

Courtesy, Etiquette and Gentle Behavior

One of the aspects of noble behavior that we try to encourage within the SCA is that of courtesy. For the most part, common sense and a polite attitude will keep you in good stead. If ever in doubt about something, ask. Most folks recall when they were new to the Society and are willing to answer your questions. With just a little time, you will become familiar with the customs and manners that exist in the SCA. Following are some guidelines to assist you in learning many of the "social graces" within the Society.

1. "Hold" is the safety word of the SCA. It is a term meaning, "Stop! Be quiet and stand still!" When you hear this, it means that something potentially dangerous has happened or is about to happen. It may mean that a fighter is down on the field, or it may mean that you are about to step into a ditch. Until you know which, it is wise to stand still and listen. Look around you and make sure that things are safe before proceeding. If you see a potentially dangerous situation for someone, you should cry "Hold!" to warn them.
2. Don't pick up another person's stuff without asking. While most folks are eager to show off their possessions, be courteous and first ask permission to handle any weapons, armor, equipment, crafts, etc.
3. All blades should be worn in sheaths and peace-bound. Peace-bound means to tie or secure the blade in its sheath so that it cannot fall out or be easily removed by someone else.
4. Before drawing forth a live steel weapon (sword, knife, axe, etc.) to show someone, it is customary to loudly state "CLEAR".
5. NEVER DRAW A WEAPON IN AN OFFENSIVE MANNER
6. Pay heed to the Heralds when they are making an announcement or speaking to the populace. Even if the announcement does not concern you or deal with something you're interested in, others around you may wish to hear the information being provided. They will usually start their announcements with a cry of "Oyez", to let you know that an announcement is forthcoming.
7. Always ask permission before entering a pavilion or going into a private meeting. Most folks will ask you to join them once you introduce yourself.
8. Try to use the correct form of address when speaking to others. If you don't know someone's title and they have a crown/coronet of some sort, use "Your Excellency". If they do not have a crown/coronet, use "milord" or "milady".
9. The SCA strives to create an illusion of a period atmosphere. Whenever possible, do your best to cover/conceal modern items such as soda cans, CD players, ice chests, etc. When possible use period-looking utensils, drinking vessels and chests. Use fabric and throw rugs to cover non-period looking coolers and chairs.
10. Always leave a site cleaner than you found it. This is a basic tenet of the SCA. How a site is left reflects on your honor and the hosting group's honor (and may even determine if the SCA is permitted the use of such facilities again).
11. Offer a helping hand. After arriving at an event and checking in, and having unloaded and set up your gear, look to see if there are others who can use a hand in getting their items unloaded and set up. This not only is providing assistance to others, but reflects well upon your honor and integrity. It also provides an opportunity to introduce yourself to folks and make new friends. And you never know... that gentle you helped move things in from the parking lot, may turn out to be a visiting king from another kingdom when you see him in garb later. Likewise, check to see if folks need assistance setting up activities for the event or aid in preparing feast.
12. Remember your Court Etiquette. Court is the time the Royalty/Baronage uses to handle matters of state. This may include announcements important to an aspect of the SCA, presentations from the populace, promotion of upcoming events or activities, changes to kingdom law and, of course, the presentation of awards to deserving gentles. So what does it mean then to be an "attende" of court? Since the purpose of court is to process matters of state, the result is that the attendees are there to bear witness to actions of the court. This means you are there in an official capacity, even if all you do is watch what is happening. On a more unofficial level, you are there to learn about upcoming activities and cheer your friends and fellow SCA folk for their efforts. Remember that during court, you are witnessing official business (no matter how silly some of it may get). If you must talk to someone (except for a short comment), it is a good idea to leave court, as others there do want to hear the business going on in court. If you are talking, they may not be able to hear what is happening. And if you are making a short comment, please remember to whisper. Courtesy is an integral part of the SCA and during court is one time in which it should be displayed greatly. Also realize at times it is hard to hear what is going on, especially during presentations because the presenters do not (or can not) speak loudly, or well, and many people get stage-fright or tongue-tied when in front of an audience. As this time is even more difficult on those who want to pay attention to court functions, talking can override what is being said. And while some portion of court, or announcements might not be of interest to you, it will be of import to others, and they will want to hear it. Please be considerate of others.