. You may wish to lock your box in place. Trinket trading in boxes is discouraged.
- ✓ Add driving directions to the Quest starting point, the time it takes to do the Quest, and some words describing the terrain and what to expect. Include the name of the box monitor and instructions about what to do if one finds a problem with the Quest. Give credit to Quest Partners by including organization names and logos (with permission).
- ✓ If your Quest will only be active for a limited period of time, indicate the time frame at the beginning of the directions.
- ✓ At the end of your Quest, include a note that says something like “If you enjoyed this Quest, check out the *Oregon Coast Quests Book*, which holds the clues and directions for more than two dozen hunts in Oregon. Visit seagrant.oregonstate.edu/quests for more information.”
- ✓ Share your Quest with others! Oregon Coast Quests would like to continue to collect, publish and distribute Quests to the public. Keep Cait abreast of your progress!



Quest Criteria

All Quests:

- Have an educational component
- Have clues that lead to a hidden box
- Provide a carved stamp for marking the accomplishment and log book to sign
- Are made by identifiable members of the community

Additionally, all Quests in the current Oregon Coast Quest Book:

- Are outdoors
- Have few or no fee/equipment requirements
- Are on publicly accessible land
- Are suitable for general audiences
- Are open year round
- Have no major changes planned at the site for the next three years

For more Quest ideas, examples, and curriculum support, visit:

- <http://seagrant.oregonstate.edu/quests>
- <http://www.vitalcommunities.org/valleyquest/>

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