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PsychoArsenal - May 2, 2023, 7:58 pm

What to Do at the Con

The first and foremost thing you'll do at Defcon is follow the 3-2-1 rule. If you're unfamiliar, that means three hours of sleep, two meals, and one shower every day. Everything else you do at the con is optional. With that as your core schedule, you can build upon it as you wish.

While the talks are extremely valuable and exciting, I would discourage you from having them as your sole focus, because you'll miss some of the best parts of the con. All the talks will be online later, so you don't have to worry about missing them. Do note, however, that Skytalks are not recorded, so you may wish to give them slightly higher priority if that's your sort of thing.

There is one talk that I recommend every one of you go to though, and that is the Defcon 101 panel, which is usually on Thursday evening. It's a great place to go and learn about many facets of Defcon, as well as to meet other individuals that are new to the con. If you're brave enough, you can even be given a hacker name in front of hundreds of fellow hackers and tech nerds. If you're interested in seeing what's in store, the video below will give you a much better idea of the kinds of villages and contests at Defcon.

With that information in mind, read the program, visit all the villages, and participate in some contests and events. Don't forget to enjoy the various entertainment and parties at night too. As much as Defcon is about learning, it's even more of a social gathering. It can be quite daunting with all the activities, so try to narrow in on what you find most enjoyable, perhaps a particular Village such as social engineering or wireless hacking, and spend the majority of your time there.

The Villages are like mini-cons unto themselves with talks, workshops, and contests of their own, so you can very easily pour all of your time into just going to one and doing nothing else at Defcon. If you insist on going to different talks and villages throughout the day, be careful not to waste too much of your time in "line con," the joking name for standing in long lines. Be sure to get to talks early to be near the beginning of the line, as some of the more popular discussions can fill up quite rapidly. Even being 20 minutes early for them, you can be so far back that you aren't allowed in the room because of fire codes.

If at any point you're lost or need help for any reason, you can look for the Defcon "goons" in red shirts for help. They're there to help you with whatever you need. They're the security team, and their job is to make everyone feel safe and ultimately happy. Don't be deterred if they come off as gruff, though — they probably have been asked the same question 200 times and may be frustrated, but they are there to help you.