

Scavenger Hunt

What is it?

A fun and engaging technique for practicing text-based search tasks with ties to the Common Core Reading Standards (find a central idea, find a detail to support that idea, etc.)

What are the benefits of using this tool?

Looking at the Common Core Reading Standards can change our notion of a text from “something to be read” to “something to be searched through.” Among other things, the standards require students to look for ideas, evidence, details, and claims. This tool lets students practice these kinds of text searches, and it uses a scavenger hunt format to make these searches both engaging and fun. (“Your challenge is to find the following items: a detail to support this conclusion, a sentence that reveals the author’s point of view, and a portion of the text that’s structured chronologically.”) Because students’ ability to complete these kinds of “find-it tasks” gives us valuable insight into their command of the corresponding skills, we can adjust our instruction accordingly.

What are the basic steps?

1. Identify one or more reading standards that you’ve been working on with your students.
2. Design some “Find a ____” tasks that have ties to the selected standard(s). Tasks should be designed around one or more grade-appropriate texts/passages, and should require searching those texts or passages for something specific. See p. 42 for examples.
3. Record your tasks on the Scavenger Hunt form (p. 44), and give students copies. Tell students whether to hunt for the items on their own or in teams, show them how to mark what they find (e.g., write on the text or use sticky notes), and clarify that accuracy is more important than speed.
4. Give students copies of the text(s) they’ll need to complete the assigned tasks, and instruct them to start hunting! If appropriate, number individual lines/paragraphs so students can more easily refer to what they’ve found. (“The words I chose are in lines 2 and 3 of paragraph 4.”)
5. Review and discuss students’ responses as a class. (“Who wants to share what they found for this task?” “Can you explain why you selected this paragraph?” “Might this sentence be a better choice than that one? Why?” “Could both Sarah’s and John’s selections be correct? Why or why not?”)
6. Encourage students to debate and defend conflicting responses (moderate as needed). Help them understand why one response is better than another or why multiple responses are equally valid.
Note: Teaching students to express and evaluate ideas in a respectful manner supports Common Core Speaking & Listening Standards 1 and 3.
7. Collect and review students’ work to gain additional information about students’ mastery of specific skills (e.g., which students are still having trouble finding details to support a main idea). Work with students individually or as a class to develop any skills that students haven’t yet mastered.

How is this tool used in the classroom?

- ✓ To get students in the habit of searching texts for specific features, information, and evidence
- ✓ To assess and improve students' ability to handle text-based questions

With a little creativity, you can design find-it tasks with ties to any of the Common Core Anchor Standards for Reading, and for both literary and informational texts. Here are some ideas:

To focus on individual anchor standards, challenge students to...	Sample tasks
Search for factual information and explanations that are explicitly stated within the text. (R.CCR.1)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How did Pascal keep his red balloon dry? FIND a picture that tells us. • Why is the USS <i>Constitution</i> called "Old Ironsides"? FIND the explanation. • FIND two human behaviors/activities that contribute to global warming.
Find textual evidence to support inferences and conclusions. (R.CCR.1)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • FIND two words or pictures that might lead us to infer that the bear is angry. • FIND two sentences from the passage that support the following conclusion... • FIND one detail from each source that supports the answer to Part A.
Identify central ideas and themes, and summarize supporting details and ideas. (R.CCR.2)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • FIND the paragraph that best reflects the main idea of the passage as a whole. • Read the main idea below. FIND two details from the text that support this idea.
Find details that reveal important information about (or highlight relationships between) characters, settings, events, and individuals. (R.CCR.3)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How can we tell the narrator is a generous individual? FIND some evidence. • FIND two details from the story that help create the setting. • FIND lines in the poem that reveal the effect the incident had on the narrator. • How did Franklin's work influence Watson and Crick? FIND some evidence.
Find clues to the meaning of words and phrases as they're used in a text or words that affect tone. (R.CCR.4)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • FIND a phrase that helps us grasp the meaning of <i>savage</i> as it's used here. • FIND words that contribute to the informal tone of this letter.
Identify and compare text structures, find connections between individual sentences or sections, and recognize how individual elements/sections contribute to the development of ideas and/or fit into the overall text structure. (R.CCR.5)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • FIND the portion of this passage that is structured chronologically. • In this passage, the author discusses two seemingly unrelated concepts. How does he connect them? FIND a sentence that makes this connection. • Examine the colonists' argument for independence. FIND the section(s) whose purpose is to demonstrate that the colonists had tried to work things out with the king.
Find passages that reveal or reflect an author's point of view or purpose, as well as passages that distinguish (or highlight similarities) between two separate points of view. (R.CCR.6)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • FIND a sentence that clarifies the author's position on this issue. • How does the author address conflicting viewpoints? FIND some examples. • How can we tell the author believes the theft was justified? FIND evidence.
Integrate and evaluate content that's presented in diverse media and formats, including visually and quantitatively, as well as in words. (R.CCR.7)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • FIND a picture that shows how the hungry caterpillar feels after Saturday's meal. • FIND a figure that expands on the information presented in paragraph 2. • Can you FIND any evidence for a regional trend in flu cases? Look in all three of the sources that were provided: map, data table, and CDC bulletin.
Identify the components, strengths, and weaknesses of an argument. (R.CCR.8)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • FIND two specific reasons that support the author's claim. • FIND a piece of evidence that isn't relevant to the author's argument.
Compare two or more texts and identify similarities/differences in content, focus, style, etc. (R.CCR.9)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Read these creation myths. FIND some common elements. • FIND an idea that's present in both the main article and the sidebar. • FIND information in Source 1 that conflicts with Source 2. • FIND rhetorical features that are common to both texts.

Teacher Talk

- ➔ To simplify things for primary-grade students, English language learners, students with reading disabilities, or students who are new to the tool, you can use shorter, less complex text passages (read them aloud if needed), design multiple-choice tasks rather than open-ended ones (e.g., “Which two of the statements below support the author’s claim?”), or have students hunt for items as a class or in groups rather than on their own.
- ➔ This tool can be used at multiple points in an instructional sequence. Use it for diagnostic purposes at the start of a unit/school year. (What do students know already?) Use it for formative assessment purposes in the middle of a unit/school year. (Which skills still need work?) Use it summatively to determine which skills students have mastered by the end of a unit/school year.
- ➔ When creating your tasks, think carefully about how long it will take students to read the required passages—particularly if you’re working with beginning readers or students with learning disabilities. Be careful not to create more tasks than students can complete in the allotted time.
- ➔ Move beyond traditional printed texts; have students “hunt” in videos, audio clips, charts, etc.
- ➔ Since friendly competition can increase student engagement (Marzano, 2007), some teachers turn Scavenger Hunt into a game where students compete for points (one point for each correct item; the student/team that’s first to find all items correctly gets three bonus points, second-to-finish gets two, etc.). Besides being fun for students, low-stakes games that target essential content have been linked to significant gains in learning and achievement (Haystead & Marzano, 2009).
- ➔ If students will hunt in teams rather than on their own, set things up so that all team members have a role to play. At the minimum, everyone should have to discuss and agree upon the final responses.
- ➔ While find-it tasks will have ties to individual reading standards, they won’t always target those standards completely. (If a standard calls for students to *evaluate* a director’s decision to make changes to an original script, for example, having students *find* those changes wouldn’t be sufficient.) In these cases, you can target the standards more fully by posing appropriate follow-up questions during the discussion in Step 5. Here’s what this might look like for Common Core Standard RL.8.7:
 - During the scavenger hunt, challenge students to *find* aspects of a live production that depart from the original script.
 - During the discussion, help students *evaluate* the director’s decision to make those changes as called for by the standard. (“Why might the director have chosen to make these changes? What impact did they have? Do you feel the changes were good ones? Why or why not?”)

Note that in this example, it’s the follow-up questions—not the original find-it task—that address the standard in question.
- ➔ While the focus of this tool is on finding text-based information and evidence, you can design hunts around other Common Core skills/standards as well. For example: Find a grammar error (L.CCR.1), or find at least three words that are too informal for this type of writing piece (L.CCR.3).

Name: _____

Date: _____

Scavenger Hunt

Text(s) to search:

My task:

Here's where I found what I was looking for (include page, paragraph, or line number if appropriate):

Text(s) to search:

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Here's where I found what I was looking for (include page, paragraph, or line number if appropriate):

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