

**EDITOR'S NOTE:**

*It is very likely that as a newcomer you have been to practices and local meetings and even attended a public demonstration; maybe that is how you discovered this wonderful new world. However, the SCA really comes alive when you attend your first event. Be it a day, weekend or even a major multi-day affair, the event is where the magic happens. The articles in the following sections will introduce you to the various types of events that you may encounter and will help you prepare for the wonders of which you are soon to partake.*

**GETTING READY FOR YOUR FIRST EVENT**

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You've been to a few meetings. You sat in on a couple of classes. Perhaps you've sewn together your first tunic. All of these things are great fun, but now it's time to take the next step—your first event. Attending an event can be a marvelous adventure, but it can also be a bit confusing or downright intimidating. Understanding how to get ready for your first event and what to expect when you get there can make all the difference. In this article, we will discuss events in general terms. There are always exceptions to any of the following concepts but most of what you will read here applies to most events you will attend.

**Before the Event**

Before you attend your first event, take some time to gather information on the event. There are a few basic types of events: tournaments, where martial combat activities take place; collegia, where you take classes on various topics; arts and sciences fairs, where gentles take A&S projects for feedback and competition; and revels, where the populace feasts and dances. Many events feature some combination of these activities. Events will either last a day (usually a Saturday), a weekend, or in the case of larger wars, a week or more. You can find out more about events by reading the advertisement for the event in your kingdom's newsletter, or visiting the event website, usually found as a part of the website of the hosting group. Here are the important details you will need to find.

**Location and directions:** take note of the location of the event. If there are directions to the site, print them out. Otherwise, take the address of the site and plug it in to your chosen map website (or grab a map, if need be).

**Schedule of events:** you'll want to know what time the site

opens and what time most of the activities start. In particular, if you plan on staying overnight, you will want to know how early you can get settled in and by what time you must leave at the end.

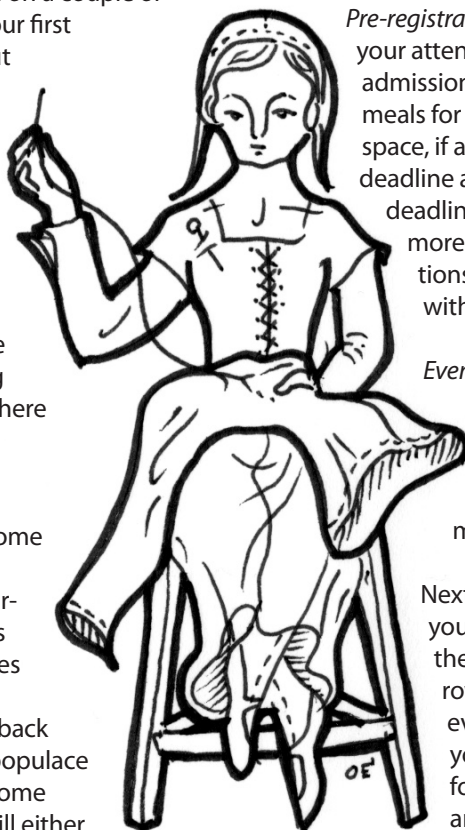
**Fees:** events usually require some form of admission fee from everyone that attends the event. This fee is used to cover the cost of renting the site, paying for all the necessary supplies and so forth. If this is a weekend or longer event, your admission fee may include overnight accommodations or there may be a separate fee for this. Many events also include prepared meals (such as breakfast or feast) and there may be a separate fee for some or all of these as well. Events that charge an admission fee charge less to gentles who have paid for a Society membership by waiving the non-member surcharge.

**Pre-registration:** many events allow you to pre-register your attendance. This often gets you a discount on your admission fees, ensures that you will have a seat at meals for which you register, and secures your overnight space, if applicable. Pay attention to the pre-registration deadline as any relevant discounts go away after this deadline and the closer to the deadline you get, the more likely it will be that overnight accommodations and feast spaces will fill up, leaving you either without a bed or seat or on a waiting list.

**Event and site rules:** familiarize yourself with the rules for the event and site. This may include policies on tobacco use, alcohol, campfires or other open flames, pets, and so forth. Be sure to obey all the posted site rules or you may be asked to leave the event.

Next, there are several things you will take with you to the event. You may already have some of these. If not, you can usually make, buy, or borrow anything that you need in advance of the event. Unless marked, it's not mandatory that you take any of the following, but having the following will make the event more enjoyable and in many cases will increase the medieval feel of your time at the event.

**Costume:** the first and most important thing to ensure you have is adequate clothing for the event. In fact, other than paying any necessary admission fees, the only requirement for attending any SCA event is making an attempt at pre-17th century clothing. You may take one or more sets of period clothing with you depending on whether or not the site is indoor or outdoor, what the weather will be like, and what types of activities you plan to do. If you do not have any costume of your own yet, check to see if there is a loaner clothing service in your local group or even at the event you're attending where you can borrow some basic items until you have your own.





**Outdoor gear:** if you will be watching or participating in a tournament or competition outdoors, you will probably need to bring something to sit on such as a blanket or portable chair. Don't worry if you only have a modern camp chair; many people do not have period camp furniture when they get started. (If you want to, a bit of fabric can make an impromptu cover, or you may want to sew one to fit over your chair). If you have a canopy or day-shade, you can usually set it up near the combat field for shade. If it is not a period pavilion or shade, make sure it does not have any obtrusive decoration such as a sport logo that might distract from the period feel of the event. No one minds a pop-up pavilion, but most everyone will mind a four-foot tall helmet. You may also want to bring bug spray and sunscreen if you are going to be outside all day.

**Feast gear:** if you plan to partake of any meals offered at the event, it is a good idea to bring a set of dinnerware with you. A plate, bowl, cup, and set of utensils will almost always suffice. You can usually find period-looking dinnerware at most department stores. Look for items made of wood or ceramic that look handmade. If you can only find modern dinnerware, try to avoid obviously modern patterns. Solid colors are your best friend! If all else fails, someone attending the event may have an extra set of feast gear, they may have extras to borrow, or they may have disposables such as paper plates for the populace to use.

**Food:** if you do not want to take advantage of on-site meal options, you will either need to leave site to dine or bring something with you. Many sites are located off the beaten path and may not allow for a convenient drive-thru dash. This is where online mapping services come in handy as you can check for nearby dining options while you download your directions. You may want to bring a light meal instead. Pack a sandwich, some bread and cheese, or other foods that do not require refrigeration. As most feast menus provide more food than you can imagine, a light lunch will still provide plenty of room for the bigger meal to come.

**Arts and sciences materials:** at many events, you will have opportunities to work on arts and sciences projects or to display works in progress or completed projects. You will frequently see people knitting, embroidering, writing, or doing other crafts while they watch tournaments or during downtime in the event. If you have something you are working on or a particular skill you are practicing, feel free to bring your supplies to the event.

**Overnight supplies:** if you are staying overnight at the event, there are several things you may need to bring. If the site has cabins or dorms, you will most likely need to bring bed linens and your own pillow. If you will be camping, you will need to bring your tent or pavilion unless you are

staying in someone else's, as well as a sleeping bag, air mattress, or other sleeping gear. Bring whatever toiletries you may need such as shampoo, toothbrush and paste, deodorant, etc.

**Medical supplies:** if you have medical needs that will have to be addressed on site, bring sufficient supplies with you. In the case of medication, bring slightly more than enough to last the event. Not so much that losing them all would represent a significant loss but not so few that losing one or two would cause a problem. Keep your medications, diabetic supplies, and so forth in a well-labeled, water-tight container. If you have something that requires refrigeration, such as insulin, contact the Event Steward in advance to see if there is refrigerator space available. If you have something that requires electricity, such as a CPAP machine, also check to ensure your cabin or encampment will have electrical access. In any case, having a list of medications you are taking and medical conditions available, particularly if you are participating in combat activities, will benefit you in case of a medical emergency.

### What to Expect at the Event

While in attendance at a Society event, the expectation is that we are attempting to relive a period of history filled with courtesy and chivalry. From the moment you enter the site, be mindful that you act with courtesy toward others. If you do not know someone by name, you can address them as "milord" or "milady." If you come across Royalty (including the King, Queen, Prince, Princess, landed Baron, or landed Baroness), pay reverence with a simple bow or curtsy. In many kingdoms, you also do this when you pass before their thrones. Follow the example of others in this regard. Be sure to silence your cell phone and if you must use it, step away from the crowd where you won't be heard. If you use tobacco products, you must also leave the public traffic areas of the event before use.

Your first stop at any event is the registration point. It is here that you will pay your admission fees for the event if you didn't pay through pre-registration, sign into the event including

signing a non-member waiver if you don't have an SCA membership, and pick up things like your event token if the event has them. Wear this at all times to signify that you paid your attendance fees. You may also receive a brochure or flyer with event information and a schedule of activities.

Next, if you need to, ask for the newcomer loan service so you can obtain loaner costume and gear for the event. Be absolutely certain you return anything you borrowed before you leave the event.

At this point, you will be free to attend whatever activities you wish. If you are staying overnight, you will most likely go set up your cabin or encampment now. If you brought a day-shade, you can take it to the field and set it up now as well. Check the

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site rules to see if there are specific places you are or are not supposed to put a shade; otherwise simply avoid areas that have been marked out in advance and do your best not to block anyone else's view.

If you are participating in any tournaments or competitions, you can register for them as registration opens. This may entail taking your arms and armor to the fighting field for inspection, signing up for a competition and possibly setting up your entry for display or work, in the case of most arts and sciences, or putting your name down for competitions to be held later in the event. If the populace is invited to vote or comment on competitions, be sure to provide your input during the day.

If you are merely watching the activities, there are some simple tips you should know to maximize your enjoyment. In the case of combat activities, feel free to show your support for any of the competitors by applauding or cheering. Be courteous to the defeated, however, as boos and jeers are not welcome. When the heralds or Marshals are addressing the crowd, pay attention or you may miss important information. Most importantly, if anyone ever shouts "HOLD!", immediately stop what you are doing and be silent. This indicates that there is a potential safety issue that needs to be addressed. If you see a safety issue such as a child running out onto a combat field or a piece of armor breaking, it is your duty to call HOLD! and alert the event staff, even if you are not sure. It is better to be mistaken but loud, than needed but silent.

You are free to attend any classes being held at the event. Most classes are offered free of charge or may have a small fee for the materials for the class. This will be indicated in the event brochure or list of classes. Feel free to take notes and ask questions. If someone is teaching a subject, it's probably because they love that topic and will be delighted that you want to know more about it.

During the event, the populace will gather for two particular activities. If the Crown, Coronet, or Baronage are present, they may hold court. During court, the Crown (etc.) will make proclamations, announce changes to law, give out awards, and recognize competition and tournament winners. Generally you will need to be quiet in order to hear what is going on in court. If you must speak, speak softly. Depending on your kingdom, you may applaud or cheer for recipients of awards or competition winners and this cheer may be specific to your kingdom. Listen to what others do and join in.

If you are called into court, make sure you are not wearing any weapons; approach the Royalty and make reverence, then kneel before them. If there are more than one set of Royals present, acknowledge them all. Follow others' examples for the order in which to do so. Listen and respond as appropriate,

thank them for any award or acknowledgement you receive, then when dismissed, stand and walk backwards until you have reached your aisle or exit. Reverence again then return to your seat.

The second activity that gathers the populace together is feast. During this time, gentles gather to dine on medieval foods prepared by the event staff. Many people will bring place settings, candles (be sure to check the site rules before lighting them), and medieval feast gear to set the mood. Depending on the setup of the feast, either the staff will serve you, they will ask volunteers to fetch platters from the kitchen, or you may gather food from a buffet. This is a great time to try a variety of foods you may never have even heard of before but don't be worried if you don't like something or would rather not try something. Not all medieval foods suit everyone's palate.

If the seated nobles are present, they will sit at a special table known as the high table. If you pass by this table, pay reverence just like you would if they were walking around or on the thrones. During feast, gentles of high rank will often give toasts to the Royals and, if appropriate the Baronage, whether present or not. Feel free to raise your glass in this toast as well. Following the feast, the kitchen staff may ask for help cleaning dishes or clearing tables. You are always welcome to help out but unless you are on the kitchen staff, you are never required to do so.

After feast and court, there are a few different activities that may take place. The event may hold a revel, ball, or hafla where gentles gather to dance. There may be a bardic circle where people will tell stories and sing songs from SCA period or of a medieval nature. Gentles may set up their own campfires and spend time together and some encampments invite others to join them. If you don't know, ask around. Please be aware that this time is usually less formal and, depending on the attendees and the site alcohol policy, encampment gatherings may not be appropriate for children.

Before you leave the event, make sure you have gathered all of your belongings, cleaned up the cabin or encampment space you used, and returned any loaner costume or gear you borrowed. You will frequently see people taking down tents or pavilions or cleaning and clearing halls, fighting fields, and so forth, and an extra helping hand is always welcome (but again, never required unless you're on the event staff).

As mentioned at the start of this article, your first event can be a fantastic experience that you will never forget. The most important thing is to have a good time. Be polite and courteous, ask questions, and try new things. By the time everything is said and done, you'll be scouring the calendar for your next event!

