

# HELP NEWCOMERS DIRECTLY

*This article is not new, but its ideas will be new to some.*

*These are concrete ways in which established members can help newcomers directly.*

- Invite them with you to events they would not have gone to otherwise.
- Lend them old copies of *Tournaments Illuminated* or *Compleat Anachronist*.
- If they're so inclined, lend old issues of your local or kingdom newsletter.
- Furnish costumes, either as gifts or long-term loan.
- Teach them to make shoes, bags, belts—things they can use to make a good first impression.
- Introduce them to people you think they can develop friendships with early on, rather than (or in addition to) introducing them to every single person.
- Arrange for friendly out-of-towners to stay at the newcomer's home, or vice versa—mix it up a little so that they get to know the people you've grown to like.
- Mention them to others, so that their names become familiar.
- Give them tasks or little projects within the local group so that they meet people and become known.
- Take pictures of them and give them copies.
- Stay with them for an hour or two at an event, giving a play-by-play and a who's who, discussing armor and weapons and costumes and pavilions. Even people who've been in for a while can benefit from such a guided tour of an out-of-town event when the speaker knows more about the local people and things than they do. *Try to give as positive a description of each person as you can, even the ones you don't like. Your new friend may decide he likes them a lot, and will think less of you for having bad-mouthed someone unnecessarily.*
- Give them feast gear if you have extra and they have none (or at least lend, or suggest a good source).
- If they're getting bored at events, send them on errands, to give them an opportunity to interact with people without you standing there.
- If you ask them to give you their impressions of events and group activities, the benefits will be many — they'll feel valued and will remember their early impressions better if they're verbalized; you'll get to know your new friends better and will learn things that you or the group can do to improve your operations.
- If they're interested in something not currently being taught in your group, arrange for someone to teach it, and get other students in on it too. (Don't say "They might teach that again in a few years," but call the teacher and say "Please do it again now.")

*Try to do for them the things that were done for you, and a few more you wish had been done.*

*A note from the author for this publication:*

This article was written in 1991. Recently when a newcomer came into our household, I also provided him with access to online information, and discussed things with him by e-mail between events, in addition to the other things above.

The original list suggested photographing the newcomer. I still do that. Nowadays, I'll hand my digital camera to a newer or younger member, and say "Take all the photos you want." That wouldn't have been possible when the article above was new. When I get home I upload the photos where the photographer and photographees can all get to them. I got to see what my friends thought were the most attractive and memorable parts of the day, which armor, people, artwork and garb they chose to photograph, and so forth. We talk about the people and the situations in the course of discussing the photos. Five people ranging from age 15 to 31 have used my camera in the past year to take photos of Crown Tournament, the Outlands A&S competition, and over a dozen workshops. Several of the photos were published and credited to those younger members.

Hosting people in homes isn't as common as it once was, but I have substituted dinners, shared car rides, errands together and other ways of hooking people up in practical ways so they can visit and get to know one another.

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**ÆLFLED OF DUCKFORD** (OP, OL, Countess), a musician and a writer, has recently become an anchoress who makes ideas, historic notes and documents increasingly available to others at <http://sandraddodd.com>