

How to make your own **simple**

TREASURE HUNT



by Sam Gething-Lewis

How To Make Your Own Simple Treasure Hunt

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This is a guide to creating a great treasure hunt for your home, which can be adapted for your town, park or even your holiday. You'll learn how to create a number of different clues, pick a theme as well as how to make an authentic looking treasure map.

All you'll need is a couple of household objects, some willing pirates and of course – some **TREASURE!**

The brilliant treasure hunt that you create is limited only by your own imagination, kids' party, hen do or team building event.

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THD Website Edition

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Introduction

Ahoy There Me Hearties!

Ahaaaargh – it is time for a Treasure Hunt you scallies!

Right, apologies for all that, all the pirate talk is now out the way for a while.

This is a guide of how to make a simple treasure hunt.

What is a treasure hunt?

This book will show you how to create a clue based scavenger hunt consisting of a variety of puzzles leading to hidden treasure. There are other definitions, such as diving for sunken treasure or metal detecting for buried booty but for the sakes of saving your front lawn from being dug up, we will concentrate on the clue style.

How long will it take?

Depending on how hard you make it and how many clues you have you can work out roughly how long the activity will take. We will use a five clue treasure hunt which should take approximately an hour to make and thirty minutes for participants to complete. Allow five to ten minutes for each clue, some travel and discovery time. Take into account the abilities of your buccaneers.

Theme

For the purposes of this guide, we will adopt a pirate theme in a house, but you can replace the locations and vernacular to suit your geography and theme. See the chapter on Themes for more alternatives.

Treasure

What is the treasure? The better the treasure, the more motivated your hunters will be. It has to be something that they want to find – even if that something is a mysterious treasure. Chocolate gold coins are a good booty, or something more suitable if it is a stag or hen do. If you don't have any actual treasure, you could put a promise note of a treat and some congratulations for finding the treasure. There is a slim chance that the treasure won't be found so avoid using live animals.

Treasure Chest

We would benefit from having something special to put the treasure in. If you happen to have a small portable treasure chest lying around use that, or get an old biscuit tin or container, depending on the size of your treasure. It will have to be hidden so a carrier bag may come in handy.

If you are going to have more than one person/group hunt for the treasure, and you are a meanie, put a little note under the treasure saying "Too late scurvy dog! Th' treasure do be plundered!". This grants some bragging rights to the winners and adds to the gamesmanship.

Ingredients

This is what you will need

Treasure

Treasure chest/container/carrier bag

Pieces of paper - one for each participant

Scrap of paper - for you to scribble notes on

Cup of tea (keep the tea bag - you can drink the tea)

Black pen - preferably fibre tip

Pencil

Optional extras

Hair drier

Oven grill

String/ribbon/elastic band

Chapter One

The End

Unlike most things in life, you don't start from the beginning. With a treasure hunt you start from the end. The end is the final answer that we want our intrepid adventurers to arrive at. This will be what unlocks where the treasure is concealed.

This will be a five clue treasure hunt, so we need a five letter word for the answer.

An object that most places have is a TABLE. This will be our final answer that we will work back from for the purposes of this guide. If your answer is longer but they don't have the time to solve the clues you can gift them some of the letters.

Put the treasure into your container, plus a note if you have more than one person taking part ([see the introduction](#)).

Hide the object on part of the table – if possible tape it to the underside, or on a stool underneath, or concealed from view on top by other objects.

So now we have the answer write it vertically down the centre of your scrap of paper:

**T
A
B
L
E**

We are going to now look for answers that fit in with the letters we have.

Chapter Two

The Clues

If you have more than one person or group doing the treasure hunt, it is really important to set clues that cannot be tampered with. Try to set clues with enough distance that other participants cannot see other challenges being completed.

With that in mind, the first thing to do is decide where we are going to have our clue locations.

For our example, we are doing this one around the house and we want five answers, so we'll pick five places:

1. Sitting room
2. Hall
3. Bedroom
4. Bathroom
5. Front door

Bear in mind that the final treasure is in the kitchen, so avoid that area for clues.

When setting the clues try to use different styles for each one to keep it interesting. Bear in mind that when you create clues, the question may seem very simple to you but it may not be as straight forward as you think. If you own a servant or a slave, get them to test clues out for you to see if they can get the answers.

If you would like more ideas for styles of clue then read [Chapter Four](#).

We've established what the final answer is, so we will now create the clues to fit.

Clue One

Sitting room

Clue Type: Pacing

First thing is to find the answer here, then we'll create the question. As the final answer is TABLE, we need to find one of those letters. An easy one for this room would be the Television. Try to use up the most difficult letters first. In this case we'll use up the L. This can fit into the final answer on your scrap of paper like this:

1. **TELEVISION**

T
A
B
E

Now we need the question. For this clue we can use pacing. Start from a fixed point, and finish facing the target object. This could read something like:

Start with your back to the light switch. Forward 2 steps. Turn right 90°. Forward 3 steps. Left 90°. Forward 2 steps. Right 180°. Backwards 1 step. Left 180°. What object is in front of you?

Answer: TELEVISION

Now we'll pirate that up a bit. See the [Pirate Dictionary](#) for more alternative words:

Shiver me timbers shipmates! Get ye back t' the light switch. Take fore 2 paces. Turn ye salty sea legs 90° to yer right. Fore 3 steps. Turn ye ship left 90°. Take yer peg legs fore 2 steps. Twist thar vessel 180° ye scallywag. Take a lily livered step back. Turn yer self 180°. What does ye spy right in front of yer shipshape eye?

Clue Two

Hall

Clue Type: Maths

Once again, we need to nail the answer here. You'll get places where initially there doesn't appear to be a great deal of material to work with. If you look really hard then you'll realise there is actually a huge range of information. In the hallway you've got a carpet, doors, lights, pictures, each of which hold a great deal of potential for clues. Look closer for hidden words, shapes or colours. This clue is a maths based one, so we will come up with the answer first then find a way of making it. We'll make the answer Eight as that is an easy number to arrive at. This will fit into the final answer on your scrap of paper like this:



Now for the question. As it is maths, and the answer is eight then make something to suit like this:

Light Bulbs + Doors + Pictures – Radiators = ?

Answer: EIGHT

And now with a hint of buccaneer:

Ye do be doin th' math:

Light Bulbs + Doors + Pictures – Radiators = ?

Clue Three

Bedroom

Clue Type: Missing Object

Rather than finding something that is here, this task will get our intrepid adventurers searching for something that isn't here. Use an object that is reasonably likely to be present, but isn't. Come up with a list of objects that are there first.

BOOKS, FRAME, BED, CABINET, CLOTH, SHEET, LIGHT, LINEN, PAGES, WHITE, SHADE

On their answer sheet they will be able to see how many letters are in the answer so use quite a few potential solutions of the same length.

Then add something that clearly isn't there. In this case we'll add WATER as that may be in the room, but isn't, and it contains a letter that we need for the final answer.

This will fit into the final answer on your scrap of paper. Mixing the answers up slightly as opposed to having the answers sequentially adds to the final puzzle:

2. EIGHT
A
B
1. TELEVISION
3. WATER

This would then be the question.

What is missing from this place?

BOOKS, BED, CABINET, CLOTH, FRAME, LIGHT, LINEN, PAGES, SHADE, SHEET, WATER, WHITE

The answer is towards the end of the list so they go through a few of the options before working it out.

Answer: WATER

And in the words of a pirate.

Hidden in me riggin' here is sommat that ain't thar!

BOOKS, BED, CABINET, CLOTH, FRAME, LIGHT, LINEN, PAGES, SHADE, SHEET, WATER,
WHITE

Clue Four

Bathroom

Clue Type: Linear Alignment

For this clue, we want to get the treasure hunters to line up a couple of fixed points and see what is at the other end. For this particular location, an easy answer which will provide the most flexibility in the question will be the Bath which fits into our overall quest.

This will fit into the final answer on your scrap of paper like so:

2. EIGHT
A
4. BATH
1. TELEVISION
3. WATER

Find the two specific fixed points that, without fail, point at the bath.

What is the first object you find if you follow the line from the door handle when the door is closed, through the centre of the towel rail?

Answer: BATH

And now the translation:

Shut yer port. Thar be a line from the portal handle fair straight through th' mid rail o' th' towel. What do she touch next?

Clue Five

Front Door

Clue Type: Mystery object description

We can loosely describe an object that you can only establish from standing next to the front door. If children are involved and you want to keep them inside, make that clear in your clue. In this example, we are now looking for the letter A so we'll find the answer first. Look around for an object with A in. Next to the front door is a Radiator.

This will fit into the final answer on your scrap of paper like so:

2. EIGHT
5. RADIATOR
4. BATH
1. TELEVISION
3. WATER

What am I? You can see me from here.

I am white and lumpy with a warm heart. I am wet but dry.

Answer: RADIATOR

Tell me, me beauty, what I do be?

Your spyglass can spy me from thar.

I be the colour of skull and shaped like bones but my heart be warm. I be as wet as the salty sea but dry as a bone.

Chapter Three

The Treasure Map

We'll put the clues, locations and grid to work out the answer on one sheet of paper to keep things simple for the hunters.

Making Your Own Old Paper

The first thing is the paper. You are going to need one piece of paper for each team or person taking part, plus perhaps a spare. We want it to look like an old map.

For this example we'll use some typical 90g office photocopier paper.





Make yourself a cup of tea, but keep the tea bags.



Put your nice crispy piece of paper into the sink, then rub the teabag on the paper.

Turn the paper over and repeat.



Carefully take the paper and put it onto an oven grill, then dry it with a hair dryer. Keep moving it around so you don't get horizontal or vertical tea stain marks from the grill.



When dry, squeeze a couple of drops from the teabag along one edge of the paper to give the sides a slightly darker look, then hair dry.

Repeat for the other three edges.



You've now got some very old paper.



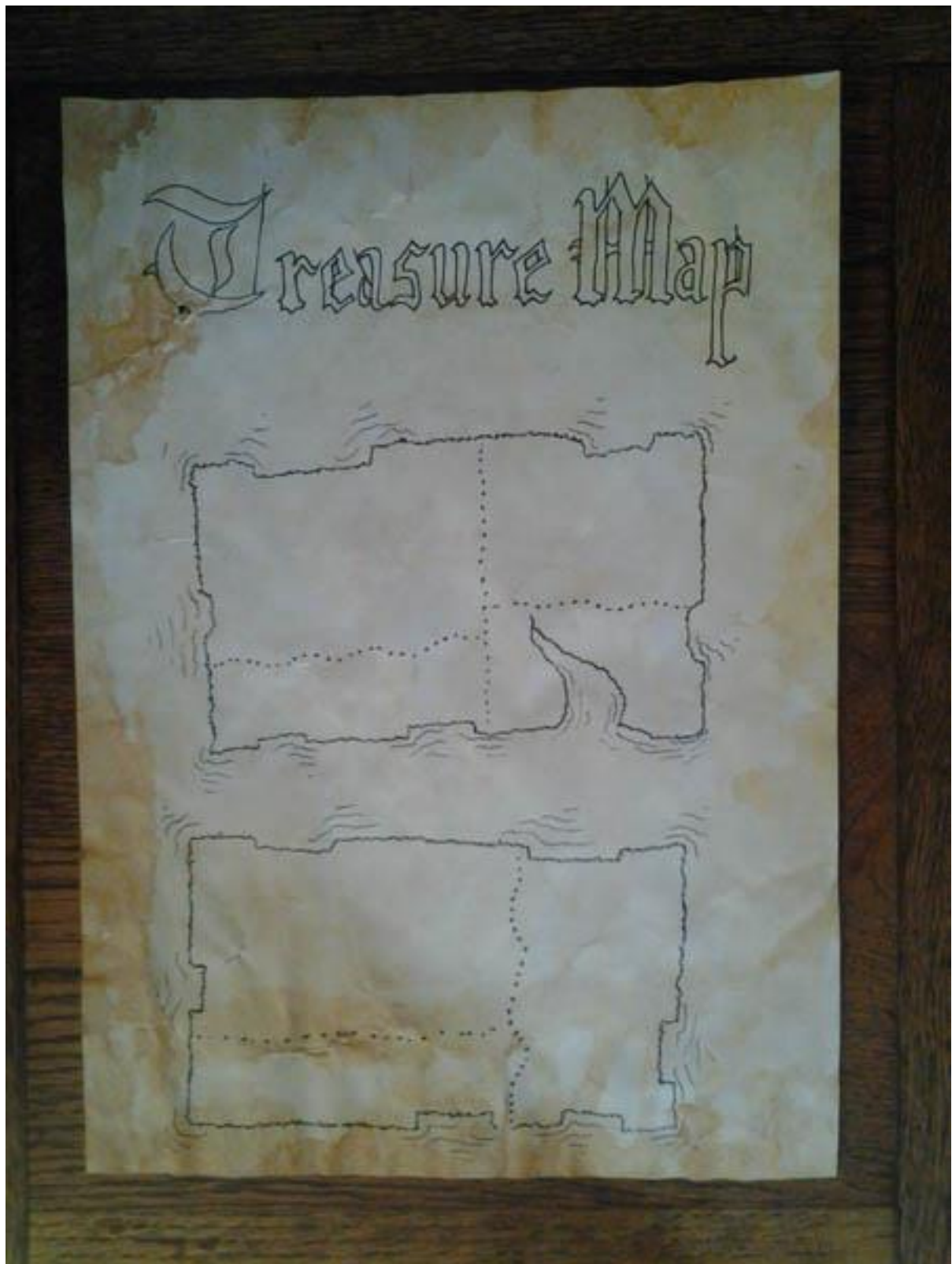
Write "Treasure Map" or the title you would like on the top 1/5th of the sheet.



Draw on the outline of the area using a squiggly line to make it look sort of like a coast. In this example, this is the two floors of the house, with slight indents where the windows are and the appearance of a river inlet where the front door is.



Draw some lighter wobbly lines outside all of the corners to give the appearance of waves on an island.



Add some slightly wobbly dotted lines which allude to paths but are actually the walls in the house.



Now add anywhere in the house that has water i.e. sinks/baths as lakes with palm trees around them.



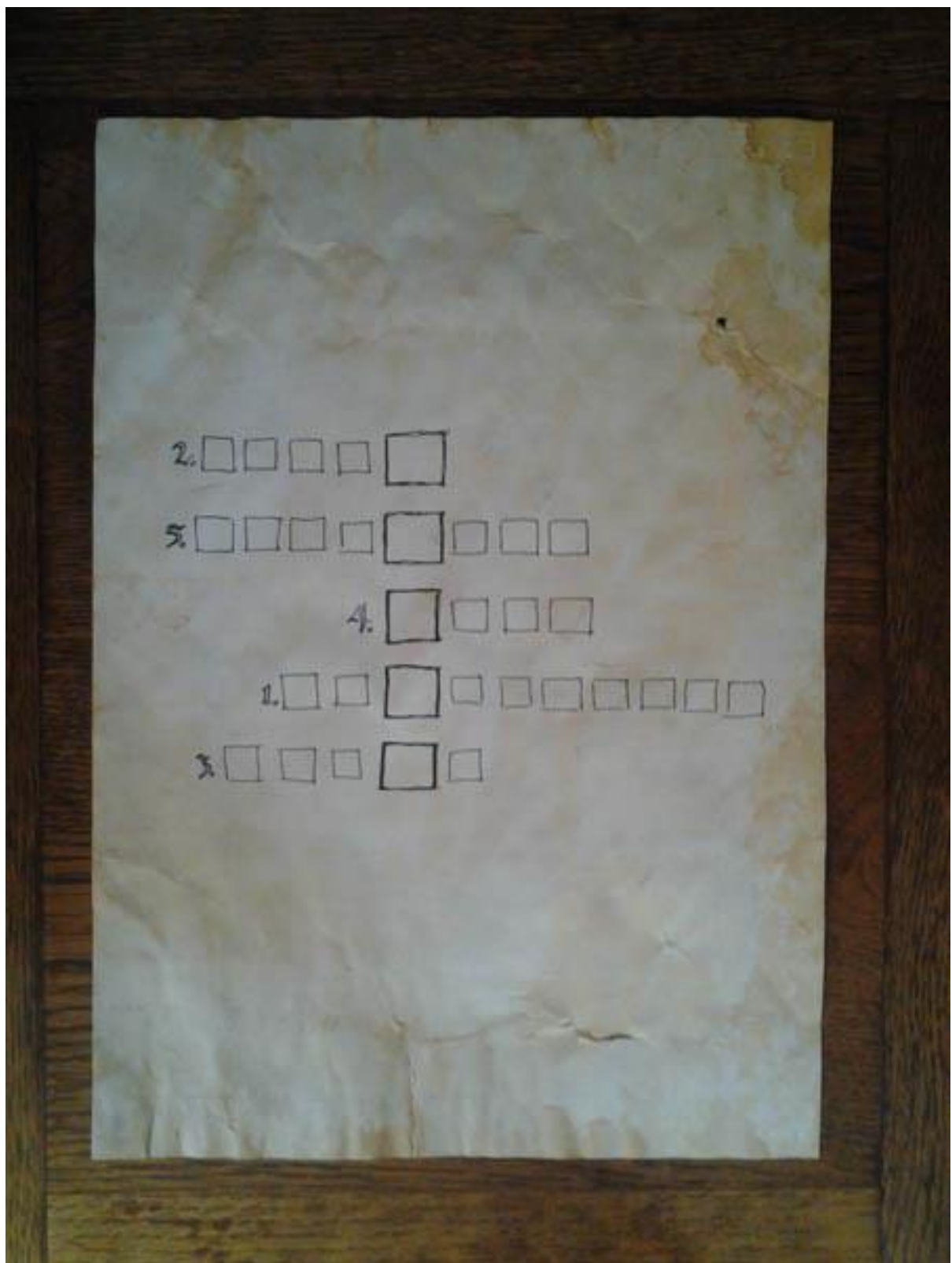
Now add mountain ranges in place of the stairs, representing the vertical obstacle ahead.



Then some grass where there are beds, hills for sofas, a tower for a wardrobe and a castle for the fireplace.



Finally for the front of the map, we'll add numbers relating to where the clues are based. The whole idea is to give the hunters a rough guide to where the clues are located.



On the reverse draw the five boxes that will take our answer TABLE vertically. Then add the lighter boxes horizontally that represents the individual clue answers and number them as appropriate.



Roll the map up and tie it into a roll with a piece of old string, with the “Treasure Map” writing visible.

Your bit is now complete!

Summary

1. Establish the treasure
2. Put it into a suitable container with a note
3. Decide the hiding place
4. Write the final answer (hiding place) vertically
5. Decide on clue locations
6. Find clue answers in locations to fit in with answer (horizontally)
7. Prepare the paper
8. Draw map and add clues
9. Roll up
10. Start the treasure hunt

Chapter Four

Clues

Try not to use the same question content every time – if you can get people actively involved in the solution they will enjoy it so much more.

Materials

What is the archway made of? Stone/Wood/Hedge/Brick? It helps to give examples to narrow down the choice of answers

Colours

What is the most prevalent/unusual colour in this area?

Spot the Difference

Take a photo and edit out a key part of the landscape – if you haven't got a program to do this there are a few free online applications such as Picnik or pixlr.

Signs

Find a word or bit of information out about a sign, or even pick out letters from the sign to put together i.e. 3rd word, 4th letter, 6th word 1st letter.

Article

You can write an article and hide the clue or make it part of the text.

Obscure Photos

Take a really close up photograph of an object that you can only make out when you are in the right location and see it for yourself.

Tastes

Do a blind taste test to work out which pot contains what food i.e. salt, sugar, flour, cocoa powder.

Code

Come up with a coding system, i.e. A=7, B=2 or use an existing one such as morse code to give instructions on how to solve a clue.

Text/Telephone

Leave them a number to call or text, then give them the answer verbally.

Scene Description

Write a detailed description of what you can see from a certain point, and include a mistake.

Audio

Find somewhere which has a constant audio feature which can only be heard from one point, like a clock ticking in another room (if it is going to be quiet) or a motorway hum on the top of a hill.

Textures

Lead the treasure hunter to an answer by feel, going from wallpaper to wood to brick to glass.

Online Video

Let them work out a website address which will lead them to the final treasure.

The more effort that is put into the way the clues are written, the more participants will enjoy the experience.

Chapter Five

Themes

Having a treasure hunt theme can definitely engage the participants further. Other themes:

Missing Treasure

Solve the mystery of the long lost treasure. 100 years ago today, thieves broke in and stole the family gold. They were caught but the loot was never found.

Ghost Hunt

An apparition has been reported in certain places – each sighting has given us a clue.

Pyramids

Ancient runes point the way to treasure from a lost civilisation.

Easter Egg Hunt

Spot the hidden Easter Bunny and solve the riddles to find the final answer.

Knights Of The Round Table

If you can establish the final resting place of the missing knight, you will solve a riddle that has puzzled generations.

Archaeological Adventurers

Using ancient architecture and hidden clues work out what actually happened to the lost treasure.

Secret Agent

We have a mission for your eyes only. To accept this mission, open the envelope in front of you and follow the instructions carefully

Popstars

The concert is about to start but we've lost the words. Use the clues to find the location of each line before the fans lose their cool!

History Discovery

You may not realise what you have been looking at. For over a century the spot where you are standing has represented something significant.

Chapter Six

Pirate Dictionary

A

Abaft: Towards the back

Aft: The actual back

Ahoy: Hello

Arr: Agreed

Avast: Stop

Aye: Yes

Aye aye: I'll get on with that now

B

Be: Am, are or is

Bilge rat : Scum from the ship's gutter

Black spot: Cursed mark of death

Blimey: Gosh

Boatswain: Deck boss

Booty: Treasure

Bounty: Price on a criminal's head

Buccaneer: Pirate

Bucko: Mate

C

Cap'n: Captain

Cat'o'nine tails: Whip

Crow's nest: Lookout at the top of the ship's mast

Cutlass: Pirate's curved sword

D

Davy Jones' locker: Lethal bottom of the sea

Deck: Ship's floor

Doubloon: Spanish gold coin

Duffle: Pirate's belongings

F

Fair winds: Good luck

Fiddlers Green: Pirate heaven

Flog: Whip.

Fore: Front/forward

Futtock shrouds: Join of lower and top masts

G

Gangway: Make way

Gentlemen of fortune: Pirates

Grog: Rum mixture

Grub: Food

H

Hands: Crew

Haven: Safe place

Head: Loo

Heave ho: Pull

Hold: Cargo bay

J

Jacob's Ladder: Rope ladder on to ship

Jolly Roger: Pirate's skull and crossbones flag

K

Keelhaul: Drag someone around the ship underneath the barnacled keel

L

Lad: Young man

Land ahoy: Land in sight

Land lubber: A clumsy oaf

Lass: Young woman

Leg Irons: Ankle cuffs

Lily Livered: Scared

Loaded to the Gunwales: Drunk

Loot: See Booty

M

Marooned: Abandoned on an island.

Matey: Shipmate

Me: My

Me beauty: My beautiful thing

Me hearty: My friend

Monkey: Small cannon

Mutiny: Crew turning against the captain

N

Nay: No

O

Oi: Excuse me

P

Peg leg: Wooden artificial leg

Pieces of Eight: Spanish silver coin worth 8 reales.

Pirate: Robber on the sea
Plunder: Steal
Poop deck: Furthest and highest deck to the rear
Port: Left
Powder Monkey: Gunner's assistant
Privateer: Government sanctioned pirate

Q

Quartermaster: Sailor second-in-command

R

Rigging: Ropes, mast and sails
Rullock: Oar hole

S

Salty sea dog: Long term sailor
Scurvy dog: Insult
Scallywag: Naughty person
Scuttle: Breach the hull to sink a ship
Shanty: Song of the sea
Shipshape: Tidy
Shiver me timbers: See Blimey
Son of a Biscuit Eater: (Bastard) son of a sailor
Starboard: Right
Swag: See Loot
Swashbuckling: Fighting

T

Thar: Not here
Three sheets to the wind: Drunk
Titivate: See Shipshape

W

Walk the plank: Walk the plank
Wench: Lady
Weigh anchor: Raise the anchor

Y

Ye: You
Yer: Your
Yo-ho-ho: Laughter

Writing like a pirate

Example

String phrases together to the point of excess, crammed with strings of adjectives. Drop the letters G and V. Use the word BE when referring to yourself.

So if you were to say:

Follow the corridor to the end then look up when you open the door.

It could translate to something like:

Ye be walkin' th' plank down th' long dark cutlass corridor, cast yer eyes to th' skies when the door do be ajar.

Congratulations!

You've got everything you need now...

Fair winds to ye salty sea dogs!

Happy hunting!

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About the author



Sam Gething-Lewis is a professional treasure hunt designer. He has been creating puzzles and games since childhood, and as an occupation since 2000. Born in Hereford, United Kingdom, Sam was noted in his school report as frequently “day dreaming”, an attribute that he has adapted to further his career. He now is the owner of Treasure Hunt Design and consults on projects around the world and on British television shows such as Channel 4's Country House Rescue. At this moment he is gazing into the mid-distance somewhere and claiming that he is working.

<http://www.treasurehuntdesign.com/>

Let us know how you got on!

Bonus Material

If you haven't got time, here is a quick one you can use.

INSTRUCTIONS

Print and cut out the clue cards from the next page.

Hide the 8. Treasure card in the bath (add some treasure of your own if you like) under a towel.

Hide the 7. Bath card on the Table.

Hide the 6. Table card in the Fridge.

Hide the 5. Fridge card in the Couch.

Hide the 4. Couch card in a Sink.

Hide the 3. Sink card on a Chair.

Hide the 2. Chair card under a pillow.

Give the 1. Pillow clue card to the treasure hunter to start.



1

TREASURE HUNT
DESIGN



2

TREASURE HUNT
DESIGN



3

TREASURE HUNT
DESIGN



4

TREASURE HUNT
DESIGN



5

TREASURE HUNT
DESIGN



6

TREASURE HUNT
DESIGN



7

TREASURE HUNT
DESIGN



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TREASURE HUNT
DESIGN