

# Advice: Six Steps to Enhance Your SCA Experience

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You've just started coming to SCA activities. Perhaps a friend brought you along or maybe you got invited to attend after seeing a demo or possibly you discovered the SCA was having meetings in your area and came on your own. However it happened, you now find yourself amongst a group of people doing various things, many of which you don't know anything about. It can be a tad bewildering at first. So how can you get oriented to this very different world? How can you get involved and begin having some fun? Here are a few pieces of advice...

## 1. Introductions

You will discover that SCA folk are friendly. So don't be shy about introducing yourself. Most people will be courteous and respect what they think is your desire to be left alone if you hide at the edges of the room. Additionally, SCA members are often involved in catching up on what happened since they last saw each other and may not notice a new face until you walk up to them. But if you approach people and say "Hi, my name is X and I'm new. Would you tell me what's going on?" they will gladly introduce themselves and explain things to you.

## 2. Be Inquisitive

Don't hesitate to ask questions. As you hear conversations, don't be afraid to ask for an explanation of some term or activity you don't know or understand. We were all new to this organization at one time and had to learn the "ins and outs" of things. If an activity is going on that's new to you, ask what it's about and the history behind it. If you hear about an activity that you might be interested in or notice someone working on a project that makes you curious...ask about it and how someone gets involved in it. You're not required to do it simply because you asked about it, but you may discover some new hobbies along the way by asking!

## 3. Orient Yourself

There are a variety of ways in which SCA groups help new people get adjusted. Some offer newcomer classes, others provide information packets and a few have a "big sibling" program. No matter what your new group offers, take advantage of them. Doing so will help you feel at home in the SCA quicker. Another thing is to give yourself adequate time to acclimatize to the SCA setting. It is usually suggested that you attend a minimum of four SCA meetings before deciding on staying involved in the SCA or not. This gives you a chance to gain a broader perspective of the organization and what it has to offer. Some activities do not occur at every meeting. And some gentles are not able to attend all the functions. Additionally, if you can attend one of the full-blown weekend events, you get to see the activities and business handled at meetings put into action. By giving yourself time to experience more things and interact with more people, it allows you to have a much truer scope of what the SCA is about.

## 4. Participate

The SCA is very much a participatory organization. As some have stated, you get out of the SCA what you put into it. By getting involved in doing one or more of the activities, you discover the fun the SCA offers. Instead of just reading about the Middle Ages, we are trying it out in a hands-on manner. Taking part lets you interact with folks, make new friends and possibly find talents you never knew you had. Everyone participates to the extent they feel comfortable with. Don't be afraid to share your knowledge. If you already know a craft that applies to the Middle Ages, you will discover that there are folks who will be willing to learn from you. If there's something you want to learn about, most likely there's someone in the kingdom who's interested in it too and would love to compare notes with you. But give yourself time also. You needn't rush into things and try to sample everything in the first few months. There's plenty of time to dabble in a wide variety of things as you participate in the SCA.

## 5. Clothes

Because the SCA is a participatory organization, the wearing of medieval clothing (many times referred to as garb) is suggested for meetings (and required for the weekend events). Thus you need to get at least one basic set of medieval clothing. It need not be overly fancy, a simple tunic and pants will do to start. Ask your group about making simple garb. If you can't sew, ask about putting together a reasonable approximation of medieval clothing out of modern clothes. Additionally, some groups have "Gold Key" garb which is loaner clothing available for folks until they get their own.

## 6. Expectations

There are two general areas of expectation in the SCA...comportment and fiscal responsibility. The comportment area is simple: be polite, lend a helping hand when you can and don't pick up another person's things without asking permission first. The fiscal aspect is also straightforward. Just like belonging to any club there are financial obligations to consider. Most groups have to rent the site to hold their meetings. If so, then that cost is usually covered by donations from the members attending. If site donations are asked for, please consider putting in a dollar or two as you can. Another expense that everyone has is their "gear". Whether it's clothing, jewelry, armor, weapons, feast gear, etc...it requires an investment to have the items you need to participate. Realize this up front. Sometimes newcomers expect everything to be provided to them, and that's just not the case. Except for children, each person is expected to be an adult and to take responsibility for themselves and their gear. Now that can sound a little scary at first, but realize that everyone you see who is wearing fancy clothing or armor started out without anything also. Also realize that not everything has to be purchased...many folks have learned to make a lot of their own gear and you will find that they are quite willing to teach you to do the same. Others are willing to trade the things they can make for things that you can make. So, whether it's items to use, activities to participate in or anything else, your SCA group can help you with suggestions, but you are ultimately responsible for your SCA experience...with just a little effort you will find it reaps great rewards!