

spring
2025
edition

So You Want to Be a

Scav Team

"Outstanding."

—THE NEW YORK TIMES

The Judges

One-page quickstart guide

for a **new team** participating in the University of Chicago Scavenger Hunt on **May 8-11, 2025**.

- 0.** Before Thursday, May 8, **register your team** by filling out a form to be posted on [our website](#).
- 1.** Early Thursday, **access the List** of Items. If you attend the List Release event (come to Ida Noyes Hall a little before midnight Central Time on Wednesday), you will receive the List when you complete the event. For everyone else, the List will be posted on our website at 3 a.m. Thursday.
- 2.** Thursday through Sunday morning, **complete Items** from the List. Optionally, attend events.
- 3.** On Sunday, **bring your Items to Judgment** at Ida Noyes to receive points.

Important communications will be delivered via [Discord](#) and email.

A little context:

Scav (or “the Hunt” or “Scav Hunt” or “ugh, that”) is the University of Chicago Scavenger Hunt, the world’s largest annual scavenger hunt. It’s been going since 1987. We made uranium once. Blah blah blah.

We’re **the Judges**, and we make this thing work for you **Scavvies**. You in particular, you reading this guide, are probably going to be a **Captain**, the fearless (or not, that’s fine) leader of a **team**. We give you a **List** with **Items**, and you submit **completions** of those Items back to us.

If you want to get a better sense of what Scav will look like, check out [past years’ Lists](#).

But nothing on the List makes any sense! Yeah, that’s my first reaction too. More on that on page 7 below. But a good first step is to look for something you recognize (maybe an artist or TV show) or an activity you like (programming, crafting, making music...). Then Google the other parts of the Item and see if it sounds fun. Or you can probably find some interesting Item that doesn’t have any references, just a straightforward activity to complete or thing to find.

Is Scav for me?

Yes.

If you are a UChicago student, ask around and you'll probably find a team that's representing your dorm, or someone who knows someone who's on a team that'd be glad to have you. Or you can start your own team! We get plenty of teams with one or two members every year.

Scav also welcomes the general public, along with UChicago grad students, alumni, faculty, staff... If you fit one of these descriptions and would like to join an established team instead of starting your own, [GASH](#) might be a good place to look. 'Free agents' looking for teams can also ask around on the [Discord](#).

Scav is free.

What if I'm a child? Hi! There is a long tradition of young Scavvies, and many Items are extremely kid-friendly. But please be aware that a few Items will probably include strong language or reference things that are NSFW. Some Items will be about topics like alcohol or sexy art, and some will be about building things that could be dangerous. So we suggest you talk with a trusted adult about what Items make sense for you.

Timeline of major events (all times Central)

Thursday, 12:00 midnight-~1:00 a.m: List Release. Complete the challenge, get the List.

Thursday, 3:00 a.m.: List posted on our website.

Thursday morning: Captain's Breakfast. Judges welcome team Captains and give more information about certain Items. Captains, ideally dressed in Costumes (as per one of the Items), ask questions. Notes from Captains' Breakfast will also be distributed via email.

Thursday evening: Thursday Night Event, a performance-based event (as per one of the Items).

Friday evening: Friday Night Event, a social event (as per one of the Items).

Saturday morning to midday: Scav Olympics, a series of competition-based events (as per a separate page of the List).

Saturday evening: Scavvenfeast, a cooking-based event (as per one of the Items).

Sunday, 10:00 am: Judgment, where teams show off their completions of Items and the Judges judge them. Judgment is known as the best place to appreciate everyone else's incredible work; it's also known to drag on for a little while. Judgment always starts with the Judging of *Showcase* Items (the largest few Items, marked on the List with a dagger †), which must be ready at Ida Noyes by then.

Sunday evening: Final Judgment, the announcement of results and any prizes. Exact time varies based on tabulation and will be announced.

Hi.

That's basically everything you need to know. The below pages provide helpful general context for what is going on at Scav and how to interpret the List.

There is a lot of stuff that happens during Scav, and some of it can be confusing. Luckily, **it is all completely optional** to having a good time: if you have read the prior pages, you have done as much as you need to. The following pages start with the more important parts of participating in the Hunt and gradually go into more detail. So we'd recommend you just start reading and stop when you get bored, and you'll be fine.

If you have questions, you can contact us through the [Discord](#), [email](#), or any of our [social media channels](#). Happy Scavving!

—The Judges

Disclaimer: The below pages are somewhat subjective and shouldn't be understood as the official position of the Judgeship. Communications from Judges overrule this guide.

Understanding Items or ‘so what do I *do* with this?’

Many Items on the List may appear inscrutable at first glance. It may help to keep in mind a few tips:

- Most Items ask for a *thing*, a (video of a) physical craft or piece of food or machinery or a website or animation or...you get it. Many ask you to create something; some ask you to go and find a thing that already exists and bring it to us.
- **Events** ask you to be in a place at a time, where you will have to perform some activity. There may be points for participation, or you may need to beat out other teams’ Scavvies. For the major events on pg. 5, everyone’s encouraged to come watch.
- We’re only asking for what we’re actually asking for—the elaborate backstory or rationale in the Item text is probably just for fun, or to set the tone of what us Judges are hoping to see.
- If you’re not sure what’s important and what’s flavor text, or if you don’t get any of the references? **Google it!**
- The bracketed text at the end of each Item gives the maximum number of points an Item can earn. It may specify what we’re asking for, e.g. “[x points for a video of up to 2 minutes],” but it may also contain an unimportant reference or pun.
- If it’s not clear what we’re asking for, check Captains’ Breakfast notes, then ask us.
- If it really doesn’t make sense, it might be a code or puzzle.
- Keep an eye out for time-sensitive Items that specify when they must be submitted by. If not specified, it’s due at Judgment.
- Items labeled ‘TBA’ will be elaborated on in an email or during an event; or they may be secret. Don’t worry about it.
- If the number of points is given as a Greek letter or other symbol, it stands for a number, but we’re not telling what number.

Asking Judges questions

If you're not sure you understand what an Item should look like (“Do I need to make it or can I buy one and modify it? Can I just make a video?”), you can ask us! Captains’ Breakfast and the Notes that come out of it give the most comprehensive listing of these questions and their answers, so check there first. The **Captain’s Breakfast notes** will also tell you what Judge is responsible for which Items and how best to contact them if you have questions later. Judges are often too busy to monitor all communications channels during the Hunt, so if you have a question about an Item, **please ask the relevant Judge directly using their preferred contact method**. Feel free to ask us anything, but be aware that Judges might not always wish to clarify. We like the mystery (and we like not being completely overwhelmed with questions).

Or just make things that feel right and don’t worry about what exactly the Item’s supposed to be. Whatever, man.

Captainly duties

Captains act as liaisons between Judges and other team members so that nobody gets overwhelmed with information. *We* will send a lot of emails during the hunt: providing event logistics, clarifying Item meanings, and so on. *Your team* may want to sign up for events or ask questions of their own. *You* pass on any relevant information in both directions.

Keep an eye on your **email** and our **Discord** for important messages.

It’s also on you to make sure your team follows the **rules** set out on the List and in our [Code of Conduct](#). Nothing too crazy: don’t sabotage other teams, don’t be unsafe, don’t yell at us, that sort of thing.

Captains should wear their **costumes** for the duration of the Hunt.

Tips for Captaining

If you are Scavving along with several others, a little bit of **organization** can save you tons of time and hassle. Most important is a system (generally a spreadsheet) to **keep track of Items**. We can only accept one completion per team for each Item, and it's no fun if two of you make the same thing and then one of the things has to go in the trash (and it was a perfect opportunity to collaborate, too! Drat.) So have team members sign up for the Items they want to work on. Similarly, keep track of where the completed Items are, be they physical or digital. The quicker you can find Item 53 when asked, the quicker Judgment will go.

You may also want to think about **materials** before the Hunt starts. You will almost certainly have opportunities to build, draw, and craft: if that interests you, consider finding some power tools or at least plenty of cardboard and duct tape.

Be ready for **Judgment** on Sunday. Figure out how to bring everything to Ida Noyes Hall. Items on the same page of the List are judged at the same time, so organize accordingly. Judges will circulate the room with a clipboard bearing a page number; you can snag any free Judge to come look at Items on their page. Judgment can involve a good deal of waiting, especially for smaller teams. Bring lunch.

Also:

- It's good to make sure your team agrees on its goals for the year. The majority of teams do whatever Items sound fun and don't worry about maximizing points, but there's also satisfaction in beating a rival or advancing in the final rankings.
- You can assign 'page captains' responsible for a specific segment of the List.
- Do you need money to have a great time Scavving? Absolutely not. Does it help, especially for getting some of the bigger Items to work? Yeah, sure.
- Consider making a note of Items that require some specific, uncommon skill—maybe you can rope in your friend who's a baker or cruciverbalist or milliner or whatever.
- It can be easy to stress about Items going uncompleted. But like literally anything else that you choose to do, Scav is only as much work as you want it to be. If it sucks... hit da bricks!!

Glossary and lore

A lot of things have happened in the 38-year history of Scav, and a lot of things happen during the duration of the Hunt. Here are some things you might hear:

2014: We don't refer to any 2013 Hunt, nor a 2022 Hunt. Instead, there was 2014 (1), 2014 (2), and 2014 (0) AKA Scavvenyear.

Blood Drive: As a community service, we ask as many Scavvies as possible to donate blood for points.

Call Your Mother: Most years, Judgment Day falls on Mother's Day. So don't leave her waiting.

Coleslaw: A dish likely to be involved in at least one Item on any given List.

Collective Effervescence: Sociologist Émile Durkheim's term for the mutual excitement of participatory rituals. Chanted by Scavvies as they gather in Ida Noyes Hall on Wednesday night to await List Release.

Eat It: If an Item asks for food or beverage, and the next item says 'TBA,' we may ask you to consume that prior Item at Judgment. Be warned.

Fake List: A little before List Release, an 'accidentally-released' List may appear in your inbox. It is not real.

Fourdays: The Thursday-Sunday period during which a Hunt occurs.

Full Points: The verdict a Scavvie strives for. For a completion that's not fully satisfactory, a Judge may give less than the listed number of points or none at all. You may or may not ever learn how many points you got from any given Item, but you will hear your team's final place.

Go-Find-It: An Item that simply asks you to acquire something. Like what you'd expect from a scavenger hunt.

Judge Recruitment: Do *you* want to do what we do? To stop playing our twisted games and become the new dark puppetmaster? Stay tuned or reach out for more information!

Prizes: There may or may not be prizes.

Road Trip: A tradition in which four costumed Scavvies pack into a car and spend the Fourdays taking pictures of themselves engaged in various activities at various sites across the U.S. A large part of the List in prior years, but not present in the last few Hunts.

Scav Survey: After the Hunt, we'll send out a survey asking for feedback on how everything went. We really do listen and make changes, so you should fill it out!

Showcase: A designation applied to a few Items each Hunt that are a cut above in terms of complexity and points awarded.

Ties: At Final Judgment, two teams with close enough scores may end up in a tie. Captains may be approached by the Judges with a choice to make.

Theme Song: Each Hunt has its own. [Listen to them all.](#)

Trainwash: To technically fulfill the terms of an Item in a ridiculously low-effort way. Unlikely to earn Full Points. Based off [this](#).