Scav Hunt 101

The University of Chicago Scavenger Hunt Organization Committee

15 April 2019
Scav Hunt Terminology

“Scav”

The first University of Chicago Scavenger Hunt took place in 1987 and has taken place every May since. Now, though, the name has been shortened to “Scav Hunt,” and doubly shortened to just “Scav.” Spanning the four days up to Mother’s Day, the Hunt is a blend of bliss and (mostly) chaos.

“Scav” can be a proper noun, as in “Scav is this week”; a verb, as in “Let’s Scav this year”; and an adjective, as in “My favorite Scav memory”.

People

- We, the Judges, write and judge the items. Everything that appears on the List comes directly from our hivemind, but during the Hunt, each Judge oversees one page of the List.
- Scavvies are non-Judge Scav Hunt participants.
- Scavvies tend to organize themselves into teams that are most commonly affiliated with dorms or Houses. Scavvies are not beholden to Scav with their dorm teams, but are encouraged to Scav with the group of people that make them happiest. Teams operate from a Headquarters where they make their items; often, House/dorm lounges or off-campus apartments become team H.Q.s.
- Teams have one or more Captains that they designate when registering for the Hunt. Captains are the main points of contact for Judges—we send lots of updates to team Captains via our special Captains listhost. Captains also don Captains’ costumes, which we will touch on later.
- Some teams organize themselves by appointing Page Captains, though Scav Hunt does not require them. On these teams, Page Captains each oversee the completion of items on one page.

Items

The List, the sacred document of Scav Hunt, contains hundreds of items. You complete and submit items for points. The following types of items appear on the List:

- The most common item type is a regular item. This is an item you make at your Headquarters or find somewhere. Usually, you bring regular items to Judgment (more on that later), but sometimes we’ll take a look at some of your items when we visit team Headquarters on Saturday night.
- Another type of item is a showcase item. These items are worth many (if not the most) points and are designated with a dagger (†). Typically, these items are large and noteworthy, and we judge them at Judgment before we judge regular items. Here are two examples of recent showcase items, where we asked for a walk-in snow globe and a redesigned desk:

  (2017, Item 178) Some people like to collect souvenir snow globes from around the world, but for us, looking at a 2"-diameter sphere from the outside isn’t quite intimate enough. Construct a snow globe inside of which a judge can comfortably explore an intricate scene from any world city. We don’t care about how your snow globe looks externally, but we do expect internal enhancements such as lights, moving parts, and furries of snow. [150 points] †

  (2016, Item 82) Your RH is coming to your room for a chat, but your desk is still littered with those detailed plans for throwing things out the window, plus various other bits of contraband! Not to worry! You’ve rigged a single switch to make at least four parts of your desk flip, slide, or otherwise vanish from sight, to be replaced with less incriminating façades. [200 points] †
• Another common item type is a Road Trip item. These items are usually recognizable by their narrative format and use of Road Trip characters, personas that Scavvies adopt for Road Trip items. Road Trip items are judged first on Sunday morning, even before Showcase items. Here are some examples of recent Road Trip items that feature characters and plot elements:

(2018, Item 126) In Milwaukee, SUCC explores all three bosoms of the Mitchell Park Domes. Ax-Man is glad that the trees haven’t been chopped down by their lumberjack brethren, but admires the handiwork of the gazebo. The domes remind Flat Arthur of the firmament. The Eateorologist wanders off to compare the domes’ climates, and the rest of the group becomes irked when they cannot find them among the green foliage. The Athletic Supporter tries to convince the group to leave without the Eateorologist. [13 points]

(2016, Item 166) Immortan John Brown asserts his dominance over Harpers Ferry by chugging a bottle of water while standing on top of Jefferson Rock. [5 points]

• Another item type is an event. Some events are small and may require only 1 person from your team, and some events are large, with the entire Scav community coming together. For these items, you’ll need to send a Scavvie(s) somewhere, sometime. They may need to bring supplies that are designated in the item. Here are some examples of recent events:

(2018, Item 190) The C-Shop is good when it comes to overpriced tiny panini, but severely lacking when it comes to ambience. You know what it needs? A live band, and by "live" we mean "animatronic", y’know, like Chuck E. Cheese. And by "animatronic" we mean "your team members, in animal costumes, pretending to be robotic band members and serenading the hapless patrons of PAM". Sign up for a time slot at the Monster Ball to play outside the C-Shop beginning at 11:30 a.m. on Friday. Performances will be graded on musicianship, slapstick comedy interstitial sequences, and "robotness". [25 flex dollar points, which is coincidentally about how much a tiny panini costs at the C-Shop]

N.B. “Monster Ball” was the name of Captains’ Breakfast in 2018

(2017, Item 55) The Great British Drink-Off: It turns out renting a bunch of ovens and a tent is prohibitively expensive, but there’s no reason why we can’t all meet in to determine the best cocktail crafter of UChicago. First, the Signature Challenge will have your team’s mixologist demonstrate the creation of a tried-and-tested mixture that they feel is most demonstrative of their team’s, as they say "spirit". Then, the Technical Challenge will have them concoct a traditional-yet-challenging mystery cocktail to please the palates of Judge Berry and Judge Hollywood. Finally, the Show-Stopper Challenge will require them to pull out coconut shells, little paper umbrellas, tiny swords, and sparklers aplenty, to make a frou-frou drink as tasty as it is visually stunning. Be warned though, only one will leave with the Star Bartender Badge! Meet in the McCormick Lounge at 3 p.m. on Saturday. [10 points for participation, 5 points for winning a challenge, 5 points for being star bartender]
A small subset of items are puzzles and riddles. These items might test your decoding, math, or other puzzle-solving skills; or they may be pop culture references to be recognized. Here are three recent examples, with their solutions:

(2018, Item 297) We didn’t say you couldn’t - we said you shouldn’t. But you did it anyway. Safely made and safely worn at Judgment. We suggest 100% cotton. [20 points, but only if cool and crisp, both aesthetically and to the touch]
N.B. Googling the first line of this item will show you that this is a reference to a deep-fried shirt from The Simpsons

(2015, Item 231) ITAWITWDAMINTILTYAIFANYIMW ITMSEAWPADFAKWLFTBNYIMWYSWHRJSW SHNWBBWYTYGBHLJMYATICBHMNS _ _ _ [7 points]
N.B. Each letter is the first letter of a word in the song “Call Me Maybe”, so the answer is “CMM”

It is worth noting that these categories encapsulate most–but not all–item types. For example, Lists typically include an item explaining the year’s Captains’ Costumes. However, being familiar with these categories gives you a good grasp of the List. Now, let’s take a look at what actually happens during Scav Hunt.

**Scav Hunt Timeline**

**Pre-Scav: Registration and Communicating with Judges**

Registration is open for this year’s Hunt on our website, http://scavhunt.uchicago.edu. Once you register your team, your Captains will be added to the Captains’ listhost. As mentioned previously, this listhost is the primary way that Judges disseminate information during the Hunt, and it is expected that Captains then pass on information to their teams. During Scav, Judges try to answer as many emails from Captains as possible, both on the listhost and individually.

Teams are welcome to register and participate in Scav Hunt regardless of their levels of funding. In fact, we have several teams each year that compete with no or almost no team funds. Additionally, we keep cost of items in mind when building the List. That being said, most of the items on our List require physical supplies that can cost money. If you’d like to obtain funding, here are some common routes that teams take:

- Many teams that are Housing-based use a combination of fundraising (e.g. a service auction) and asking for donations from Housing. In some dorms, houses donate funds from their House Councils. In other dorms, the Resident Deans donate funds.
- Some teams that are Housing- or RSO-based hold campus fundraisers (e.g. selling doughnuts).
- Many teams, whether Housing-based or not, gain funding from selling team t-shirts.
- Some teams, especially teams not affiliated with current students, solicit small donations from their members or from generous donors (e.g. a PayPal button on their team website).

Once your team has registered, it’s time to energize your Scavvies. In Housing, many Captains elect to hold study breaks in which they provide food and educate potential Scavvies. Outside of Housing, many teams hold similar pre-Scav meetings. Teams often also organize themselves virtually on platforms like Facebook and Slack; this virtual organization allows teams to come together before Scav and also keep tabs on items during Scav.

**Wednesday Night: List Release**

The List is digitally released at 3:00 a.m. on Thursday morning, but if you want it before then, you’ll have to come get it! In order to obtain the List, teams gather in the lobby of Ida Noyes Hall for a challenge known as List Release. The challenge differs from year to year, and successful teams are given a physical copy of
the List. Previous List Releases have included tracking down Judges around campus, digging around the beach, and crawling around a dimly lit theater. Sometimes, we ask that teams bring some supplies to List Release. If this is the case, those supplies are sent out on the Captains’ listhost.

Many teams enjoy coming to List Release to chant at each other in full team t-shirts/regalia.

**Thursday Morning: Road Trip and Captains’ Breakfast**

Though Road Trip forms are due for processing by the University in early April, Road Trippers gather in costume on Thursday morning for a Road Trip send-off. Then, they embark on their trip, where they film/photograph themselves completing items in costume.

Immediately after the Road Trippers embark is Captains’ Breakfast. This event is very important for your team’s success, and is more than just a breakfast get-together. At Captains’ Breakfast, we clarify and explain lots of item-related information.

In addition, Captains’ Breakfast is the debut of the year’s Captains’ Costumes! Each year, there is one item on the list that gives the Captains some fashion inspo. Overnight, Captains get their costumes together and arrive at Captains’ Breakfast! Then, they wear those costumes throughout the Hunt. Here are some recent examples, where we asked Captains to dress as Björk and as North American birds.

(2015, Item 308) The Swedish Chef says bork bork bork — what does an Icelandic chef say? We don’t know, but your Captains sure do! Descending from the peaks of Óraefajökull, your bjödacious leaders are anything but björing, lavished in the bizarre stylings and posh outfits of the Guðmundsdóttirs, Guðmundssons, and Guðmundsbörn. We’re expecting more than just a l’il Cygnus — feel free to delve into any and all fashion statements made by hers truly, as long as your captain is rebjörn as Björk. [p points]

(2016, Item 39) This is the year all your chickens come home to roost—because Captain’s costumes are the Birds of North America! Your Captains must be recognizable from a provided reference photo according to their plumage and beak. Both species and sex of the bird are up to you. While birds of a feather may flock together, each of your captains must hatch as a different bird species. [Γ points]

**Evenings: Large Events and Scavenfeast**

On Thursday, Friday, and Saturday evenings, we typically hold large events. Traditionally, Saturday evening is Scavenfeast, an event in which teams prepare a dinner based on certain prompts. Here are some recent events and a recent Scavenfeast item:

(2018, Item 170) Scav Olympics are the sporting event of the year, so why don’t we ever have a big tailgate? On Friday at 6:30 p.m. on the Main Quads, your team will set up camp and get hyped for this year’s Olympics. You should arrive decked out in team colors and face paint, display a large banner to support your Scav Olympics team, and invite others to play a lawn game of your own creation. In addition, please come with ingredients to serve the Judges (and your team!) a signature hot dog or burger. We’ll bring the grills and some extra snacks - you should bring your lawn chairs, grilling ingredients, team spirit, and any other supplies you’ll want for your team to have a good time. [Ω points]

(2017, Item 59) It’s not bro time, it’s show time! Send your Channing Tatums and audience to Hutch Commons at 8:30 p.m. on Thursday for Inverse Magic Mike. Naturally, their routine should be the opposite of Magic Mike in any/all respects. With that in mind, don’t forget to reverse your background music, and be sure to have your performers start normally clothed, but continue to pile on the layers! Performers of all sexual and gender identities are welcome, as always. [µ points for quality choreo, theme, and showmanship. Joe Manganiello-esque abs not required]
Saturday Morning: Scav Olympics

The Scav Olympics have traditionally been held on Saturday morning on Eckhart Quad. There, teams compete in “sports” requiring a range of athletic abilities. Olympics events are typically consecutive rather than overlapping, so your teams’ athletes can compete in multiple events. Here are some examples of recent Scav Olympic items:

(2017, Olympics Item 1) THE MOST DELICIOUS GENTLEMAN’S DUEL: CHURRO FENCING. Tips of churro will be dipped in chocolate to mark the points on your special churro fencing outfit. Your special churro fencing outfit is a light-colored pillowcase with arm and head holes upon which you have Sharpied "Churro Fencing Out". Winner eats both churros and advances to the next round, competing yet again for glory and the gluttonous satisfaction of having eaten like 6 churros if they win the whole thing.

(2016, Olympics Item 3) Each team should submit one competitor who, in a timed test, will: bite single rows of corn off of an ear of corn in an alternating stripe pattern; bite individual kernels of corn to create a checkerboard pattern; freestyle corn chomp.

Saturday Night: Headquarters Visits

On Saturday night, the Judges will visit the Headquarters of every team that is interested in having us visit. There, we will check a subset of items that either must be presented at your HQ, or can be presented at your HQ. Only on rare occasions will we judge items early, and Judges reserve the right to say “no, bring it to Judgment tomorrow” if asked when we visit. We do not recommend relying on your items being judged at Headquarters.

The Judges’ HQ visits route changes each year, but typically go very late into the night. A tentative schedule is sent out to Captains before visits start, and our last HQ visit is usually around 2:30 a.m.

Sunday: Judgment and Results

The word “Judgment” has one E, and takes place on Sunday morning through afternoon. The exact schedule is sent out over the Captains’ listhost. We begin with Road Trip Judgment, where Road Trippers show us their items. Then, we move outside to the Ida Noyes courtyard for Showcase Judgment, where teams show us their showcase items. The final (and longest) portion of Judgment is regular Judgment, where Judges go to teams and judge the items on their pages.

We have two tips for Judgment. (1) Organize your items by page, since that is how they will be judged. (2) Don’t be afraid to walk up to Judges and pull them to your team—Judgment takes a long time, so bring Judges to your team’s table when you get the chance.

After Judgment is over, teams momentarily go home and unwind. Then, around 8:00 p.m., teams gather again in the Ida Noyes Hall Cloister Club for final results.

We hope this was a helpful primer for you! If you have any questions, feel free to contact the Scav Head Judge at obrian@uchicago.edu.