



SCA Basics that every New Member should know

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So you want to know more about the SCA?

As with most of us, you have seen an SCA demo, or even found the SCA online. You seem to have a vague interest in what the SCA is about, or you are so excited that you can hardly stand it. No matter what your enthusiasm level, you are curious as to what the next step may be.

Finding a local group

The first step will be to locate a group in your area. There may be many groups depending on where you live. You may go to the following website and find a local group:

<http://www.sca.org/findsca.html> or contact the corporate office at:

Society for Creative Anachronism
P.O. Box 360789
Milpitas, CA 95036-0789
Phone: (800) 789-7486, (408) 263-9305.
9:30 am - 4 pm Pacific Time, Monday-Thursday.

Once you find your local group, you should contact the Seneschal (local president of the group) or the Chatelain (local new member assistance). These two officers can direct you to local meetings and SCA events in your area.

Vocabulary

One of the first things you may notice is the use of new words, or familiar words that now have different meanings. Do not worry about learning them all at once. They will come in time. We will define more vocabulary later in this packet. A few are listed below to help you with the basics:

Events: An actual SCA function or gathering.

Mundane/Modern Era: Reference to things non-SCA.

Business Meeting: Meeting where officers of the group and populace gather to discuss group business.

Fighter Practice: Gathering of SCA combatants and non-combatants to practice and socialize.

Kingdom: Geographic area determined by population and activity level with a King and Queen designated by combat every six months. The Kingdom size may be part of a state or several states.

Household: A group of individuals who come together for common interests or socialization.

Knight: The highest level a member of the populace can obtain for excellence in martial arts. Awarded by King and Queen. Designated by a white belt and an unadorned gold chain. Avoid using a solid white belt or a large gold chained necklace.

Laurel: The highest level a member of the populace can obtain for excellence in the arts. Awarded by King and Queen. Designated by a laurel wreath on the head and/or a laurel wreath medallion.

Pelican: The highest level a member of the populace can obtain for excellence in service. Awarded by King and Queen. Designated by a Pelican medallion and/or a cap of maintenance.

Squire: Member of the populace taken as a student by a Knight to guide in martial arts activities. Red belts and silver chains are commonly worn by squires. Avoid wearing a solid red belt.

Apprentice: Member of the populace taken as a student by a Laurel to guide in arts activities. Green belts are commonly worn by apprentices. Avoid wearing solid green belts.

Protégé: Member of the populace taken as a student by a Pelican to guide in service activities. Yellow belts are commonly worn by Protégé's. Avoid wearing a solid yellow belt.

Your Local Group

Your local group may be one of the following possibilities:

Barony- A large group of members within a Kingdom with a Baron and/or Baroness in charge of their area.

Shire: A smaller group within a Kingdom. ex- a smaller city, or rural area not affiliated with a Barony.

Canton/Marche: A smaller group which is part of a Barony

College – A small group located on a college campus. Due to the changes in population and summer months, Colleges are not held to the same standard of group activity that a Shire would be required to make to stay active.

Each group has officers that are in charge of running a specific area of the group's activities. The manner in which these officers are selected and their terms of service may change from group to group so you will need to inquire on each group's processes if you are interested in holding an office. Some groups separate out duties in their offices, or have deputies. For example: The Chatelain may have a separate person doing Gold Key duties. The following is a list of the most common officers and a brief description of their duties:

Seneschal – Official legal representative of the group (President).

Exchequer – This position is required if the group deals with any type of money (Treasurer).

Herald (or Pursuivant) – This officer oversees the submissions sent to Kingdom for members who want to pass a medieval name or device.

Marshal – This officer is responsible for martial activities, if any exist.

Chronicler – Responsible for the newsletter about the group

Arts & Sciences Officer- This position is needed to coordinate group arts activities.

Chirurgion – This officer administers the organization that is responsible for voluntary first aid at events and notifying attendees of health and safety concerns

Chatelain – Officer that coordinates newcomer activities and coordinates gold key activities (the lending of costumes and accessories to new people interested in the SCA). In many groups the Chatelain assists or coordinates demonstrations of SCA activities to the public.

Historian – Officer that keeps a running written and/or pictorial history of the local group's activities.

Minister of Youth – Officer that coordinates the youth activities in the group and at local events.

Activities in the area will also vary depending on the size of the group and the interest of the current active members. Generally a fighter practice is held weekly. There may be numerous Arts & Sciences classes, as well as business meetings to discuss the general running of the group. Business meetings will be a time to discuss the calendar of events, take a look at the finances, and may be a forum for members to discuss projects.

SCA Personas

The next thing you may notice when attending a local activity, is that everyone may have more than one name. This will most likely be very confusing in the beginning, but it will become easier as you attend more activities. Unlike the Civil War Re-enactors, the SCA will not allow you to become a real historical person. If you were hoping to become Queen Elizabeth or Richard the Lion Heart, you may be sorely disappointed. But never fear, we still have fun with our personas. Since the SCA is a not-for-profit, educational organization they strongly encourage research. That is how our personas are developed. Using history you will find a time period, a culture, and a name that you feel fits you the best. The local Herald can help you and will most likely have many books for you to look at or internet sites to recommend. Once you have decided upon a name, you may submit it to the College of Heralds, and if it is approved, no one in the Society will be allowed to have that unique name.

What do you need at an event?

Depending on your financial resources, you can be as elaborate or as basic as you want. Generally, most of us do not have unlimited financial resources to apply to this hobby, so it may take a little while to acquire all of the medieval items we would like. You can meet with the local Chatelain to borrow a costume and some basic feast gear if you are unsure if this hobby is what you are interested in, or try the following list:

- Costume (Speak with an SCA member regarding appropriate clothing)
- Feast gear (bowl, plate, spoon, knife, cup)
- Blanket to sit on and/or a chair
- Cooler for drinks and food
- Blanket to throw over modern-looking items
- Extra money to shop at merchants

That is as basic as it gets for most of us. As you continue to develop your persona or meet others your items will multiply. We can guarantee it!

How do you find an event?

As stated before, your local business meeting will probably discuss upcoming events. If you have joined the SCA as a member, then you should be receiving a kingdom newsletter, which will list all upcoming events and have event flyers that will detail directions, activities, price, etc. If you have internet access, most groups will have a link to their event flyer off of the kingdom calendar on the kingdom web site. Your local Chronicler may also publish a calendar of events or have flyers included in the newsletter. There are two basic types of events: Day trip and weekend events. A day trip event will only occur on one day. Sleeping accommodations will not be provided. A weekend event usually opens on Friday evening and runs through Sunday. Accommodations will be announced in the flyer, whether it is a tenting event, if the site has cabins, or if it is in a hotel or near a hotel.

What are the basic steps in attending an event?

I.) Gate

The first thing you will need to do at event is pay the admittance fee. Some members refer to this as “Trolling in” and you will need to locate the Gate (*Troll*). The Gate will have all of the necessary information about the event and will take your money. If you are not an SCA member you will be charged a non-member surcharge in addition to the event fee. If you are a member, you will be asked to prove your membership by either showing your card or your kingdom newsletter with your name printed on it. If you take your children to the event, you may be asked to fill out additional forms for medical authorization, etc. (If you are not the legal guardian of a minor you are taking to an event, check with your local seneschal or minister of youth for more information about what is required in your area.) You may receive a site token and/or feast token if the event has a feast, proving you have paid to participate. The group may have created a site flyer that details the day’s events and there may also be sign up sheets to volunteer to help with some activities.

II.) Activities

After paying your site fee you will find many activities that you may want to watch or participate in. Martial activities may include: Heavy Combat, Archery, Thrown Weapons, and Rapier. Arts & Sciences may include classes, demonstrations, or an A&S Faire, where members enter their projects to be judged on authenticity and skill. Youth activities are available at most events for members with children. Merchants will be on hand to sell or take orders on their merchandise. Some events will also hold meetings for various orders or guilds.

III.) Lunch

Many events do not provide any type of lunch. There may be a fund raiser where lunch can be additionally purchased, or you will have to bring your own food. Check the event flyer for more information.

IV.) Court

If the event is being held by a Barony or if the flyer announces that a member of the Royal Family is attending (King, Queen, Prince, or Princess) a court will be held. Check the site flyer for times and listen for the Heralds who may make announcements about any schedule changes. Court can be a wonderful experience full of pageantry and courtly behavior. Usually members receive awards and you may even witness a Peer elevation, where they make a Knight, Laurel, or Pelican. Those are really rare and often very elaborate. Bring a chair or go early to get a good seat. Court may occur before or after feast.

V.) Feast

If your event is offering a feast there is usually a feast limit and you may have to check at the gate for availability in case you did not buy feast when you first signed in. Some groups will allow you to pre-register for the event and feast, so that you are guaranteed a spot when you arrive. Each feast is different. If you have food allergies, it is best to contact the Head Cook (sometimes called the "feastcrat") about ingredients. Most groups have an ingredient list posted by the kitchen door. You will need to bring feast gear and it is commonly helpful if you have a candle in case they turn the lights off for ambiance. Some people love attending feast and will bring table cloths, candelabras, their own salt and pepper, cloth napkins, etc. If alcohol is permitted on site, you may see several wine bottles as well. A head table will be set up at one end of the hall for any royalty. There may be a seating chart located at the sign in table. If a seating chart is not provided then it is a first come, first served process at finding a seat. A trash bowl for left over food and trash bag to take your dirty dishes home are also good ideas. Most event sites do not have the facilities to allow you to wash your dishes on site.

VI.) Post Revel

After feast and/or court, dancing and socialization often occur until the site closes and it is time to clean up. Some people may host a "post revel", an off-site party held in a private home that may include a bardic circle or other social activities. The site flyer should describe the details of any evening activities or may give details on a post revel, or you can ask the Gate for details.

Each event is completely different from the next and may have all or a mixture of the above components. If you can attend your first event with another Society member, it may make the transition from modern-person to SCAdian a lot easier. Remember to ask as many questions as you need so that you feel prepared. The Seneschal and Chatelain are available to answer any questions or concerns you may have in attending an event. Have fun!

Local Seneschal: _____ Phone: _____ Email: _____

Local Chatelain: _____ Phone: _____ Email: _____