Using Czar

Czar is how we keep track of puzzles and people. The main Czar page shows (at the bottom) a list of puzzles, with a way to filter the list of puzzles above it. At the top of the page is non-puzzle-specific information, such as the current Puzzle Czar and Comm Czars, and links to useful places like the Who page, which shows a more detailed but more complicated form of the data in Czar.

- Small-font indented bullet points like this indicate things that don't happen very often or finer details that aren't super-important for you to know. Feel free to skip them if you're pressed for time reading this document.

Getting Started (Authenticated)

The first time you start Czar, you will see a box at the top that is labeled "Who are you?" with the default value "Nobody". Any buttons on the page will be labeled WhoRU and disabled. Choose your name from the menu (it will be prefixed with "e" or "w" based on which coast you're on).

- The team organizers should have added everyone's name before the start of Hunt. If your name isn't there, click "Back to Who", enter your name in the "Add person" field, and then return back to the main Czar page.
- More information about our naming conventions can be found on our Czar Conventions page.

Once you've updated the "Who are you?" menu to your name, all the buttons that previously said WhoRU will now say something more meaningful like "Start" or "Do This".

You will also need to authenticate with Google to ensure you have access to the team's shared Google Drive folder. As such, the first time you load Czar, you'll get some authentication screens asking for permission to use your Google Account. If you can't access the folder, ask someone else on the team to add you, since it will be necessary to view the puzzles linked from Czar as well. Note that if you see a field that says "Click to enter new puzzle name", you've already authenticated and don't need to worry about this step.

Puzzles (Overview)

The main Czar page is puzzle-centric; there are many lines, each corresponding to one puzzle. Each line contains the following fields:

1. Title/Name of the Puzzle
2. "puzzle" : A link to the puzzle on the official website, if it exists. Hover over it to bring up a box where you can click in to change the link.
3. "sheet" : A link to the shared spreadsheet we have dedicated to that puzzle. Hover over it to bring up a box where you can click in to change the link.
4. Description Text : A piece of text attached to this puzzle that can be edited by anybody.
5. Tags : editable short strings that can be used to filter puzzles.
6. People count : number of teammates working on (assigned to) the puzzle. Hover over it to see who those teammates are.
7. "Do This" Button : a button you can press to indicate you're working on this puzzle.

Details about the editable fields (1, 4, 5) are described later in this document.

Your Status

You are expected to keep Czar up to date with what you're working on at all times.

- Your local Puzzle Czar is expected to nag you if you don't.

There are two types of activities on Czar: "exclusive" activities (e.g. puzzles, sleeping) and "non-exclusive" activities (e.g. Puzzle Czar, Comm Czar). The reason we make a distinction is that everyone should always be assigned to an "exclusive" activity, and Czar will give you a big scary warning when you aren't assigned to one.

- It is fine to be unassigned between puzzles while you are looking for what to do next, but if you are unassigned for more than say, 15 minutes, you should start thinking about updating your status with a non-puzzle activity, or just pick a puzzle already. :)

Exclusive Activities

By far the most common exclusive activity will be working on puzzles. To signify that you are working on a specific puzzle, simply click the "Do This" button next to the puzzle you are working on. It will turn green and start keeping track of how long you've been on that puzzle. This will also automatically remove you from your previous puzzle (or exclusive activity) and update your "Current activity".

When puzzles are solved (as signified by getting the "solved" tag - more on tags below), everyone working on that puzzle will be kicked off the puzzle and will need to choose their next puzzle (or exclusive activity).

- (Rarely, you might want to continue working on a puzzle after it's been solved -- just click the "Do This" button on that puzzle again.)

Note that to ensure your status is current, the button next to the puzzle you are working on will slowly turn from green to red. If this happens, just hit the button again to reset your clock -- this is a signal to everyone that there is still a live human working on the puzzle and you haven't fallen asleep or left.

For the most common non-puzzle exclusive activities, like "Sleeping" or "Away", there are some buttons on the main Czar page at the top right. Click on the activity, and you'll move to that activity (and be removed from your current exclusive activity). This is especially important when you are not going to be puzzling for a long time. Don't just abandon ship and leave yourself assigned to a puzzle that isn't finished, because that will look to the rest of the team like someone is working on it.

- Note that you can't click again to leave the activity from Czar; if you're not doing it any more, then you must be doing something else.
- The list of non-puzzle activities should be self-explanatory, but you can read some details about them in our Usage Conventions guide.

Contact the Czar manager (currently Dan Egnor) if you feel an activity is common enough to go up there on the list.

- For less-common exclusive activities, you'll need to visit Who to update your status. On the Who page, click on the intersection of your name and the desired activity, then select the green "Exclusively" button, which will unassign you from your previous exclusive activity (if any) and assign you to the new one. (You may need to create the activity on the Who page if it isn't there already.) Once you pick an exclusive activity from Who, if you go back to Czar, you'll now see that activity in your "Current activity" field.

Non-Exclusive Activities

Some activities don't require all of your attention, and you'd like to do those along with whatever puzzle you are currently working on. The most common cases of this are the rotating jobs of Puzzle Czar and Comm Czar, which you can indicate you are in those roles directly from the main Czar page, at the top right.

- Meta Czar jobs are assigned for the whole duration of the Hunt, so we don't bother tracking them on Czar.

When you start a Puzzle Czar or Comm Czar shift, simply hit "Start" next to the appropriate shift and your name will be added to that section for all to see, and will be shown in your UI as your "Current job". When you finish your shift, hit "Stop" and your name will be removed. It is generally good practice to help ensure the incoming PC/CC starts their shift when yours ends so there is never a gap.

- Note that starting and stopping the jobs in this manner is independent of your puzzle status, because these jobs are generally treated as non-exclusive, though if you want to dedicate your full attention to one of these, feel free to make your assignment exclusive from the Who page, as described above.
- For any other activity that you'd like to add as a non-exclusive activity, you'll need to visit Who to update your status. The process is the same as described for selecting exclusive activities on "Who", except that you would choose the purple "Non-Exclusively" button, and this won't remove you from any other activity. To remove yourself from a non-exclusive activity, again click on the corresponding cell in Who, and choose the "No longer" button.

Editable Puzzle Fields

For each puzzle, you can click on the title, description text, or tags section to turn them into an editable box. Any edits you make show up on everyone's Czar, so be sure this is what you want to do! A quick summary of how we use these boxes are below; for more details, check out our [Czar Usage Conventions](#) document.

Puzzle Title

Prefixed with a short code, then colon, then the puzzle name.

- You need to be authenticated with Google, as described in the previous section, in order to change puzzle names, since changing a puzzle name also changes the name of its spreadsheet in Google Drive.

Description Text

The solution in all-caps for a solved puzzle, otherwise (abbreviated!) information relevant to any potential solvers that might want to work on this puzzle.

Tags

Unlike the other two editable fields, tags follow a stricter syntax. Tags are always lower-case letters and numbers (with no spaces), separated by commas; you can have multiple tags per puzzle.

Both the main and Who pages have a means of filtering puzzles by tags. Specifically, these pages show only those puzzles that match all of the checked tags (if no tags are checked then all puzzles match). Checking the "invert" box shows "the other puzzles."

There are two tags that the Czar software understands to have special meaning: **solved** indicates that a puzzle has been solved; **meta** indicates that a puzzle is a metapuzzle.

Other tags are based on either the structure of the hunt (like **meta**), or based on the status of a puzzle (like **solved**). Unless you're working on a meta, you probably don't care about the structure of the hunt, but you might want to use some of the status tags to decide which puzzle to work on, or to indicate the current status of the puzzle you are working on. For example, by convention we add the tag **needsaha** to a puzzle where we're stuck because nobody knows what to do next -- you can be a big hero by making progress on such a puzzle.

- For more details on how our team uses tags, check out our [Czar Usage Conventions](#) document.

Puzzle Spreadsheet

When you create an entry for a puzzle on Czar, a Google Spreadsheet is automatically created and a link is made to it from Czar.

- You do need to be logged in for this to work. Sometimes it takes a few seconds for the link to show up after the puzzle is created, so be patient.

The spreadsheet is made from a template and contains many goodies, such as default header rows, monospaced font, a "Puzzle Tools" menu, and CzarChat.

CzarChat

CzarChat is a persistent chat panel embedded on the right side of each puzzle's google sheets that links directly to a channel in the [LeftOut Slack](#). Whenever a new puzzle is created, CzarChat will create a new slack channel. Use CzarChat to collaborate on the current puzzle, to communicate status and distribute tasks for anyone working on this puzzle.

- Unlike Google's spreadsheet chat, CzarChat is persistent so people will see it when they open the puzzle - even if they had not been working on it previously. Do *not* use Google's spreadsheet chat for communication, please!
- CzarChat is a mostly javascript / tiny bit of Python creation that is integrated with both Slack (via its RTM API) and Czar. If you have any questions or suggestions to improve CzarChat, please contact Charlie Graham.

To use CzarChat, just open a puzzle sheet and begin messaging on the right side. For a full set of CzarChat commands type "/help" in a CzarChat panel.

- You can also use the Slack webapp to get to the same CzarChat channel, but it might not be useful without seeing the spreadsheet as well.

You can use almost all normal slack commands (including messaging channels or other people using # and @ tags) and custom plugins like /giphy.

Drag a file (for example a photo of your amazing progress on that tough 3d cryptic crossword) into the chat panel to upload it and share it with everyone working on the puzzle.

CzarChat also supports commands like /who (to show who has opened this spreadsheet), /files (to see a list of files uploaded), /nq <query> to run nutrimatic within the czarchat and /functions (to get a quick list of the puzzle-related functions we have added to the Google Spreadsheets).

- If you need to delete a message (say you accidentally disclosed that you are a Russian spy working at Google), you have to use the Slack webapp to delete it; you can't do it from CzarChat.

- To disable CzarChat permanently for your browser, (1) load a CzarChat-enabled spreadsheet; (2a) either type /more_help to get instructions OR (2b) change the URL from /index.html to /config.html and check the appropriate checkbox.

CzarChat is a useful way to coordinate with the people on the other coast actively working on your puzzle. E.g., "West will do the data lookup for lines 1-10, and East will do the data lookup for lines 11-20." Note that this will only work if everyone is actually looking at the chat box, so try to keep a Czar window open next to the spreadsheet.

When stuck on a puzzle, try to summarize the "This is what we've tried" stuff and put it as the last few lines in the chat. This way, when someone comes to pick up the puzzle later, they can see your progress without wading through hundreds of lines.

- We used to do this in the Czar description text, which was fine if the summary was less than 120 characters, but horrible otherwise.

How Do I…?

In case you ever need a quick refresher on how do do certain things in Czar, there's a helpful link labeled "How Do I…" at the far bottom of Czar that has a bunch of common recipes.

Now you're ready to start using Czar!

Advanced Czar Techniques

Adding puzzles to Czar

We used to make adding puzzles the job of the Puzzle Czar. For 2014 we decided to make this the job of one person (Doug Zongker, who has some scripts that help him do it), and it worked pretty well. We've done this every year since, and plan to continue doing so in the future. However, if you need to add a puzzle manually (maybe Doug's asleep), here's how to do it.

To add a new puzzle to Czar, you first need to be authenticated with Google as described in the Getting started section above. Once authenticated, you will thereafter see a field that says "Click to enter new puzzle name". Simply type the name of the new puzzle into that field, which will generate a new puzzle entry in Czar, and a new spreadsheet will be automatically created with the same name, and the "sheet" field for the puzzle will be updated to link to the newly created spreadsheet.

Finally, you will also want to manually link to the puzzle itself from the newly created puzzle entry. Simply click on the "puzzle" field and paste in the URL of the puzzle itself (usually hosted from a site we don't have knowledge of until hunt day.) There's a shortcut for this -- after you type in the puzzle name in the previous step, hit space and paste in the URL. Czar will look for a URL at the end of your "puzzle name"; if it sees one, it will strip off the URL from the end of your puzzle name and automatically make the link.

Removing puzzles from Czar

If someone has accidentally created a puzzle that shouldn't be there (multiple people creating the same puzzle is the most common way this happens), delete any one puzzle entry by changing its title to the empty string.

Using Who to create non-puzzle activities

The Who page shows both puzzles and non-puzzle activities, such as "Sleeping" and "In Boston." Non-puzzle activities are shown in orange at the bottom of the list. You can add a new non-puzzle activity on the Who page with the Edit control near the bottom, Add activity. You can change the name of an activity by clicking its name in the grid.

Doing Other Stuff with Who

The bottom of Who has a legend explaining the big table and additional controls and explanations.

Czar for Mobile

With the new Chat and other things, Czar can take a while to load, especially if you're on a mobile device. To ease with some of this pain, we developed a "mobile" version of Czar, that has many of the features stripped away.

You can click the appropriate link at the bottom of full-featured Czar to get to Czar for Mobile. To get back, click on the word "Czar". We recommend bookmarking this on your mobile device before you need it, otherwise it'd be kind of silly to have to load the full-featured Czar just to get to the mobile version.

Features:

- No adding new puzzles.

- No tag filtering. Only unsolved puzzles are displayed.

- No images.

- No tooltips (most mobile devices don't support hovering anyway).

- No notification applause when a puzzle is solved (but if you mark a puzzle as solved, notifications will still show up on other people's Czar).

- No "How Do I...?" helper text.

Compatibility

Czar is known to work with Firefox and Chrome and known to not work with IE. There are some reports of it working with Safari as well. But Chrome is awesome, you should use Chrome.

Contacts

If something goes wrong with Czar please contact Wei-Hwa, Dan, Corey, or Rich.

Want to make Czar better?

Czar is an open-source project, accessible at https://github.com/onigame/czar/ . If you want to join the project and make it better, ask us.

If you have ideas or feature requests for future versions of Czar, please file an issue and we'll discuss it there! If it is urgent (e.g. during a hunt requiring immediate attention), please contact Dan, Wei-Hwa, Corey, or Rich directly.