

GOLD PROSPECTING CHECKLIST

29 Field Indicators To Help You Find More Gold

A practical field worksheet for scouting creeks, rivers, gravel bars, bedrock, historic mining areas, and other prospective ground.

FIELD & TRIP INFORMATION

Field	Record
Prospector / Team	
Date	
Location / Mining District	
Access / Land Status	
Waterway / Area	
Weather / Recent Conditions	
Season / Water Level	
Vehicle / Trailhead	
General Notes	

WAYPOINT & LOCATION LOG

Waypoint	Latitude / Longitude	Elevation	Site / Feature	Notes
WP-_____				
WP-_____				
WP-_____				
WP-_____				
WP-_____				
WP-_____				
WP-_____				

Tip: Record a waypoint whenever you identify a promising trap, sample site, contact between materials, old working, or other feature you may want to relocate.

HOW TO USE THIS CHECKLIST

- ☐ Use one checklist for each scouting trip, or print extra copies for separate locations and samples.
- ☐ Check an indicator only when you actually observe it. Leave it blank when unknown rather than assuming it is present.
- ☐ Record observations before moving material. Good notes make it easier to compare promising ground with ordinary ground.
- ☐ Use sample numbers consistently from collection through processing and recovery.
- ☐ Treat the checklist as a decision tool, not a promise of gold. Multiple favorable indicators can justify further investigation, but sampling and recovery testing are what confirm what the ground is producing.

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THE 29 FIELD INDICATORS WORKSHEET

Check only what you actually observed. Use the notes area to capture details that matter when you return, compare samples, or decide where to spend the next hour.

1. Geological Setting

Is the area within or near a known gold-bearing geological setting, mineralized zone, or productive district?

☐ Strong / clear ☐ Moderate / possible ☐ Not observed ☐ Unknown / needs research

☐ Evidence / photo recorded ☐ Waypoint recorded ☐ Sample taken (if appropriate)

Observation / location / sample ID:

2. Historic Gold Activity

Are there signs of previous prospecting, mining, placer workings, shafts, adits, pits, tailings, or production nearby?

☐ Strong / clear ☐ Moderate / possible ☐ Not observed ☐ Unknown / needs research

☐ Evidence / photo recorded ☐ Waypoint recorded ☐ Sample taken (if appropriate)

Observation / location / sample ID:

3. Natural Gold Concentration Zone

Does the site provide a physical reason for dense material to settle or accumulate?

☐ Strong / clear ☐ Moderate / possible ☐ Not observed ☐ Unknown / needs research

☐ Evidence / photo recorded ☐ Waypoint recorded ☐ Sample taken (if appropriate)

Observation / location / sample ID:

4. Inside River Bends

Is there an inside bend, point bar, or other lower-energy area where heavier material could settle?

☐ Strong / clear ☐ Moderate / possible ☐ Not observed ☐ Unknown / needs research

☐ Evidence / photo recorded ☐ Waypoint recorded ☐ Sample taken (if appropriate)

Observation / location / sample ID:

5. Bedrock Exposure

Is bedrock exposed, shallow, fractured, irregular, or capable of trapping dense material?

☐ Strong / clear ☐ Moderate / possible ☐ Not observed ☐ Unknown / needs research

☐ Evidence / photo recorded ☐ Waypoint recorded ☐ Sample taken (if appropriate)

Observation / location / sample ID:

6. Bedrock Crevices & Pockets

Do cracks, potholes, ledges, seams, or natural pockets provide places for gold and heavy minerals to collect?

☐ Strong / clear ☐ Moderate / possible ☐ Not observed ☐ Unknown / needs research

☐ Evidence / photo recorded ☐ Waypoint recorded ☐ Sample taken (if appropriate)

Observation / location / sample ID:

7. Boulders & Large Obstacles

Are large boulders creating protected low-energy zones downstream or beside them?

☐ Strong / clear ☐ Moderate / possible ☐ Not observed ☐ Unknown / needs research

☐ Evidence / photo recorded ☐ Waypoint recorded ☐ Sample taken (if appropriate)

Observation / location / sample ID:

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8. Gravel Bars

Does the gravel bar contain a useful mix of coarse material, sand, black sand, or heavy-mineral concentration?

- ☐ Strong / clear ☐ Moderate / possible ☐ Not observed ☐ Unknown / needs research
☐ Evidence / photo recorded ☐ Waypoint recorded ☐ Sample taken (if appropriate)

Observation / location / sample ID:

9. Black Sand Concentration

Is dark heavy-mineral material concentrated where gold could settle?

- ☐ Strong / clear ☐ Moderate / possible ☐ Not observed ☐ Unknown / needs research
☐ Evidence / photo recorded ☐ Waypoint recorded ☐ Sample taken (if appropriate)

Observation / location / sample ID:

10. Paystreak Continuity

Can you trace a consistent line or layer of concentrated heavy material rather than an isolated patch?

- ☐ Strong / clear ☐ Moderate / possible ☐ Not observed ☐ Unknown / needs research
☐ Evidence / photo recorded ☐ Waypoint recorded ☐ Sample taken (if appropriate)

Observation / location / sample ID:

11. Recent Flood Evidence

Has high water recently moved, sorted, or exposed material in a way that could reveal fresh concentration zones?

- ☐ Strong / clear ☐ Moderate / possible ☐ Not observed ☐ Unknown / needs research
☐ Evidence / photo recorded ☐ Waypoint recorded ☐ Sample taken (if appropriate)

Observation / location / sample ID:

12. Ancient or Abandoned Channels

Are there terraces, benches, elevated gravel deposits, old channels, or evidence of former stream courses?

- ☐ Strong / clear ☐ Moderate / possible ☐ Not observed ☐ Unknown / needs research
☐ Evidence / photo recorded ☐ Waypoint recorded ☐ Sample taken (if appropriate)

Observation / location / sample ID:

13. Changes in River Gradient

Does the stream change slope, narrow/widen, or otherwise alter flow energy near the site?

- ☐ Strong / clear ☐ Moderate / possible ☐ Not observed ☐ Unknown / needs research
☐ Evidence / photo recorded ☐ Waypoint recorded ☐ Sample taken (if appropriate)

Observation / location / sample ID:

14. Confluences & Tributaries

Does another creek or drainage enter nearby and change flow, sediment supply, or trap conditions?

- ☐ Strong / clear ☐ Moderate / possible ☐ Not observed ☐ Unknown / needs research
☐ Evidence / photo recorded ☐ Waypoint recorded ☐ Sample taken (if appropriate)

Observation / location / sample ID:

15. Clay Layers / False Bedrock

Is there a compact clay or hardpan layer that could act as a trapping surface beneath overburden?

- ☐ Strong / clear ☐ Moderate / possible ☐ Not observed ☐ Unknown / needs research
☐ Evidence / photo recorded ☐ Waypoint recorded ☐ Sample taken (if appropriate)

Observation / location / sample ID:

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16. Heavy-Mineral Layers

Do you see distinct layers of dark sand or other heavy material within the sediment profile?

- ☐ Strong / clear ☐ Moderate / possible ☐ Not observed ☐ Unknown / needs research
☐ Evidence / photo recorded ☐ Waypoint recorded ☐ Sample taken (if appropriate)

Observation / location / sample ID:

17. Accessible Sample Material

Can you collect a representative sample from the suspected trap without entering protected or unsafe ground?

- ☐ Strong / clear ☐ Moderate / possible ☐ Not observed ☐ Unknown / needs research
☐ Evidence / photo recorded ☐ Waypoint recorded ☐ Sample taken (if appropriate)

Observation / location / sample ID:

18. Sample Representativeness

Does the sample represent the feature being evaluated rather than a convenient but biased scoop?

- ☐ Strong / clear ☐ Moderate / possible ☐ Not observed ☐ Unknown / needs research
☐ Evidence / photo recorded ☐ Waypoint recorded ☐ Sample taken (if appropriate)

Observation / location / sample ID:

19. Sample Classification

Can the material be classified or screened to a consistent size before comparing recovery results?

- ☐ Strong / clear ☐ Moderate / possible ☐ Not observed ☐ Unknown / needs research
☐ Evidence / photo recorded ☐ Waypoint recorded ☐ Sample taken (if appropriate)

Observation / location / sample ID:

20. Sample Number & Chain of Notes

Has each sample received a unique number that stays with the material through processing and recovery?

- ☐ Strong / clear ☐ Moderate / possible ☐ Not observed ☐ Unknown / needs research
☐ Evidence / photo recorded ☐ Waypoint recorded ☐ Sample taken (if appropriate)

Observation / location / sample ID:

21. Gold Indicators in the Pan

During testing, did the concentrate show visible gold, colors, flakes, pickers, or other indications worth documenting?

- ☐ Strong / clear ☐ Moderate / possible ☐ Not observed ☐ Unknown / needs research
☐ Evidence / photo recorded ☐ Waypoint recorded ☐ Sample taken (if appropriate)

Observation / location / sample ID:

22. Recovery Test Result

Did a controlled recovery test produce a measurable result that can be compared with other samples?

- ☐ Strong / clear ☐ Moderate / possible ☐ Not observed ☐ Unknown / needs research
☐ Evidence / photo recorded ☐ Waypoint recorded ☐ Sample taken (if appropriate)

Observation / location / sample ID:

23. Re-Pan / Tailings Check

Did a second pass or tailings check reveal retained gold, indicating the process can be improved or gold is in the tailings?

- ☐ Strong / clear ☐ Moderate / possible ☐ Not observed ☐ Unknown / needs research
☐ Evidence / photo recorded ☐ Waypoint recorded ☐ Sample taken (if appropriate)

Observation / location / sample ID:

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24. Comparison With Nearby Ground

Does this location perform differently from nearby sample points processed with a reasonably consistent method?

- ☐ Strong / clear ☐ Moderate / possible ☐ Not observed ☐ Unknown / needs research
☐ Evidence / photo recorded ☐ Waypoint recorded ☐ Sample taken (if appropriate)

Observation / location / sample ID:

25. Metal-Detecting Potential

Does the ground offer exposed bedrock, shallow overburden, historic activity, or other conditions worth detecting?

- ☐ Strong / clear ☐ Moderate / possible ☐ Not observed ☐ Unknown / needs research
☐ Evidence / photo recorded ☐ Waypoint recorded ☐ Sample taken (if appropriate)

Observation / location / sample ID:

26. Drywashing Potential

In dry country, is there suitable loose material and terrain where dry recovery could be practical and lawful?

- ☐ Strong / clear ☐ Moderate / possible ☐ Not observed ☐ Unknown / needs research
☐ Evidence / photo recorded ☐ Waypoint recorded ☐ Sample taken (if appropriate)

Observation / location / sample ID:

27. Access, Rules & Land Status

Have ownership, claim status, land-management rules, permits, closures, and seasonal restrictions been verified?

- ☐ Strong / clear ☐ Moderate / possible ☐ Not observed ☐ Unknown / needs research
☐ Evidence / photo recorded ☐ Waypoint recorded ☐ Sample taken (if appropriate)

Observation / location / sample ID:

28. Safety, Weather & Conditions

Can the site be worked safely given water level, weather, terrain, wildlife, remoteness, equipment, and communications?

- ☐ Strong / clear ☐ Moderate / possible ☐ Not observed ☐ Unknown / needs research
☐ Evidence / photo recorded ☐ Waypoint recorded ☐ Sample taken (if appropriate)

Observation / location / sample ID:

29. Overall Prospecting Signal

After geology, terrain, history, sampling, and recovery results are considered together, is there a defensible reason to continue investigating?

- ☐ Strong / clear ☐ Moderate / possible ☐ Not observed ☐ Unknown / needs research
☐ Evidence / photo recorded ☐ Waypoint recorded ☐ Sample taken (if appropriate)

Observation / location / sample ID:

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SAMPLE & RECOVERY LOG

Connect the exact location, sample ID, processing method, and recovery result. Consistent notes make comparisons much more useful.

Sample	Waypoint	Feature	Material / Depth	Prep / Screen	Method	Gold Recovered	Notes
S-01	WP-						
S-02	WP-						
S-03	WP-						
S-04	WP-						
S-05	WP-						
S-06	WP-						
S-07	WP-						
S-08	WP-						
S-09	WP-						
S-10	WP-						

RECOVERY TEST DETAILS

Field	Record
Sample ID	
Starting Material Amount	
Classification / Screen Size	
Processing Method	
Number of Passes	
Gold Recovered / Observed	
Tailings Rechecked?	
Recovery Notes / Adjustments	

SIMPLE RECOVERY COMPARISON

When sample sizes and processing methods are comparable, record starting material and recovered gold so results can be compared rather than judged only by appearance.

Sample	Starting Material	Recovered Gold	Recovery % / Measure	Compared With
S-01				
S-02				
S-03				
S-04				
S-05				
S-06				

SITE COMPARISON SCORECARD

Site	Geology	Trap	History	Test Result	Decision
Site A					
Site B					
Site C					
Site D					
Site E					

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FINAL FIELD DECISION

Do not make the decision from a single shiny pan. Consider geological setting, physical traps, historical evidence, sample quality, recovery results, access, rules, and safety together.

CONTINUE

- ☐ Evidence justifies additional sampling or work.
- ☐ A promising trap or paystreak can be followed or tested.
- ☐ Recovery results support spending more time here.

Why continue? _____

Next target / waypoint: _____

RELOCATE

- ☐ Current ground does not justify additional time compared with alternatives.
- ☐ Sampling results are consistently weak or absent.
- ☐ Access, conditions, rules, or safety make another location more practical.

Where next? _____

Reason: _____

INVESTIGATE FURTHER

- ☐ The geology or physical setting is interesting, but evidence is incomplete.
- ☐ More representative samples are needed.
- ☐ Historical records, maps, land status, or terrain need additional research.

What needs verification? _____

Next research / field step: _____

RETURN-TRIP NOTES

What did I learn today? _____

Most promising waypoint: _____

Best sample / recovery result: _____

What should I test differently next time? _____

Maps, photos, records, or samples to review: _____

People / agencies / sources to contact: _____

QUICK FIELD REMINDERS

- Look for the geological reason gold could be here before chasing a visual clue.
- Follow the concentration: sample changes in material, flow, bedrock, black sand, and heavy mineral layers.
- Keep sample IDs tied to the exact waypoint and feature.
- Compare like with like whenever possible.
- A negative sample is useful information when it was collected and processed well.
- Respect land status, claims, permits, closures, private property, waterways, wildlife, and reclamation requirements.
- Work safely. Water, unstable banks, remote terrain, weather, wildlife, and old mine workings can be dangerous.

GOLD PROSPECTING CHECKLIST – 29 FIELD INDICATORS

29 Field Indicators • Observation Notes • Waypoints • Sample Tracking • Recovery Results • Field Decisions

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