

# **Calontir Seneschal's Handbook**

*This handbook is dedicated to the memory of one of its authors, Baroness Elina in Harraudha (Ellen Pinegar). Her contributions to this handbook and to the SCA were great, and she is greatly missed.*

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In service to Calontir,  
Elasait ingen Diarmata  
Kingdom Seneschal  
February 15, 1999

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# Introduction

## Welcome to the Seneschalate...

“All other officers have nice, neatly defined offices with clear cut duties, responsibility, and authority; the seneschal has everything left over.”

*Rory O’Tamrair, Past Midrealm Seneschal, October A.S. XIII*

The above quote is twenty years old now, and many, many things in the SCA have changed in that time. But the more things change, the more they stay the same, and the words of that long-ago Middle Kingdom Seneschal are still accurate.

It may be helpful to divide the duties of a branch seneschal into two categories—paperwork and people. While the paperwork aspect of the job has become legendary, and failure to fulfill paperwork requirements is the easiest way to find your term as seneschal shortened, the human relations aspect of the job is actually far more important—and if done badly, can do far more harm to the SCA than a couple of late reports.

As seneschal, you are the group’s coordinator, organizer, legal representative, contract-signer, cheerleader, advocate, president, teacher, dispenser of information, and sometimes nursemaid. If this sounds like a big job, it is. If you’re beginning to question whether you really want the job at this point, congratulations—you have a good grip on reality, and chances are you’ll do just fine as your group’s seneschal.

In dealing with paperwork, deadlines are important. Too many people in the SCA have a tendency to disregard deadlines, since “this is a hobby and we do it for fun.” Yes, that’s true; however, when you take an office, your participation in the organization is no longer entirely voluntary. You take on an obligation to do certain things whether or not you feel like it, and one of those things is the timely submission, four times a year, of a short report to the Kingdom Seneschal’s office. Your warrant can be suspended or revoked if you skip a report, or if you have two consecutive late reports. The Kingdom needs to hear from you regularly so we know how things are going in your group!

Important as the paperwork is, being a seneschal is really a “people” job. You’re the activities planner, the hand-holder, the arbitrator of disputes, the person who is “in the know.” You have information to share with your populace. You must ensure that the other officers’ jobs get done, without insulting their competence or micro-managing them. You are also responsible for scheduling and running your group’s meetings, unless you are a baronial seneschal, in which case you may share that responsibility with the baronage.

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## Welcome to the Seneschalate..., Continued

As a local seneschal, your job includes the scheduling of regular branch meetings, and usually it will be you who set the agenda and run the meetings. You also need to share information with your populace, particularly information about upcoming events (as local seneschal you will receive flyers for many events, which you need to make available). And when the Kingdom Seneschal informs the local seneschals about things happening in the Society at a kingdom or corporate level, the intent is that you will share that information with your populace. Not everyone is interested in the doings of the corporate office, but don't let that stop you from passing on the information.

You should also be the first point of contact for the local media, and will probably be many people's first point of contact with the SCA as an organization. You may share these duties with a chatelaine, but you will still be an important contact. And, you must coordinate the other officers and see to it that their jobs are being done, although you are not their boss. This sometimes takes considerable diplomacy, particularly when an officer is performing unsatisfactorily.

And, in some instances, you will find yourself asked to arbitrate disputes. This should not be a primary role of your office, but it is occasionally necessary. You will also find that people are likely to come to you when they have a problem, a grievance, or just want someone to listen to their side of things. The job requires tact, grace, objectivity, and good listening skills...sort of a super-parent with a smattering of Judge Wopner thrown in.

The pay is low, the hours can be inconvenient, but the benefits can be great. Knowing that you've helped the SCA thrive and grow in your corner of the kingdom is a reward like no other. And the local seneschals truly are the foundation upon which the rest of the structure of our Society is laid.

*Elasait ingen Diarmata*  
*Kingdom Seneschal*

## Stuff I learned the hard way (or Elasait's Helpful Hints)

1. The 72-hour rule: If someone contacts you and describes a major problem, particularly one that's clearly interpersonal in nature, you don't have to act right away. Take time to mull it over before you do anything. Half the time, the crisis will blow over in a few days. (This doesn't mean it won't resurface later, under a different form.)
2. Distinguish between calls for action and a desire to vent. Lots of people who contact you just want to vent at someone. Vents don't necessarily need action on your part, beyond listening.
3. Never attribute to malice that which can be adequately explained by stupidity. Never attribute to stupidity that which can be adequately explained by poor communication. Always assume communication failure, even if it looks unlikely. (Elasait's corollary to Hanlon's razor)
4. Never let your boss be surprised. If you think it might come to the attention of the Kingdom Seneschal, be the first to contact them—or, at the very least, contact your regional reporting deputy and let them contact the kingdom seneschal!
5. Burnout can be insidious. I didn't realize how badly I wanted out of the local seneschal's office until I found myself, immediately after turning over the office, skipping out of the feast hall shouting, "I'm free, I'm free, I'm free!"
6. Kingdom and regional officers are resources; use them. They don't bite, and they're there to help.
7. It's more important to fix problems than blame. Or, to use the dead fish analogy created by Mistress Hilary of Serendip, long-time Steward (now called Seneschal) of the Society: When you have a dead fish lying on the carpet, if you spend all your time trying to find out who left it there, it will only grow more and more smelly. Your first order of business is to appropriately dispose of the fish.
8. Don't reinvent the wheel. It's likely someone else has had the same problem you're having. This is also why you shouldn't hesitate to consult your superior officers.
9. Some people just live to complain. There will be a small minority of folks who won't be happy no matter what course of action is decided upon. They won't offer suggestions (constructive or otherwise) or express their opinions when given the opportunity, but will wait until a decision has been made and then complain about how they weren't consulted, or they could have told you it wouldn't work, or the powers that be have to have everything their way.
10. Anytime anyone begins a statement with the phrase, "People are saying..." it usually means that's what that person is saying. Take it with as much salt as needed.
11. Beware the prophet who preaches the One True Way. The SCA is a broad organization, and there are many, many ways to play the game. This doesn't mean you have to tolerate elf ears, vampires, or showing up in a spandex Civil War outfit; but as long as someone's version of the game isn't in contradiction with the governing documents or kingdom law and policy, it's to be permitted. Other people will either flock to that version of the game, or they won't.

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## Stuff I learned the hard way (or Elasait's Helpful Hints), Continued

12. It's worth trying to regard problem entities as people with misdirected energy. Sometimes your problem child is actually someone who cares passionately about some aspect of the organization, or really wants to make a contribution, but doesn't know how or feels ignored. Cast about and see if you can come up with a project for your problem child. This won't always work, but it's worth a try.
13. Don't assume. Anything. A close look at the word tells you what it can make out of all of us.
14. Perceptions, even erroneous ones, look like reality to some people; and left unchecked, they have a way, over time, of becoming reality. They are more important than you think, which is unfortunate, but true. Don't ignore them.
15. If you must use an iron fist, put a velvet glove on it if at all possible. You really will go farther by being pleasant and agreeable, and demonstrating interest in people's concerns.
16. While it may be gratifying, in the short term, to give in to the impulse to tell someone exactly what you think of their intelligence, personality, parentage, etc., or to indulge in backbiting and innuendo when those around you are doing so, it's rarely worth the cost. Ultimately, this game is won on what, for lack of a better term, I call graciousness points. This is doubly true of officers, and quadruply true of seneschals.
17. Never suppose you're too unimportant for somebody to take what you say as an Official Pronouncement...and always at the worst possible moment.
18. If you're not (mostly) enjoying what you're doing, then you're not doing the right thing. Yes, this is true even of officers. Holding office is a big responsibility, and can be a burden, but it can also be a delight. If doing what you're doing causes you no joy, arrange to stop doing it.
19. Being able to make soothing noises over the phone is an invaluable skill.
20. When (not if) you make a mistake, the best approach is to swallow your pride and own up to it readily. Apologize where appropriate, take whatever beating you've got coming with as much grace as you can muster, do what you can to make things right, fix it, and file whatever you've learned for future reference.
21. If someone comes up with a really stupid idea, assign them to carry it out. Nine times out of ten you will never hear from them or the idea again. (Thanks to Master Stephen Ironhand, first seneschal of the then shire of Three Rivers, for this valuable and time-tested rule!)

# Job Descriptions for the Seneschal's Office

## Introduction

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**Purpose** This section contains information (“job descriptions”) on the offices within the seneschal's office, including the branch seneschal, the baronial seneschal, and the chatelaine.

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**In this section** The following topics are covered within this section:

Topic	See Page
Kings, Queens, and Boards of Directors: The Structure of the SCA	6
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# Kings, Queens, and Boards of Directors: The Structure of the SCA

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**Introduction** The structure of the SCA is sometimes difficult to understand completely. This is because the organization operates on several levels. On one level, we're a modern nonprofit corporation. On another level, we're a club, run by the officers and the membership. On still another level, we're a feudal monarchy. Figuring out which level of organization is applicable in a given situation is one of the challenges of getting things done, and not something at which a beginner can expect to be adept.

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**Board of Directors** At the top of the heap, the SCA is governed by a seven-member Board of Directors. This Board is self-perpetuating, meaning that it chooses its own members. Anyone in the organization can nominate someone for a seat on the Board of Directors. Candidates can also self-nominate, which is quite common. The Board seeks input from the membership on the qualifications of candidates, but there is no direct election or input. For the Board to act, it must act as a whole; an individual Board member has no particular authority. Board decisions are made by a majority vote—the only place in the SCA where decisions are made this way.

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**Society officers** There are also Society-level officers to correspond to the kingdom-level officers. There is a Society Seneschal, a Society Marshal, and so forth. A couple of these are paid, part-time positions, but most are volunteer positions.

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**Society Seneschal** The Society Seneschal has the authority to make policy decisions and to interpret the SCA's governing documents, although his/her rulings are subject to approval by the Board of Directors, and must be reported to the Board at their next meeting. The other officers may make decisions and rulings in their particular areas of authority. Again, these decisions are subject to the Board's approval.

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**Kingdom Seneschal** The Kingdom Seneschal is the legal representative for the Kingdom of Calontir in the eyes of the modern world. The Kingdom Seneschal interprets Kingdom Law, and makes policy decisions about the day-to-day workings of the Kingdom. These decisions are subject to approval by the Crown and the Society Seneschal. Other kingdom officers have similar authority within their particular areas of expertise.

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# Kings, Queens, and Boards of Directors: The Structure of the SCA, Continued

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## **The Crown**

The Crown (the King and Queen) are absolutely in charge of the medieval aspects of the SCA. They have the sole power to give awards and to change Kingdom Law (although Kingdom Law cannot be changed in such a way as to conflict with the Society's governing documents, or real-world law). The Crown also appoints Kingdom Great Officers, in conjunction with the appropriate Society Officer. A great many other things are subject to the Crown's approval. For example, both the Crown and the appropriate Kingdom Officer sign the warrant rosters for local officers, and the Crown must be consulted if a warrant is to be revoked.

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## **Your input to the Board**

The Board of Directors seems very far away to most people, but as an officer in the SCA, you should take some interest in what is being done at the Society level. While few of the Board's decisions have great immediate impact, they do set trends and cause gradual changes. From time to time, the Kingdom Seneschal will probably send you items on which the Board is requesting comments from the membership. If you have an opinion at all about the subject at hand, write to the Board and tell them so. It doesn't matter what your SCA background is. They are happy to get feedback from anyone in the organization. Also, this information should be made available to your local members, so they can also express their opinions if they choose. If you don't give your opinion on the workings of the organization, how are those who make decisions going to know?

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## **Your input to the Kingdom**

The same is true of those charged with running the kingdom. If the Kingdom Seneschal, or your regional seneschal, asks you for input, please try to give it.

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## **Your input to the Crown**

As an officer of your group, you have a duty to submit award recommendations to the Crown. An award recommendation form is included in this handbook. When there are people in your group doing things for which you believe they deserve recognition, you should send an award recommendation to Their Majesties. They cannot know all Their subjects, and They really want to hear from you. If you don't do it, who will?

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# Branch Seneschal

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## **Purpose**

This section contains information on the responsibilities of the local branch seneschal.

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## **General Duties**

The local branch seneschal within the SCA is directly responsible for:

- Acting as the legal representative for the branch.
  - Running or arranging for the running of group activities in a manner that meets the needs of the populace and the SCA. This includes assuring that the branch complies with real-world law, Corpora, and Calontir Kingdom Law, either by reference to the SCA documents or consultation with the Kingdom Seneschal.
  - Submitting the required office reports on a timely basis.
  - Monitoring receipt of copies of the reports that are to be sent by the other local officers to their kingdom superiors in order to be aware of whether the responsibilities of their offices are being fulfilled.
  - Participating in financial decisions as a member of the branch's Financial Committee.
  - Overseeing conflict and dispute resolution when the issue can be resolved at the local level.
- 

## **Deputy officers**

As seneschal you will probably have some deputies; it is your responsibility to make sure that they can do their jobs and are doing their jobs, without getting in their way or taking over and trying to do their jobs for them.

The minister of children and chatelaine/castellan have kingdom superiors, from whom they receive their job guidelines and responsibilities, but they also have to make sure that their activities are tailored to serve the needs of the populace. Other deputies, usually including such things as event steward or demo coordinator, have no kingdom superior and will work with you to make sure that they are serving the needs of the local populace and the SCA.

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## **Minister of Children**

The minister of children is responsible for establishing and implementing children's activities in accordance with the guidelines set forth by the Kingdom Minister of Children and the local branch.

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## **Chatelaine/Castellan**

The chatelaine/castellan is responsible for facilitating the introduction of new people to the SCA in accordance with the guidelines set forth by the Kingdom Chatelaine/Castellan and the local branch.

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## Branch Seneschal, Continued

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### Event Steward/Autocrat

The event steward/autocrat is responsible for a particular event. Autocrats of local events are not typically warranted; however, they must be paid members of the SCA because they are considered temporary officers. (A deputy to the autocrat need not be a member, but the head autocrat must be.)

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### Legal representative

You, as the warranted seneschal, are the only person authorized by SCA, Inc. to act as legal representative for the branch, or in other words, to obligate the Society at the local level. This includes the following responsibilities.

Responsibility	Description
Contracts	Only you, or someone that you <u>specifically</u> authorize to do so (such as the autocrat of an event) can sign site contracts or any other contract at the local level.
SCA sanction	Only the ranking seneschal at an event can decide whether to pull SCA sanction from an event if things get out of hand. (This is covered in Corpora and requires <u>extreme</u> circumstances.)
Non-SCA Paperwork	This includes doing any paperwork required to maintain any standing your branch has outside the SCA (for example, paperwork required to reserve a meeting room or to maintain student group status at the local college). You don't necessarily have to do this yourself, but it's your job to see that it gets done, and on time.

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### Group activities

You are responsible for making sure that group activities are run to try to serve the needs of the populace and the SCA. As seneschal, you are also ultimately responsible for making sure that all group SCA activities are in compliance with applicable laws, the requirements of Corpora, and Calontir Kingdom laws and policies. If you are not familiar with the SCA documents when you take office, you should read them as soon as possible and discuss any questions that you might have with the Kingdom Seneschal.

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### Local meetings

As the seneschal, you are usually the one who runs business and/or populace meetings, although these meetings may be run by someone whom you delegate or authorize to do so. This may differ in baronies, however, when the local custom may be to have the baronage preside over meetings.

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## Branch Seneschal, Continued

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### Events

This responsibility includes the responsibility to schedule and oversee events. When your branch decides to hold a kingdom-level event, you must:

- contact the Kingdom Reeve (calendar deputy) to confirm the event. The autocrat can make the initial call, but only the seneschal (or baronage in a barony) can confirm the date to get it officially put on the calendar, and
  - look over event flyers before they are sent to the *Mews* for publication. There's more information on this in the section on events.
- 

### Phone list

Another thing that falls under this heading is the maintenance of a list of your group's participants, usually in the form of a phone list. You don't have to do this yourself—in many groups it is handled by the chatelaine or the chronicler—but it is important to see that such a thing exists and is periodically updated.

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### Office paperwork

You are responsible for submitting office paperwork on a timely basis. This is pretty straightforward. You have quarterly reports to submit and deadlines by which they must be turned in to the regional reporting deputy assigned to you by the Kingdom Seneschal. The Kingdom Seneschal needs the information from your reports to turn in Kingdom reports to the Crown and the Society Seneschal. If you cannot meet the deadline, let your reporting deputy know as early as possible, and provide a date on which the report will be sent. Then get it in by that date.

- NOTE: This is a non-negotiable part of the office. Failure to turn in reports is grounds for the revocation of your warrant and installation of a new seneschal.
- 

### Financial Committee

You are also responsible for participating in financial decisions as a member of the branch financial committee. The Society requires that all financial decisions involve more than one person. To accomplish this, each group is required to have a Financial Committee that consists of the seneschal and the treasurer at a minimum.

As a member of the Financial Committee, you are responsible for making sure that all expenditures of group funds are:

- in accordance with the law and with SCA guidelines, and
- follow any policies or procedures your group may have for deciding how to spend money.

If you have questions about this, you should contact the Kingdom Seneschal or Kingdom Treasurer for more information.

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## Branch Seneschal, Continued

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### **Group officers**

Another one of your responsibilities is to monitor the other officers' reports to make sure that they are being filed on time and to monitor the other offices to make sure that their areas of responsibility are being handled. This, too, is pretty straightforward.

- There is a place on the Seneschal's Report Form to indicate whether you have received copies of the other officers' reports. You should be receiving a copy of each officer's report each quarter, as well as the Domesday. If you are not getting copies of the report, you should notify the officer's kingdom superior, although it is a very good idea to talk with the officer first to find out if there's a reason you didn't receive a copy.
  - In addition, it is your responsibility to make sure that the requirements of each office are being met. If there is a problem, this will usually mean at least that you will have to make sure that the reports for that office are completed and filed while the situation is being resolved.
- 

### **Conflict arbitration/resolution**

As seneschal and therefore the person seen as the leader of the group, you will occasionally find that conflicts are being referred to you, or must be addressed by you for resolution. This is probably one of the most difficult parts of the job. There is a section on this topic elsewhere in this handbook, but a few key points to remember are as follows.

- If it looks as if it could be more than a minor skirmish, let the Kingdom Seneschal know about it in advance.
  - Decide whether this is an appropriate conflict for you to address. Rumors about someone's criminal habits should be left to the civil authorities. Complaints of "she stole my boyfriend" are best handled by pointing out that you are not the Lonely Hearts Club and that the situation is only in your jurisdiction if the behavior exhibited by the conflicting parties starts to affect the group.
  - Remain as neutral as possible. If you can't remain neutral, talk to the Kingdom Seneschal or your regional deputy; it may be appropriate to refer the conflict to the Kingdom Seneschal, the Kingdom Advocate, or another person respected by the parties.
  - Insist that the official Grievance Procedure for the SCA be followed (this appears in the Organizational Handbook).
  - Document the situation at the time it occurs.
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### **Other duties**

The seneschal will also frequently find him/herself the person who handles all of those tasks and responsibilities that don't neatly fit into the job descriptions of any of the other officers or deputies. Over time, you will find that things will occur which need to be handled that do not fall neatly into the function of any office. You are responsible for seeing that these things are done as required. This does not necessarily mean that you have to handle them yourself, but you will have to make sure that someone does take care of them.

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# The Seneschal in a Shire, College, Stronghold, or Canton

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**Seneschal's role** In these groups, the seneschal is the administrative director. As such, the seneschal generally makes most of the administrative decisions of the group and signs all contracts, unless you have delegated this responsibility in a specific instance. (For more information, see the section on Contracts.)

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**Membership: Shires and Cantons** Shires and cantons are required to have a minimum of five sustaining members of the SCA in order to maintain the group. It is wise for the seneschal of groups with low membership to ensure that membership levels are maintained. If the group drops below five sustaining members for more than a few months, the Kingdom Seneschal may recommend that the Board of Directors remove the group's official status.

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**Membership: Colleges and Strongholds** Colleges are located at actual institutions of higher learning, and strongholds are affiliated with military bases. Because both these sorts of institutions tend to have transient populations, a group with college or stronghold status may temporarily drop below the required five sustaining members, as long as there are still people actively working to increase the membership. In these groups, the seneschal usually acts as the liaison with the real-world college, university, or military base in addition to the administrative duties within the group itself.

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**Cantons** Cantons are semi-independent subsidiary branches of a barony. Cantons must meet all the normal requirements for a shire, except that if there are fighters in the canton and nobody is available to be a knight marshal, the fighters may be carried on the baronial rolls instead of the canton's rolls.

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**Cantons and reports** Canton officers must provide their baronial counterpart with a copy of their reports. This is covered in Corpora's definition of a canton as a group reporting through a barony. In Calontir, we ask that the cantons submit reports directly to their kingdom superior (or a deputy, according to how the kingdom officer administers that office). But, if you are a canton seneschal, you must also give a copy of your report to the baronial seneschal. You should also be providing a copy of the report to the baronage unless they have specifically told you not to.

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**Cantons and baronial activities** It is not unusual for the barony to require canton seneschals to attend the baronial officers' meetings. Also, if your canton wants to schedule an event, you must clear it with the baronial seneschal or the baronage first. If you are a canton seneschal, you should be keeping both the baronial seneschal and your baronage informed about activities in the canton.

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# Baronial Seneschal

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## **Purpose**

This section contains information on being a seneschal within a barony.

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## **Introduction**

The seneschal of a barony has a somewhat different role than the seneschal of any other type of group. Being a baronial seneschal is in many ways like being the kingdom seneschal, only on a smaller scale. Rather than being the sole leader and single most visible representative of the group, as is generally the case in shires, the baronial seneschal shares that role with a baron and/or baroness, and often works more “behind the scenes” than does the seneschal of a smaller group.

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## **Shared role of baronage and seneschal**

The kingdom is ruled over by a king and queen, and the kingdom seneschal’s job is to see to the smooth administration of the kingdom and its branches. In much the same way, your baron and baroness are the Crown’s representatives in the barony. They have the final say regarding how the barony is run. Your job is to ensure that the barony runs smoothly, and that any cantons also are running smoothly. Just as the Kingdom Seneschal advises the Crown on matters pertaining to the legal end of the SCA, it is part of your job to advise your baron and baroness on such matters.

Exactly how the responsibilities are divided between the seneschal and the baronage varies from group to group, but it is vitally important that you develop a good working relationship with your baron and baroness. Meet with them at the commencement of your term of office to discuss who will do what and also to discuss personal goals. There are many things that are negotiable between you and the baronage, or that may be done by tradition one way in one barony and another way in another barony.

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## **Baronage as administrator of the Crown’s lands**

The baron and baroness are responsible to the Crown for the administration of the lands within the barony. Typically they are heavily involved in planning the overall goals and direction of the group. They take on much of the “cheerleader” and “group advocate” roles that are left to the seneschal in smaller branches. And the baron and baroness have one important privilege: they may hold baronial courts and create baronial awards with which to recognize the achievements of their populace. Only the baron and baroness may hold courts; groups below the baronial level are not permitted to hold courts or create awards.

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## Baronial Seneschal, Continued

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### Baronage “approval” authority

Your baron and baroness have veto and/or approval power over most things that happen in the barony. While they may not directly appoint or remove baronial officers (that responsibility rests with the Crown and the appropriate Kingdom officer), they have considerable influence in officer selection—probably more so than anyone else. While they may not make unilateral decisions about how the barony’s money is spent (nobody should be doing this!), they usually will have veto power on spending decisions, just as the Crown does on kingdom-level expenditures.

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### Meetings

Whether barony meetings are run by the baronage, the seneschal, or both jointly is usually a matter of custom. If the baron and baroness prefer to run the meetings they may do so; however, they may prefer to leave that up to you.

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### Events

It is a requirement of the Kingdom Reeve’s office that baronial events be scheduled on the kingdom calendar by either the seneschal or the baronage, so you should discuss who will take this responsibility. In any case, event bids should have the approval of both the baron and baroness (because they are the group’s rulers), and the baronial seneschal (because you are ultimately responsible for overseeing the autocrat, signing contracts, and making sure the event meets SCA guidelines).

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### Financial committee

You will also serve, per Society financial policy, as a member of the barony’s financial committee, and you should be a signatory on the checking account. The treasurer is also required to serve on the committee. The baronage is not required to do so, but may if they wish, and they will probably wish. Other officers or members of the group may serve on the financial committee, depending on the wishes of the barony. All members of the financial committee will participate in making decisions about budgeting and expenditures.

- NOTE: Financial decisions should never be effectively in the hands of any one person or couple, be that the baronage, the treasurer, or you!
- 

### Contracts

You are still the legal representative of the SCA in the barony’s area, and you must sign any contracts the group enters into, i.e., for meeting or event sites. It is Society policy that only a warranted seneschal, or his/her duly appointed representative, such as the event autocrat, may sign a contract of any sort. The baronage may not sign contracts unless you specifically delegate one of them to do so, and the delegation is for a single instance—it is not a blanket delegation. This is Society policy and isn’t negotiable—seneschals sign contracts.

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## Baronial Seneschal, Continued

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### **Problems in the group**

Both you and the baronage should work together to solve problems the group may have. This includes, but is not limited to, officer problems, issues concerning minors, site rules and restrictions, and interpersonal conflicts. Frequently in a large group, people with a complaint will have a “favorite” person to go to—a certain officer or the baron or baroness—but it is important that you communicate with each other about problems and potential problems. Don’t let someone in the group “play you off” against each other. It’s best to present a united front.

This is easiest to do if you keep your baron and baroness informed about anything you think might develop into a problem. In working with the Crown, I try never to let them be surprised by anything—I try to make sure they’ve heard it from me first. I also prefer to err on the side of giving them too much information rather than too little. I suggest you do the same with your baronage. If you keep them informed, they will be likely to return the favor and not let you be surprised, either.

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### **Problems with the baronage**

If you are having problems, try to approach them directly. Schedule a meeting with your baron and baroness, and talk about what’s bothering you. Many, many problems are the result of unclear communication or uncertainty about the other person’s expectations.

If you really feel you’re hitting a brick wall, contact your regional deputy or the Kingdom Seneschal. Perhaps one of them can mediate for you. Do keep in mind, though, that your baronage usually will have the deciding vote, since they represent the Crown within the barony.

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### **Cantons**

You will be involved in overseeing any cantons the barony has, in a general way. The canton seneschal is required to give you a copy of his/her quarterly report and Domesday, and the canton must contact you or the baronage and get approval before scheduling an event on the kingdom calendar. Some baronies require that the canton seneschals attend baronial officer meetings, and this is probably a good idea. Keep informed about what’s going on in each canton, and let the canton seneschal know that you’re available to provide assistance as needed. It’s not a bad idea to attend an occasional canton meeting, either. But unless you detect signs of real trouble that the canton seneschal seems unable to handle, let them do things for themselves.

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## Baronial Seneschal, Continued

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**Your deputies** You will appoint and oversee such deputies as you deem necessary to assist you in performing the duties of your office. However, remember that the baronage retains veto power, and don't appoint anyone to whom they object as a deputy. Don't appoint someone to a deputy position if you don't have real work for them to do, but don't try to do it all yourself either. Being the seneschal of a large group is quite demanding, and besides the benefit to you, you'll make other people feel more involved by letting them help out.

Your deputies will probably include a chatelaine and a minister of children, and you may want to have other deputies as well. Many baronies have a person who is in charge of coordinating and scheduling demos for the group. Other deputies that you may find useful might include a gold key office (responsible for issuing loaner garb to new members), a person in charge of public relations and publicity for the barony, a clerical assistant, and there may be others as well.

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### **Cooperation with the baronage**

This cannot be stressed enough—it is imperative that you and the baronage cooperate with each other. Follow their lead in establishing your relative roles, but remember that you do have a lot to offer to lessen the weight of their coronets. There are many areas of overlapping responsibilities...and a well-established barony will probably have developed customary ways of dealing with most of these. If you take care to communicate, inform, and learn their wishes, you will probably find that you can work very well with your baron and baroness.

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# Chatelaine/Gold Key

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**Purpose**

This section describes the duties and responsibilities of the chatelaine's office. The chatelaine will have various duties according to the needs of the group. In general, the duties may include anything related to recruiting and retaining new members and improving the public image of the SCA.

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**Definition:  
Chatelaine**

The chatelaine is a deputy of the seneschal, who appoints and assigns duties to the office. "Chatelaine" is feminine, though in the SCA, we tend to use it as generic. "Hospitaller" is generic, and "chatelain" and "castellan" are masculine terms. Any of these titles can be chosen by the holder of the office.

Smaller groups may have no chatelaine at all, with those duties falling to the seneschal or the group at large. A barony or larger group may have several people assigned to carry out the responsibilities of the chatelaine.

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**Definition:  
Gold Key**

The term "gold key" refers to both the loaner equipment available (garb, feast gear, etc.) and to the person who maintains it and lugs it around. This may be the chatelaine or someone else who volunteers.

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**Reporting**

The chatelaine of a local group should make quarterly and domesday reports to the local seneschal and to the Kingdom Chatelaine.

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**Handbook**

Calontir has an excellent Chatelaine's handbook, written by Countess Lile ni Mhordha. Some of the text found here is verbatim from this handbook or very slightly updated. There are many more good ideas in the handbook that will make the chatelaine's job easier.

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**Kingdom  
Chatelaine's  
office**

The office of the Kingdom Chatelaine exists as a resource for you and your chatelaine. He or she has ideas and publications on most or all of the subjects that will concern the duties of your local chatelaine. If you need help with any aspect of dealing with newcomers or public relations, don't hesitate to contact your Kingdom Chatelaine.

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## Chatelaine/Gold Key, Continued

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### Selecting a chatelaine

When selecting someone to serve as your chatelaine, be sure to choose an individual who is outgoing and friendly, is comfortable speaking to large groups of people, and who makes newcomers feel welcome, interested, and at ease. It is far better to have no one at all in the office (and handle the chatelaine's duties yourself) than to have someone who is shy, absent, overbearing, pedantic, or who has a personal agenda that will not serve your group.

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### Primary functions

The primary functions of the chatelaine include:

- Selective recruitment of new members. Some newcomers will find the SCA on their own, but the chatelaine is responsible for recruiting the type of members needed by the group the most. "Selective" does not mean turning anyone away who is interested in the SCA.
  - Retention of new members and integration of new members into the existing group.
  - Improvement and maintenance of the public image of the SCA as a whole, and the community image of the local group.
- 

### Specific duties

The duties of the office of chatelaine will include, but may not be limited to:

- Greeting newcomers.
  - Acting as media representative, along with the seneschal.
  - Acting as liaison between newcomers and established members.
  - Coordinating demonstrations for recruitment, education, and public relations purposes.
  - Assembling and maintaining a newcomers information packet.
  - Coordinating newcomers' workshops and meetings.
  - Publishing and distributing informational flyers.
  - Maintaining a supply of garb and other essential gear ("gold key") for loan to newcomers.
  - Encouraging SCA participants (new and established) to become and remain national members.
  - Keeping track of membership rolls, order of precedence, address/phone lists, and attendance at meetings of the local group.
- 

### Children's activities

Some groups expect the chatelaine to be responsible for children's duties as well. However, Calontir has an excellent Ministry of Children program, and if at all possible, a different person should carry out those duties. The chatelaine has enough to do!

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# Administering a Group—the “People-work”

## Overview

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**Purpose** This section contains guidelines and procedures for administering a group, including running a meeting and resolving conflicts.

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**The seneschal’s role** In general, the seneschal ends up being a jack of all trades: administrator, director, counselor, cheerleader. The seneschal must do his/her own job, and sometimes the jobs of the other officers. The seneschal often acts as a mediator when conflicts arise within the group. Aside from the paperwork aspect of the job, the most important role is probably the role of cheerleader. The seneschal needs to inspire the populace of the group to grow and change. As seneschal, you will expect much and much will be expected of you. Learn from both your successes and your failures what works best for you and your group.

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**In this section** The following topics are covered in this section:

Topic	See Page
Running a Good Meeting	20
Problem Solving and Conflict Resolution in the SCA	23
Steps to Arbitrating a Dispute	26

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# Running a Good Meeting

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## What is a good meeting?

There are a number of elements that go into a good meeting, but basically, a good meeting is one where the group doesn't leave feeling that their time was wasted. There are many things that can be done to make sure that the meetings that your group holds are good meetings, and most of them are under your control and direction. In this section, let's look at some of them.

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## Finding the meeting

Make it easy for people to find the meetings.

- Hold meetings on a regular schedule. Some groups meet once a week, some every two weeks, and some every month. It doesn't really matter how often the meetings are held, as long as the needs of the group are being met by the schedule. It is, however, important for people to know when the meetings will be held without having to ask someone each time.
  - If possible, hold meetings in the same place each time. For those groups that cover a large amount of territory and make a point of moving their meeting sites to accommodate as many people as possible, try to schedule the meetings in the same location in each area where the meetings are held. This will make it much easier for people to find the meetings if they have been out of touch for awhile.
- 

## Focus of the meeting

Make sure that everyone knows in advance what the focus of the meeting will be. Some groups have meeting in the following formats:

- Business meetings once a month with the other meeting(s) that month focusing on something else, usually arts and sciences activities.
- A short business session at the beginning of each meeting, followed by some other activity.
- Everything at each meeting: business, A&S, fighter practice, dance practice, etc.
- Periodic mini-events, with fighting, food, games, and other activities.

It doesn't really matter how your meetings are focused as long as the needs of the group are served and the group knows when each activity is scheduled. Also, do your best to see that the meetings are enjoyable and productive. Nobody likes to feel that they are wasting their time.

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## Changes in the meeting time or place

Have a pre-established method of communicating a change in the planned meeting time or place. This can run the gamut from a phone tree to an announcement on the group web page (if you have one) to a sign on the door. If you rely on a web page or e-mail, however, do be aware of those members who aren't hooked up to the internet.

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## Running a Good Meeting, Continued

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### **Agenda**

Use the following guidelines to prepare an agenda in advance for the meeting.

- Organize the agenda so that all of your information is included.
  - Leave space for people who will arrive at the meeting with announcements they wish to make.
  - Before the meeting starts, ask anyone who wishes to make an announcement to sign up on the agenda (your local herald can help with this). There is absolutely nothing wrong with pre-screening these announcements to make sure that they are appropriate for the SCA meeting context.
  - Organize the agenda so it flows smoothly and all the business is covered. In some groups the person is called up to make the announcement, while in others the herald makes the announcement.
- 

### **Discussion**

When issues are brought up for discussion, lead the discussion so that everyone who wishes to participate in the discussion has an equal opportunity to do so. This will mean controlling the discussion so that no one dominates it to the exclusion of others. It will also mean closing the discussion when nothing new is being said. Beating the proverbial dead horse is usually a waste of time.

Some discussions need to be tabled after awhile, pending perhaps another discussion or to give someone time to obtain missing information. If this happens, make it very clear when the discussion will be resumed, and make sure that it is indeed resumed at the announced time.

---

### **Closing the meeting**

Close the meeting when it's finished. It's time to close the meeting when all the information has been conveyed, all the announcements have been made, all the discussions have been held, and there's nothing more to say. The meeting should close so there is enough time to clean up the site and be out by closing time, if your site has such a deadline.

---

### **Meeting format: guidelines**

Remember, you are running the meeting. A good meeting does not just happen. It has structure and form and is not run by a committee. Do use a format, however. Doing so makes it much easier to ensure that all the necessary announcements are made and the planned discussions are held.

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## Running a Good Meeting, Continued

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### **Meeting format: example**

Although the content will depend on what is going on with the group, an example of a meeting format is as follows:

- Welcome the group.
- Introduce and welcome new members and guests.
- Announce upcoming events and pass around seneschals' flyers that you have received.
- Announce upcoming group activities, such as special interest group meetings, fighter practices, the next business meeting, etc.
- Officers' reports, beginning with your own.
- Discussions and plans for future group activities.

This is not a required meeting format, and you may find that another structure works better for you and your group.

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### **Meeting format: other ideas**

Some groups like to include event reports from members who have attended an event since the last meeting, or include a "medieval moment" which is when a volunteer spends five minutes or less sharing some interesting information or research they've found about the Middle Ages.

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### **A note about announcement**

What if someone wants to make an announcement that is questionably appropriate to the meeting? You may have to decide on the spot whether the announcement should be made. Some guidelines to use are:

- How does the announcement relate to group business or activities?
- Is the topic something that will interest and apply to the entire group?
- Is the topic likely to set off an emotional debate that does not directly pertain to the activities of the group?

You, as the seneschal, can decide that the announcement may not be made during the meeting, but only after it. In that way, you can avoid having it become part of the group's official business, and anyone who is not interested does not need to stay to avoid missing the rest of the meeting.

---

### **A final word about meetings**

Unfortunately, you can never guarantee that a meeting will be completely successful even though it is easy and predictable to find and you have planned an agenda that covers all of the necessary information. You are working with people, after all. These techniques may give you some ideas, however, that you can tailor to your group to make the meetings as successful as possible.

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# Problem Solving and Conflict Resolution in the SCA

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## Introduction

The SCA is an organization filled with intelligent, creative people, many of whom are deeply involved in their hobby and care passionately about it. For a number of them, it is also their major social milieu. Of course what happens in the organization matters to those who are deeply involved in it, and the very sense of community that the SCA tends to engender also causes people to wrap themselves up in the doings of their shire, barony, or kingdom to an extent that can make it difficult for them to be objective or rational when things don't happen as they'd like.

There is no way to write an instructional manual that will give specific advice on how to resolve all the problems a branch can encounter. The purpose of this section is to give some general guidelines which, if followed, should prove helpful in dealing with conflict and difficulties.

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## Role of the local seneschal

Local seneschals are frequently called upon to act as arbiters in interpersonal conflicts, or to resolve problems that arise when members of the group have different ideas about how things should work. The source of the conflict or disagreement may well be outside your jurisdiction, but any behaviors which affect the group dynamics are within your jurisdiction. While you should not actively seek out this role, it will almost certainly find you from time to time.

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## Goal is to fix the problem

And it's worth remembering that the goal is always to fix the problem. As seneschal, your aim is to keep your group running smoothly, with the people in the group more or less enjoying their pursuits in the Current Middle Ages. While you won't always keep everyone happy (and some complaints, quite honestly, have little or no merit), if you can manage to keep things on a fairly even keel and keep the group occupied with productive activities, your tenure will be a rousing success.

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## Types of conflict

Types of conflict include:

- Interpersonal relationship problems.
  - Disagreements about group activities—events, expenditures, etc.
  - Conflicts originating outside the SCA.
- 

## When to step in

You should step in when the conflict is affecting:

- the group's ability to function, or
  - the ability of others to enjoy the SCA.
- 

## What to address

You should first address the effect the conflict is having on the group. If the conflict is of SCA origin, then perhaps you should address the source.

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## Problem Solving and Conflict Resolution in the SCA, Continued

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### **How to address**

Use the following guidelines to address conflict:

- Remain neutral. If you can't remain neutral, find someone who can (i.e., someone else in the group, the Kingdom seneschal or regional deputy, the Kingdom Advocate, or someone suggested by one of these people).
  - Communication/discussion with disputing parties—preferably with everyone in the same room.
  - Get it in writing if you can.
  - If it's SCA based, include the cause.
  - If *not* SCA based, focus on the effect on the group.
  - Try to reach agreement, which will be compromise—nobody will get everything they want.
- 

### **Communicate and share information**

Many group problems can be resolved or headed off by clear communication. When you are leading the group in a particular course of action, make sure you are clear about what you are doing and why. Providing information—in a helpful rather than patronizing fashion—can stop many problems before they are well underway, and people are more willing to put up with a course of action they might not totally endorse if the reasons for the action are explained to them. Don't make the mistake of trying to control information to increase your own standing or power. That trick rarely works for long, and frequently backfires.

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### **Distinguish between group and personal business**

You need to draw a clear distinction between what is group business and what is personal business. You don't need to be spreading gossip about Lady Soandso's pending divorce. And you must stay neutral in disputes between other members of your group. Be very careful to distinguish between your personal agenda (everyone has one) and that which is best for the group.

---

### **Allow discussion but stick to the ground rules**

In meetings, allow plenty of time for discussion of topics, but establish some ground rules for discussion and stick with them. "No name-calling" should go without saying; other ground rules should reflect the basic SCA requirement that those participating in Society functions behave like ladies and gentlemen. And if people are getting too far off the "official" topic, you should drag them back with a gentle reminder.

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## Problem Solving and Conflict Resolution in the SCA, Continued

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### **Listen**

Be an active listener when people come to you. Give them your undivided attention if at all possible, ask questions occasionally to clarify, and be sure you understand their position. If someone is seeking advice, you might ask them what they think their options are. If you can get them to talk through their options, then they own the solution they come up with. And many times, people merely want to vent. They aren't necessarily expecting you to solve their problem. They may just want to talk to someone.

---

### **When you don't have the answer**

Never be afraid to say that you don't have an answer right then. "I'm not sure what to do about that. I'll have to think it over and get back to you" is far better than offering hasty, ill-considered advice. A side bonus is that, when you check back in with them, you may discover the problem has resolved itself in the meantime.

---

### **Addressing disagreement**

Things to remember if there is disagreement on what the group should do:

- You will not always get unanimity from the group.
  - It is not your responsibility to keep everybody happy; in fact, most of the time it is impossible for everybody to have their own way.
  - You cannot make everybody agree, but you can do your best to make sure that the disagreement does not have a serious effect on the dynamics of the group.
  - Depending on the situation and the people involved, it may not be possible to resolve the situation at the local level.
- 

### **When to involve the Kingdom Seneschal**

If the dispute is something that you think might come to the attention of the Kingdom Seneschal, or other people outside the group, notify the Kingdom Seneschal about the problem. Surprises of this sort are not good! If the Kingdom Seneschal does hear about a problem in your group, you can bet you'll be contacted. It's usually better if you contact the Kingdom Seneschal first (or your regional deputy, if you prefer). This doesn't mean that they will step in automatically, or that you've failed. It merely means that you were sensible enough to recognize that a potential storm was brewing, and to notify your boss so he or she learned it from you first.

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# Steps to Arbitrating a Dispute

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## **Purpose**

This section contains a general process to follow when arbitrating a dispute.

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## **Meet with both parties**

First, meet with both parties, if possible, in a neutral place. This might be your home or the home of an uninvolved member; it might be a meeting room or a restaurant. Avoid meeting at the home of anyone involved in the dispute. That way nobody has the “home court advantage.”

---

## **Set ground rules**

Set some ground rules to begin with. No interrupting, no raised voices. One person gets to tell their side of the story, then the other person tells their side. After both have spoken, each can address the other’s points in turn. After you have listened to both of them, you should strongly consider asking them each to write down their version of the problem.

---

## **Ask for solutions**

Also have them write down what they want to have happen as a result of the meeting. What would they consider a good solution? And what are they prepared to give up in order to get some of what they want? Explain that what you are working toward is a solution that everyone can live with. If the parties insist that they cannot give an inch, then tell them you’re sorry, but without some acceptance of the idea of compromise, you can’t help them.

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## **Disputes: An example**

Here’s an example of how a dispute could occur:

One person details his plans for the event he’s autocratting; somebody else notices that the autocrat has failed to include any arts and sciences activities and concludes that the autocrat, who has often joked about “artsy types” in the past, has something against A&S. In reality, the autocrat noticed that there was no indoor site for displays, or comfortable area for classes, and wasn’t sure people would be willing to do these activities outdoors in the middle of a field. But instead of addressing this at a planning meeting, the autocrat simply sidestepped the issue; while the offended party didn’t ask why there wasn’t any A&S but rather went and grumbled to the assemblage at the shire dance practice. Et voila, a full-blown “fighters vs. arts” controversy erupts by the time of the next populace meeting.

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## **Failure to communicate**

The root of most SCA problems is failed communication. If you can manage to cut through the miscommunication in the above scenario, or other similar ones, and state in a nonconfrontational way what has happened and what can be done, your chances of fixing the problem are much better.

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# Communication

## Overview

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**Purpose** This section contains guidelines for using various types of communication.

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**Introduction** Communication is 90% of the seneschal’s job. A lot of this will be face-to-face communication, but it isn’t always possible, or even desirable, to talk to someone in person. You will use the phone a great deal in your office, and you will also use written communication—via postal service and, if you have the capability, via e-mail.

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**In this section** This section contains the following topics:

Topic	See Page
Telephone Calls	28
Letters and Other “Snail Mail” Communication	30
Electronic Communication	32

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# Telephone Calls

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**Introduction** Telephone calls are not “official” communications. If something major is being decided via phone, you need to follow it up with a letter or e-mail to confirm what was discussed. However, telephone calls are a necessary and frequent part of the job. Here are some guidelines for using the telephone for SCA business.

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**Call before 10:00 pm** Call at a reasonable hour. A good general guideline is never to call somebody after 10 p.m., or before 10 a.m., unless you know for a fact that they are willing to take calls at that time. Yes, this means that if you make a long-distance call, you can't take advantage of late-night rates. But on a short call the savings are not great, and it's never safe to assume someone will be awake late enough to take your call after 11:00. Likewise, unless you know someone will be home during the day, it's probably not a good idea to call then; they will just have to return your call later.

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**Use modern name** Unless you are positive that you are calling a strictly SCA household, always ask for people by their modern names, not their SCA names. And identify yourself by your modern name, too, if leaving a message with a non-SCA person. When calling non-SCA entities such as demo clients or prospective sites, always use modern names

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**Be pleasant and business-like** Once you have your party on the phone, be pleasant, but get down to business quickly. Ask your question, give your information, or whatever it is you called to do. After the business part of the call is over, you can always chat if the other person is willing. You don't need to be brusque or abrupt, but get the business accomplished quickly, and if you are inclined to chat, be sensitive to whether the other person is also so inclined.

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**Ask if good time to talk** If you expect the call might take longer than two or three minutes—for example, if you've got a problem you need to discuss—ask the person if this is a good time to talk. If they say no, ask when would be a better time for you to call.

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**Leave clear messages** Leave clear, complete messages on answering machines. And if you don't have an answering machine yourself, you should strongly consider getting one. They aren't expensive and will make you infinitely easier to reach.

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**Take notes** Take notes if you're calling for information. You don't want to hang up and find yourself half an hour later trying to remember what you were told.

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## Telephone Calls, Continued

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### **Receiving calls**

Be prepared to get a certain number of phone calls from people in your group wanting to vent about something. In this sort of call, your role is mainly to listen and, if you can, be sympathetic. Frequently, people don't really expect the local seneschal to do anything about their complaint or beef, but they do want someone to listen to their side of things.

However, you are not on call constantly. Feel free to enforce your own reasonable limits on phone call lengths and times. Let your group members know what hours and days are okay to call you; if a call comes at a bad time, or is going on too long, politely say so. "I'm sorry, I'm afraid I have to go now," or "I can't really talk right now—could I call you back in an hour?" are always acceptable.

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# Letters and Other “Snail-Mail” Communication

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**Introduction** In your capacity as seneschal, you’ll be writing letters occasionally, and sending reports quarterly. If you have e-mail, you may be able to handle some written correspondence that way, but undoubtedly there will still be times when you need to find an envelope and a stamp and send a hard copy of something.

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**Writing style: business letters** Any correspondence with non-SCA people or entities should follow standard business letter format. This means your address and the date appear at the top, followed by your correspondent’s address, a greeting along the lines of “Dear Mr. Smith:”, the body of your letter, and a closing such as “Sincerely.” Always use modern names in letters to non-SCA members, site owners, the media, etc.

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**Writing style: SCA letters** If your correspondent is also in the SCA, the standard style changes a bit. “Writing forsoothly” is fun for many people, and adds a bit of pleasure to the business of writing, but you should not let fancy phrases get in the way of your communication. Usually, it’s best to use an SCA-style greeting, stay fairly concise and plain in the body of your letter, and close with a more “period-sounding” closing.

- Greeting—SCA correspondence frequently uses a fairly flowery beginning, such as “Unto Their Royal Majesties of Calontir come greetings from....” or such.
- Closing—Standard closings include things such as, “In service to Crown and Kingdom,” “By my hand this XXVth day of November, A.S. XXXIII,” or “Written in my keep in the Shire of Neverdowell.”

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**Include modern date** Always have the modern date somewhere in your letter. SCA correspondents are notoriously bad about dating correspondence, and this is a major inconvenience later. “A.S.” dates are fun, but troublesome to translate. If you use an A.S. date, put the modern year after it in parentheses, or use the phrase, “being 1999 in the common reckoning.”

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**Include modern name** Always include your modern name and contact information somewhere in the letter, so your correspondent can answer you.

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*Continued on next page*

## Letters and Other “Snail-Mail” Communication, Continued

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### **Addressing envelopes**

Envelopes are no place to be forsooth. The purpose of an envelope is to ensure your letter gets where it’s going. Don’t use SCA names or titles when addressing envelopes! If you can’t resist using a name or title, or want to call the recipient’s attention to the fact that this is SCA business, add “Attn: TRM” or “Attn: Kingdom Seneschal” or something like that in an out-of-the-way place, such as the lower left-hand corner or the back of the envelope.

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### **Writing in anger**

Never send a letter written in anger. If emotions are running high, and you write a letter, put it aside for at least 24 hours before mailing it. Then reread it and make sure it says what you want it to say, in the tone you want it to take. The written word is much harder to take back than the spoken word!

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# Electronic Communication

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**Introduction** In a few short years, e-mail has changed the face of SCA communication dramatically. E-mail is a bit fuzzy in category. It can be used to replace a phone call, or a letter, or to pass on information or check out a question you otherwise would have ignored or delayed until you saw the other person face to face. When using e-mail, you need to be conscious of whether or not you need to generate a hard copy for your files.

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**Use for official business** According to SCA policy, e-mail can only be used for official business if all parties involved have consented to such use. If I provide you with my e-mail address and say that you can report via e-mail, I've consented. Under no circumstances can you require that business be conducted via e-mail. If someone doesn't have e-mail (such as, an officer in your group), you may not insist that they e-mail you their report. Hard copies are always acceptable.

---

**Writing style** Most of the pointers about written correspondence apply to e-mail as well. It isn't necessary to date e-mail, because the computer will do that. The nature of the medium is that it is less formal than full-blown letters, so a complete business/SCA business style is usually unnecessary. However, it is a good idea to include your e-mail address somewhere in the body of your message, for those people whose software won't read headers. Always remember to sign your messages—don't assume people will know from your e-mail address who you are!

---

**Writing in anger** The warning about not sending a letter in anger applies triply to e-mail. It is so fatally easy to write an intemperate response to something, hit the reply button, and send your return venom zinging into cyberspace. Don't do it. When you're feeling emotional about something, sit on your e-mail for a minimum of 24 hours before sending it. It's not a bad idea to send it to a trusted friend first, for input and advice.

---

**Use in the SCA** A relatively high percentage of SCA members have e-mail capability. However, it must be remembered that e-mail capability is not a requirement for holding office. If you have e-mail, that's wonderful. If you don't, it might be advisable to investigate what you would need to get it. However, you can certainly hold an office without it. You'll just have to rely much more heavily on the telephone and the U.S. mail than many people.

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*Continued on next page*

## Electronic Communication, Continued

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### **SCA committees**

It isn't unusual these days for SCA committees to conduct much of their business via e-mail. It saves long distance phone bills, is more immediate than the regular mail, and does not require getting everyone in the same place. This is fine, as long as you are aware of those in the group who do not have e-mail, and you include them in the discussions. This can be done either by calling them and letting them know what was discussed, or, better still, by printing out copies of all the e-mails and sending them to those who are not e-connected.

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### **Filing reports**

If you are permitted to e-mail a report, you must keep a hard copy for the files. Likewise print out and file any responses to your report from your superior officer. And if your local officers send you copies of their reports via e-mail, those should also be printed out and filed.

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### **Filing other mail**

Anything that you would have sent or received via mail if you didn't have e-mail should be printed out and filed. This takes some judgement on your part. Ask yourself how the matter would have been handled if computers didn't exist. If it is important enough that it would have generated letters, it needs to exist in hard copy.

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### **Filing informational items**

Short, strictly informational items probably need not be filed. Examples: e-mail asking for someone's phone number, notifications about meetings.

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### **Filing personal notes**

Personal notes need not be (and probably should not be) filed. This sometimes gets tricky since a message can contain both solid content and chatter. Again, use your judgement. If nothing in the message has to do with the running of your branch, you probably don't need a hard copy.

---

### **Problem-resolution**

Problems should always be documented as well as possible. Any e-mail exchanges that deal with problem resolution should be printed out and kept, at least for awhile. One frequent problem that arises in conflict resolution attempts is that memories often differ on who said what in a phone conversation or face-to-face meeting. E-mail is not always a good medium for conflict resolution, due to its impersonal nature, but if e-mail is exchanged, at least a written record is readily available.

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# Paperwork

## Overview

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**Purpose** This section contains procedures and guidelines on completing the paperwork associated with the seneschal’s office, including reports, files, contracts, and waivers.

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**Introduction** The seneschal’s job has many facets. While the job of seneschal requires many so called “soft skills”—communication, compassion, etc.—the “hard” skills such as reporting and filling out forms are a bit more straightforward. Pretty much anyone can learn to complete a quarterly report and to keep a file box.

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**In this section** The following topics are included in this section:

Topic	See Page
Reports	36
Sample Report	38
Files	40
Contracts	42
Waivers	44

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# Reports

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## Quarterly reports

Seneschals are required to complete a quarterly report on the 25th of the month following the end of the quarter. (Reports are therefore due April 25, July 25, October 25, and January 25.)

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## Report forms

A blank report form is included in this Handbook. You may also use an on-line version of the form or create your own. If you create your own, please follow the basic format given on the standard form. All the information on the report form is needed for the Kingdom Seneschal to understand what is going on in your group. Please complete everything on the report form. If something does not apply to your group, put “none” or “n/a.” Don’t just leave it blank.

---

## Tracking membership numbers

A word about membership numbers: this will be an estimate, but it is an important one. You can track memberships in several ways. One way is to ask, about once a month, who has a sustaining membership, count heads, and do the same for family memberships. Then take an average. Another way is to send a sign-up sheet around the room at a well-attended meeting, asking people to sign under “Sustaining,” “Associate/Family,” or “Non-member.” Once a year or so, the Kingdom Seneschal will send you copies of the membership list for your zip codes; you can use this to check your numbers.

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## Domesday reports

Along with, but separate from the fourth quarter report (January 25), is the Domesday report. No one really explained what this was to me the first time I held a local office, other than to say that I needed to do it. Basically, the Domesday report is a summary of the previous year. Hit the high points and the low points your group experienced. You might also want to include a brief note on future plans or what direction you see the group heading.

This is your chance to express all those joys and frustrations you may have felt during the past year as seneschal of your group. This is a subjective document. It is a lot less of facts and figures than a way to assess the personality and talent of your group. Ultimately, try to look at this as one report that is FUN to write and be creative.

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*Continued on next page*

## Reports, Continued

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### **Sending reports**

Use the following table to determine who to send your report to.

<b>IF you are the seneschal of a...</b>	<b>THEN send your report to the...</b>
shire, college, stronghold, or barony	appropriate regional reporting deputy of the Kingdom Seneschal.
canton	appropriate regional reporting deputy of the Kingdom Seneschal and to the baronial seneschal.

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### **Late reports**

I cannot express to you how important it is to send your report in on time! If your report is late, it has kind of a domino effect. The regional deputy may have their report to the Kingdom Seneschal delayed and the Kingdom Seneschal will have a difficult time sending an accurate report to the Society Seneschal. All in all, it can get quite messy!

Sometimes there are unavoidable delays. Personal and work life have a way of “knowing” when you have a report to do and often seem to center crises around that time. Please, let someone know if you will be sending in your report late. Contact your regional deputy or the Kingdom Seneschal. Chances are you will find a very sympathetic listener. We just want to be sure that you haven’t forgotten.

---

### **Failure to submit reports**

**Failure to submit reports in a timely manner will jeopardize your warrant as seneschal and may cause suspension of your group.**

The Kingdom Seneschal has the right to suspend your warrant as a group seneschal if reports are very late or have been missed for two consecutive reporting periods. If your group is suspended, you cannot hold events, meetings, practices, etc until the suspension is lifted. Activities may only be undertaken that are necessary to remove the group suspension.

---

### **Reports from group officers**

You should receive reports from other officers in the group on a quarterly basis. Ideally you should receive the reports prior to your reporting deadline. If you do not, remind the officer and go ahead and send in your report even if you do not have reports from all the other officers.

---

# Sample Report

Name of group: Shire Cheveaux Pommes

Number of sustaining members: 35      Associate/Family members: 20

Active population: 40

## I. OFFICERS

Seneschal: Ld Juan Llave d'Oro

Herald: Ly Vox Titiania

Knight Marshal: Syr Ryan O'Hyde

Treasurer: Ly Penelope Pinscher

MoA/S: Ld Arthur de Coe

Chronicler: Ly Rumer Mille

Archery Marshal: Ld Hitte Remiss

Chatelaine: H.L. Merry Greetings

## II. LOCAL HAPPENINGS

1. Regular meetings are held on the first Monday of every month at the School for Exceptional Children (business meeting) and on the third Sunday (arts and sciences farble).
2. Special local activities: The Sewing and Terrorist Society meets at Ly Angora's house on the second and fourth Sundays. We had a local auction to raise money for our newsletter, the Horse Tales.
3. Demos: We did the annual Cub Scout Demo, May 5; there were about 200 scouts in attendance. One of our people led the boys in a rousing cheer of "kill them all, we want to see blood, capites volantes!" The scout masters were a bit upset, and we had to ask that member to leave. Any suggestions for avoiding this problem in the future?
4. "Boatloads of Fun," a sea-faring theme with a seafood feast. A few people got sick the next day, but we're pretty sure it wasn't the bad fish, as we threw all of that away before it was served. The fighting was fun and featured several boat battles and pirate raids.

## III. Regular activities

1. Arts & Sciences
  - a. Interest groups: Culinary Interest group meets sporadically, and usually goes full throttle about 4 months before our events. Herbal group gets together weekly and makes great soaps and salves.
  - b. Other A&S activities of note: None
  - c. Assessment of A&S in your group—Not bad, there's a lot of talent and enthusiasm, just not a lot of drive to get much done on a regular basis.
2. Marshalate
  - a. fighter practice: Saturday noon
  - b. archery practice: Concurrent with fighter practice
  - c. number of fighters: authorized 15 in training 1
  - d. number of archers: authorized 4 in training 2
3. Does your knight marshal have a warrant? Well, he's a knight so I think so.
4. Does your archery marshal have a warrant? yes
  - a. Other marshalate activities of note: none
5. Assessment of local officers' work:
  - a. Chatelaine: Great with new members when she's around. Sometimes hard to get a hold of.
  - b. Chronicler: Doesn't put out a newsletter very often, but does a good job when one is published.

- c. Herald: Ly Vox is a marvel. I never knew that one person could be so loud! However, she has done a great job with submissions and consultations.
- d. Knight Marshal: Syr Ryan is a very good teacher. Our fighters seem to be doing well. Haven't gotten a report from his office in about a year, though. Should I be concerned about this?
- e. Archer Marshal: Holds practices regularly.
- f. Treasurer: Very good at maintaining the books. Always available when we need reimbursements. Reports timely. Balance in checking acct as of last last day of quarter: \$2567.34.
- g. MoA/S: Seems to like her job, but often puts other people off of showing off their projects and skills.

#### IV. Awards

- 1. Kingdom awards received by members of your group: None. This has me rather worried. Appears that the Crown has forgotten us yet again.
- 2. Other individual accomplishments: None, again!
- 3. People in the group to watch for future recommendations: Lady Jane of the White Silks - Lily for dance.

#### V. Office of the Seneschal

- 1. Date you took office: 1/1/97 Do you have a warrant? Yes. Expiration date: 1/1/99
- 2. Do you have an emergency deputy? No
- 3. Have you had problems as a seneschal or general problems with the group? Yes. If yes, please give details: Well, as you know we had the boy scout demo fiasco. Few of the officers turn in reports to me so I don't know what to do with them. No one seems interested in running an event either. I don't know how to motivate these people!
- 4. Do you have any questions or is there anything that the kingdom seneschal/deputy can help you with? Other than the above listed questions, there aren't any additional ones.

#### VI. Miscellaneous

Please add anything you wish about future plans, things your group does well, and ideas which might work for other groups. Feel free to brag about the good things your group does. Use the bottom and/or back of this page or an additional page if necessary.

#### Signature:

Mundane Name: John Peters

Address: 1313 Mockingbird Lane Morningstar, MO 65721

Phone number: 816-555-1212

E-mail: jueves@aol.com

Membership # and exp date: 110956 exp 7/7/98

Is any of this info new? No

# Files

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**Introduction** Maintaining files may not be your idea of fun, but some things just have to be done! When you start your tenure as seneschal you may or may not receive the group's files in working condition. This section contains guidelines on how to organize and maintain your files.

---

**File contents** How you organize your files is up to you, but make sure that if something happens to you someone else will be able to figure out your system! Your files should contain reference materials and content files.

---

**Reference materials** All seneschals should have copies of the following reference materials in their most recent printing.

- Organizational Handbook of the Society for Creative Anachronism (Corpora is included in this document)
- Kingdom Law
- Seneschal's Handbook
- Local procedures (if applicable)

---

**Content files** Files should be created for the following items. (If you primarily use a computer for your files, always make a hard copy in case of computer disasters.)

- meeting notes
- correspondence with officers including their quarterly reports
- correspondence TO people outside the group
- correspondence FROM people outside the group
- seneschal's reports
- local phone and address list (even if your chronicler is "in charge" of this)
- event reports and site contracts
- new member/demo/pr information
- inventory (also maintained by the treasurer)

---

**Optional files** If you're really into filing you may want to have some of the following.

- Projects—both in progress and completed.
- Items of interest (newspaper articles, book lists, etc).
- Back issues of local and kingdom newsletters.
- Local order of precedence (list of who has what awards and when they got them).

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*Continued on next page*

## Files, Continued

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**File retention** As a general rule, event and officers reports should be kept a minimum of seven years. If space permits or you have a group historian, keep pretty much everything. Since this is obviously too much to lug around to meetings and events, you should probably have a condensed version of the required files in a traveling file box. Keep the most current reports, etc. in that box and use that as your mobile command center.

I remember being pretty overwhelmed with all the old files I received when I became seneschal. I ended up, however, having a really good time reading through the history of the group.

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**A final word** In a nutshell, complete your quarterly reports on time and keep a copy of EVERYTHING for your file and you can't go too wrong!

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## Contracts

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### **Written contracts**

If your group is anticipating being involved in any activities for which you have a written contract (for example, the local Chamber of Commerce is holding a renaissance festival and offers to pay your group a set amount of money if you will provide X number of fighting demonstrations), you need to contact the Kingdom Seneschal at once.

---

### **Authorization to sign**

The Kingdom Seneschal of Calontir is, by Kingdom Law, the only person authorized to sign any contract which commits the SCA or the Kingdom to perform in any way. This includes contracts for SCA participation in paid demos, Renaissance festivals, or other activities where the SCA is paid a fee for participating.

The local seneschal is the only officer authorized to commit the local group to any kind of contractual obligation. These contracts are most often for site rental for meetings or events, and other event-related contracts such as equipment rental.

---

### **Named parties**

It is important that the contract clearly state that it is between the other organization and your local branch. You cannot sign a contract that simply commits the “Society for Creative Anachronism” to do anything. You do not have that authority.

The Kingdom Seneschal may delegate the authority to sign such a contract to you, as the local branch seneschal. This is not a blanket authority, but only exists for a single contract. You must contact the Kingdom Seneschal well in advance of the time the signature will be needed.

---

### **Delegation of authority**

The local seneschal is the only person with the authority to sign contracts or delegate certain signing authorities, and is therefore responsible for all contracts signed, whether signed by the seneschal or by someone to whom the seneschal has delegated signing authority. If you delegate signing authority to an event autocrat, impress upon that person that this is a specific authorization for a specific contract, and not to be taken lightly.

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## Contracts, Continued

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### **Contracts for events**

If contracts need to be signed for an event, and getting them signed by the local seneschal proves too difficult or unwieldy, the local seneschal can delegate signing authority to the event autocrat for individual contracts. Make sure the autocrat understands that the authority is delegated for individual contracts only, and is not blanket authority to sign all contracts related to the event.

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### **Legal consequence**

**Contracts are legal documents.** The consequences to both individuals and the SCA if the terms of the contract are not met are real. If you sign a contract saying that your group will pay a certain amount per event attendee to the site owner, abide by certain rules, and vacate the site by a certain time, you are obligated to do that. If you sign a contract saying that you will provide certain services in exchange for certain considerations, then you are obligated to provide them. Take this responsibility seriously, and make sure your autocrats do, too.

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# Waivers

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**Introduction** Waivers are a fact of SCA life. As seneschal, you are ultimately responsible for seeing that your group follows SCA waiver policies, and for educating group members on what these policies are. The policies have changed many times over the years, so it is no wonder people get confused. The current policy was adopted by the Board of Directors in 1996.

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**Text** The standard text for an adult waiver is that which appears on the SCA membership forms. No alteration of this text is allowed, because it invalidates the waiver. People completing waivers are not permitted to change or cross out anything. There is also a standard SCA waiver for minors, and it likewise cannot be altered.

---

**Membership and waivers (blue cards)** When a person buys an SCA membership, he or she has the opportunity to complete the waiver on the membership form. If this is done, the Registry will send the member a blue membership card. The blue card signifies that the person has completed a waiver and the waiver is on file with the Registry’s office in California.

The waiver on the membership form must be completed absolutely correctly, and dated, or a blue card will not be issued. If someone doesn’t fill out the waiver, or doesn’t fill it out completely, that person receives a white membership card. He or she still is a national member, but doesn’t have a waiver on file and should be treated as a non-member for purposes of signing paperwork at an event or fighter practice.

Most people want a blue card, and most of those who receive white cards did not intend for that to happen. It is possible to get a replacement card for free, by completing a new membership form, including the waiver, and checking the “replacement card” box on the form.

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**Calontir policy** Current Calontir policy is to require people to put their membership number on the form, but to take their word that they have a blue card—in other words, they aren’t required to produce it.

---

**Events and waivers** If your group holds an event, you need to have certain pieces of paperwork available at the gate, including:

- Consent to Participate and Release of Liability (“Roster Waiver”)
- Site Roster
- Minor’s Consent to Participate and Hold Harmless Agreement
- Medical Authorization for Minors

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## Waivers, Continued

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**Roster waiver** The “Consent to Participate and Release of Liability” is a roster containing the full waiver text at the top. This is for adult non-members (or people with a white card) to sign. This form appears in the Appendix section of this handbook.

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**Site roster** The “site roster” does not contain waiver text and is a simple sign-in sheet. Everybody’s name should appear on this form! SCA members who have blue cards (whether adults or children) should sign in on this form. All attendees need to be listed, even small children.

Please make sure that the roster waiver is clearly labeled as a waiver! When we use a clipboard, as is commonly the case, it is sometimes hard to see the title. It’s important that people signing the roster waiver know (either because it is clearly labeled as such, or because the workers at the gate tell them so) that they are signing a waiver.

---

**Forms for minors** The “Minor’s Consent to Participate and Hold Harmless Agreement” and “Medical Authorization for Minors” are to be completed by the parent of a minor (under 18) who does not have a blue card. The minor’s consent may not be done roster style; it must be completed as an individual form, although it may be on the same paper as the medical authorization form. These forms appear in the Appendix section of this handbook.

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**Local events and waivers** If you are holding a local event which will have SCA fighting, you still must enforce the above procedures. It doesn’t matter whether you are charging a site fee or not, or whether the event is held on public property or in someone’s backyard. If it is sponsored by the group, publicized locally as a group function, and has fighting, waivers must be collected.

---

**Fighter practice and waivers** According to Calontir marshallate procedures, all fighters complete a waiver once a year which the local knight marshal keeps on file. The knight marshal is responsible for seeing that nobody participates in a fighter practice without having a waiver on file. You should discuss this with your knight marshal and make sure that he/she is aware of, and conforming to, this requirement. If you detect a problem here, please contact either the Kingdom Seneschal or the Earl Marshal.

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## Waivers, Continued

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### Exceptions to waiver policy

The following types of events are exempted from needing waivers:

- Business meetings, guild or interest group meetings where no fighting occurs.
  - Dance practices.
  - Demos (fighters and marshals at demos must have waivers on file, however.).
  - Archery practice. Because archery is not considered a combat-related activity, the SCA does not require waivers to shoot archery. However, Calontir requires those shooting archery (except at demos) to have waivers on file with the archer marshal.
- 

### Minors and waivers

A parent can complete a waiver for a minor child as part of the membership application, and receive a blue card for the child. In that case, the child does not need a waiver for an event. (The Lilies War is an exception; see below.) However, if the child attends an event without a parent or legal guardian present, the parent must complete a “Medical Authorization for Minors” form, designating someone who is with the child to authorize medical treatment if necessary. (It is recommended, but not required, that a parent complete one of these forms for a child even if the parent is with the child.)

A child who does not have a blue card must present a minor’s waiver at each event. This form must be signed by the parent. Obviously, if a child is going to attend an event without a parent, some advance planning must be done. Make sure your members are aware of this, and provide forms as needed.

---

### Minors and The Lilies War

Due to the special nature of Calontir’s Lilies War, the policy for minors attending the war without their parents is a bit more stringent. Anyone under 18 years of age who attends the Lilies War without a parent or legal guardian must present a minor waiver and medical authorization form, signed by the parent, and notarized. This is required regardless of whether the young person has a blue card or not. You should make very sure your members are aware of this policy—it’s no fun to arrive at Lilies and get turned away at the gate for not having the proper paperwork!

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## Waivers, Continued

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### **Waivers and other kingdoms**

Please be aware, especially if you live near a border with another kingdom, that the above policies are specific to Calontir. They are virtually identical to the SCA national requirements. However, any kingdom has the right to be stricter in its waiver requirements than the SCA minimums, and many exercise that right.

If you travel to another kingdom, it is possible that:

- you may be required to complete a waiver regardless of your membership status,
- you will not be allowed to fight if you don't have a blue membership card, and
- a minor will not be allowed to attend the event without a parent or legal guardian.

These are just examples of requirements in some kingdoms that are more stringent than Calontir's requirements. If you or members of your group plan to travel to an out-of-kingdom event, you may save yourselves some headaches if you contact the seneschal of the sponsoring group, or the event autocrat, ahead of time and make sure you will be able to meet their waiver requirements.

---

### **Storage of waivers**

After an event, waivers are supposed to be sent to the Member Services Office (the Registry) for storage. It is not necessary to keep copies of them. However, they should be labeled with the name, date, and location of the event before being sent to Milpitas.

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# Branch Status

## Introduction

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**Purpose** This section contains information on forming new branches, changing branch status, and maintaining branch status.

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**IMPORTANT** All seneschals should be familiar with the information in this section. It is not unusual for a branch seneschal to be asked about the procedures for starting a group or changing status, even if your own group is stable and well-established.

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**In this section** This section contains the following topics:

Topic	See Page
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Group Boundaries	53
Group Status Requirements—Contact Person/Group	54
Group Status Requirements—Incipient Group	55
Group Status Requirements—Official Group	56
Changing Branch Status—Lateral Change	58
Changing Branch Status—Becoming a Barony	60
Maintaining Branch Status	62
Group Suspension	63

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# Types of Branches

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**Purpose** This section contains definitions and other information on the types of branches within the SCA.

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**Contact group or contact person** A contact person is someone who is listed as the local contact for people interested in the SCA in an area where there is no established local group.

A contact group is the same thing, only the term is applied when there is more than one participant. In practice the terms tend to be used interchangeably.

This is the starting place to form an SCA branch.

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**Incipient group** An incipient group is a group of people who are actively trying to form an official chapter of the SCA. An incipient group is expected to continue actively working toward full status.

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**Official group or official branch** An official group or official branch is one that has been formally recognized by the Crown and Kingdom Seneschal as meeting the requirements for this status, and reported to the Board of Directors as such.

Once a group has met the requirements for becoming an official branch, it can (and should) petition the Crown and the Kingdom Seneschal for recognition as an official branch of the SCA. Once that recognition has been granted, the group can only be dissolved by action of the Board of Directors.

---

**Shire** This is the most common and basic branch type. Most of the branches in Calontir are shires.

To be a shire, a group must:

- have at least five sustaining members, and
  - keep the following offices filled: seneschal, treasurer, herald, and either knight marshal (if the group has any fighters) or minister of arts and sciences.
- 

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## Types of Branches, Continued

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### Barony

A barony is a larger, better-established branch than a shire. Baronies usually start out as shires and maintain that status for several years before growing large enough and active enough to petition for advancement to baronial status.

To become a barony, a group must have:

- at least 25 sustaining members,
  - a full slate of officers (seneschal, treasurer, herald, knight marshal, minister of arts and sciences, and a chronicler),
  - a strong history of activity, and
  - an acceptable person or persons to serve as the Crown's representative by being baron and/or baroness.
- 

### Canton

A canton is a smaller subdivision of a barony. The requirements for a canton are the same as those for a shire, except that the canton:

- must be physically part of the barony's territory,
  - can do without a knight marshal and instead have a minister of arts and sciences, even if there are fighters in the canton, since they can be carried on the barony's fighting rolls, and
  - officers report to both the corresponding baronial officer and the kingdom.
- 

### College

A college is a group that is based at an institution of higher learning, rather than having a geographical base. Most, if not all, of the members of a college must be affiliated with the educational institution that forms the group's base, otherwise the group must become a shire or canton.

A college may stand alone, or it may exist within a barony. In some rare instances a college may co-exist with a shire, but this is not recommended. If no other group is within the same area, the college will function much like a shire. If it exists within a barony's boundaries, the college will function like a canton.

The requirements for the status are the same as for a shire, with one important difference: If a college drops below minimum requirements, for instance because most of the members graduate and leave, it does not have to be dissolved. Instead it may go dormant for awhile, until more students join and revive it. However, someone must be left who is actively trying to get the group going again.

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## Types of Branches, Continued

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**Stronghold** A stronghold is the same as a college, except that it is based at a military installation, and all or most of its members are in the military or military dependents. Again, if the stronghold drops below the minimum membership requirements for awhile, the structure can stay intact until those remaining can recruit enough new members to make the group viable again.

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**Province** A province has the same requirements as a barony, except that there is no baron or baroness. There are very few provinces in the SCA, and none in Calontir. A group that has the same relation to a province as a canton does to a barony is called a *riding*.

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## Group Boundaries

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### **Territory**

All official groups in Calontir are issued charters defining their territory. These charters include both a geographical description of the group's territory and a zip code list (since the SCA, Inc. defines territories by zip codes). If errors or incongruities are discovered in the zip code list, minor changes may be made by the Kingdom Seneschal without re-issuing the charter, and the seneschal of the affected group will be informed of the change in writing.

---

### **New groups within existing borders**

Some of the groups have very wide boundaries, and it can be a long drive from the border areas of the group to the center of most activities. Occasionally, someone will wish to form a new group within the borders of an existing group.

Per kingdom law, no group will be permitted to form which fosters a political schism. However, sometimes there are sound reasons why an area previously assigned to an existing group wants to form its own branch, or change its designation to a neighboring branch.

The policy of the Calontir Kingdom Seneschal's Office is as follows:

- If a group wishes to form in territory that is within, but on the edge of, an existing group, this may be permitted by the Kingdom Seneschal and the Crown, after consultation with the existing group's seneschal.
  - If an area that lies on the boundary between two groups wishes to change its designation, and all parties cannot agree, the matter will be decided by the Kingdom Seneschal and the Crown, after consultation with those SCA members residing in the affected area
-

## Group Status Requirements—Contact Person/Group

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### **Becoming a contact group/person**

To become a contact person, you must:

- live in an area where there is no SCA group,
- be a sustaining member of the SCA, and
- write to the Kingdom Seneschal expressing your desire to become a contact person for that area.

At this point your name, address and phone number will be listed in the *Mews*, and you may act as a representative of the SCA in your area.

---

### **Maintaining contact status**

To maintain this status, you must report to the Deputy Kingdom Seneschal for New Groups on the same quarterly schedule as group seneschals, i.e. on January 25, April 25, July 25, and October 25. However, you need not use the report form; if you prefer, you can write a short letter. You should include the number of people in your group, any demos or recruiting activities you have done, and if you are working toward incipient status you should start using the report form and listing any other officers you have.

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### **Bank account**

A contact group may not open an SCA bank account. Any money the group may accumulate must be held for it by a sponsoring full-status group, or by the kingdom.

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## Group Status Requirements—Incipient Group

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### **Becoming an incipient group**

Once a group starts to show some cohesion, it should work toward incipient status. To gain incipient status, a group needs:

- A minimum of a seneschal, a herald, and either a knight marshal or a minister of arts and sciences. All these officers must have established contact with their kingdom superiors and started reporting according to kingdom requirements.
- Someone who is willing to serve as the group's treasurer once there is a need. This person may not be the seneschal or live in the same house as the seneschal. Once your group has any money, you will need a treasurer. Incipient groups may be allowed to open bank accounts, at the discretion of the Kingdom Seneschal and Kingdom Treasurer.
- Four or five sustaining members.
- A name for the group, which has been selected and agreed upon. The group's herald must have contacted the Kingdom Herald to begin the process of registering the name. A device is recommended, but not required. At this stage, if you haven't given thought to a group device, you should begin working on it.

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### **Pursuing full status**

An incipient group should be actively pursuing full status by:

- holding regular meetings and activities,
- trying to recruit new members and teach the members about the SCA,
- participating on a kingdom level as much as you can, and
- attending other groups' events as much as possible.

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### **Sponsoring group**

You will need a sponsoring group; the Deputy Kingdom Seneschal for New Groups can help you find a sponsor. The officers of the incipient group should be working closely with their counterparts in the sponsoring group, to ensure that they are learning how to do their jobs.

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### **Reporting to Kingdom Officers**

At this stage it is very important that the incipient group's officers report regularly to the Kingdom Officers; this will be looked at very closely when you attempt to move to official status.

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## Group Status Requirements—Official Group

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### **Becoming an official, or full-status, group**

This section contains guidelines and procedures on becoming an official branch of the SCA. To become an official, or full-status, group, you need members, officers, an approved name, and sufficient SCA activity.

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### **Members**

You group will first need a minimum of five, and preferably eight to ten, sustaining members. If you have a lot of family members, you may be approved with fewer sustaining members; however, five is the absolute Society minimum, and the Kingdom Seneschal wants some assurance that your group will not die if one or two people move away.

---

### **Officers**

The group will also need to have all required offices filled. This means you must have a seneschal, a treasurer, a herald, and at least one other officer—either a knight marshal (required if you have any fighters), or a minister of arts and sciences. It is highly recommended that you have both, if possible. It is allowed, although not encouraged, for one person to hold two offices.

- NOTE: The seneschal and the treasurer cannot be the same person, or live in the same house.
- 

### **Group name**

The group will need a name which has been approved by the SCA College of Arms. This process can take awhile, which is why you need to submit the name as soon as you become incipient, if not before. It is highly recommended, but not required, that you have a group device submitted as well.

---

### **SCA activity**

Your group will also need a history of SCA activity sufficient to demonstrate that it can function independently, without any particular assistance from other SCA branches. This history may include the following:

- A regular history of timely reporting by the group's officers.
  - A regular activity record of meetings, fighter practices, etc.
  - A record of demos held by the group.
  - Attendance by members of the group at SCA events held by other branches.
  - Hosting an SCA event with the help of the sponsoring group.
- 

*Continued on next page*

## Group Status Requirements—Official Group, Continued

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### **How long does this take?**

It is difficult to estimate the amount of time you will spend at the contact stage; that depends on how successful you are at recruiting other people who are interested enough in the SCA to want to help with the work of forming a branch, and the demographics of your particular area have a lot to do with that. Once a contact group has more than two or three people, the kingdom will work with you to help you gain incipient status as quickly as possible.

If all goes well and your officers all do their part, you can move from this point to incipient status in a year or so. Once you are incipient, if all goes well and the group puts forth concentrated effort, you might achieve full status in as little as a year, but two years is more common and a more realistic goal. Some groups remain incipient for longer periods of time, usually due to fluctuating membership and difficulty in filling offices.

If this is the case with your group, don't despair. Building an SCA group "from scratch" is a lot of hard work, and the fact of the matter is that most of the areas in Calontir that are not already home to an official group are areas without a high population density from which to draw. It is going to be more difficult to establish a viable group in a rural area or a small town, and it may take more time. The Deputy Seneschal for New Groups, and your sponsoring group, will provide you with help, advice, and moral support.

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# Changing Branch Status—Lateral Change

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**Introduction** Most groups will remain at whatever status they choose when they become official. Occasionally, a group's circumstances will change and they will wish to change their status. There are two types of status changes: lateral, and advancement to baronial status. This section contains information and procedures on lateral changes.

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**Definition** A lateral change is a change to a type of group with the same minimum requirements.

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**Examples** Examples of lateral changes are:

- canton to shire (or vice versa)
- college or stronghold to shire (or vice versa)
- college or stronghold to canton (or vice versa)

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**Reasons for lateral change** A group might want to make a lateral change for several reasons:

- A far-flung canton may feel it has become independent from its barony and wish to stand alone.
- A group which began as a college or stronghold may find that few of its current members are students or connected with the military.
- A shire or canton heavily based at a college or university may find that it is having trouble maintaining a year-round activity level.

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**Contact Kingdom Seneschal** If a group wishes to make a lateral change, the first step is to contact the kingdom seneschal, in writing, explaining what change is proposed and why it's in the best interest of the group.

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*Continued on next page*

## Changing Branch Status—Lateral Change, Continued

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### **Polling/ Petition**

For a group to change status, the group's members must be shown to be substantially in support of the change. A polling or petition will be required and will be conducted as follows:

- Generally, the Kingdom Seneschal, or a deputy designated by the Kingdom Seneschal, will conduct the polling.
- The polling must be neutrally worded.
- Every effort must be made to ensure that it goes to all national members who live within the affected area. The seneschal of the group considering the change will probably be asked to supply the addresses of the people who need to receive the polling. Please note that if someone is a national member and can be located, they have a right to receive a poll even if they don't participate in the group. Likewise, while people who are not national members, or don't physically reside in the group but participate there, are welcome to write the Kingdom Seneschal with their opinions, they are not considered part of the actual polling.
- In general, a response rate of at least 75% of those eligible to be polled, with at least 75% of the respondents expressing support for the change, is necessary for it to be considered.

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### **Final decision**

The SCA is not a democracy, and the final decision is made by the Crown and the Kingdom Seneschal. In general, all that is needed for a change from, say, college to shire is strong support from those residing in the affected area. This is because such a change does not affect anyone else. If a canton wishes to become a shire—or, conversely, a shire on the border of a barony wishes to become a canton of that barony—then the wishes of the baronage will also be taken into account. In these cases the group desiring the change can expect a lot of scrutiny of their reasons for desiring the change; if those reasons seem to be primarily political or personality-motivated, the answer may well be “no,” even if the change is supported by a majority of the area's residents.

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# Changing Group Status—Becoming a Barony

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## Introduction

A large, active group which has a long history of strong activity and many national members may consider becoming a barony. This section contains information and procedures on becoming a barony.

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## Requirements for baronial status

An advancement to baronial status must ultimately be approved by the Society Seneschal. The basic requirements for a barony are as follows:

- At least 25 sustaining members, preferably at least 30-35 (the kingdom is unlikely to recommend advancement if it looks as though you may fall below the required number of members).
  - A name and device that have been approved by the SCA College of Arms.
  - A full slate of officers—seneschal, treasurer, herald, knight marshal, minister of arts and sciences, and chronicler.
  - A baronial newsletter.
  - The support of a substantial majority of the residents of the proposed barony for the advancement.
  - A candidate for baron and/or baroness, acceptable to the Crown, who are not substantially opposed by the group.
  - A strong history of many and varied SCA activities, such that the group can not only sustain SCA activities within its borders, but can provide leadership and assistance to smaller groups in the area.
- 

## Expectations of baronies

Becoming a barony in Calontir also obligates the group to bid, or arrange for a bid, periodically on Crown Tournaments and Coronations. There are also expectations that baronies will provide leadership within the kingdom, and there can be social, financial, and personnel expectations such as hosting parties at the Lilies War, or contributing to various kingdom endeavors.

Becoming a barony also means profound changes in the way a group functions, since besides a council of officers, a barony is led by a baron and/or baroness, who are direct representatives of the Crown within the barony. It is not a step to be undertaken lightly.

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## Changing Group Status—Becoming a Barony, Continued

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### **Additional issues to consider**

No group should consider baronial status just because it has the minimum required number of sustaining members. If your group is of sufficient size and activity level that the members are beginning to discuss the possibility of advancing to baronial status, you should proceed slowly and with caution. Take plenty of time to discuss the issues, consult with the kingdom seneschal, and talk to members of existing baronies, especially members who remember the transition.

Above all, if your group is just beginning to discuss petitioning to become a barony, try to avoid any discussion of who will become baron and/or baroness. That should be left until everything else is worked out. There have been groups whose baronial petitions have failed, usually because of dissension over who should gain these titles, and recovering from such dissension can take a long time and be quite painful for a group. Better to take it slowly and make very sure that your group is comfortable with every step of the process.

If you do decide on advancement, remember that ultimately the Crown will decide who will represent Them in your barony anyway (with input from the populace, to be sure, but the final decision is Theirs). Keeping that fact in mind can alleviate much potential unpleasantness.

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### **Procedure**

A baronial application is more complicated than an application for a lateral change in status, and must ultimately be approved by the Society Seneschal. Any group considering applying for baronial status will need to work closely with the Kingdom Seneschal, who can assist you in preparing an application packet.

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# Maintaining Branch Status

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## Requirements

To maintain your group's status:

- You must continue to have at least five sustaining members (at least 25 for baronial status).
  - You must keep the four required offices filled (six required offices for baronial status).
  - Officers must report according to the schedule their Kingdom superiors establish.
  - The group must have regular activity.
- 

## “Regular activity”

A group's activity level can certainly fluctuate, and some groups go through nearly-dormant phases. For example, a shire that is located in a college town and has a high population of college students might not hold regular meetings during the summer months. These periods of inactivity should not last more than a few months, however.

In general, an official group is expected to hold an event that appears on the kingdom calendar at least every couple of years, and to have regular meetings and the occasional demo and/or local revel. A group that isn't doing these things, and has not done them for an extended period of time, can expect to have the Kingdom Seneschal looking into why the activity level is so low.

---

## Kingdom vs. local activity

Occasionally people in a group get so involved at the “kingdom” level that they don't wish to participate locally. If there is literally nobody in the group interested in pursuing local SCA activity, or recruiting new members, and this has been the case for six to twelve months or more, then it may be time to ask whether the effort of maintaining an official SCA presence in that location is worth it to the people who live there.

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## Dissolving a group

Once a group is officially recognized by the Crown and the Kingdom Seneschal, it can only be dissolved by action of the Board of Directors. However, the Board will usually act on a recommendation from the Kingdom, particularly if it can be documented that the group no longer meets minimum Society requirements to maintain its status. The Kingdom Seneschal will work with you as much as possible to help you maintain your status. The Kingdom has no desire to dissolve a group, and unless the members of the group request that it be dissolved, we will do everything in our power to help your group overcome any problems that could lead to its dissolution.

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# Group Suspension

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## Introduction

It is possible for an official branch of the SCA to be suspended. This may be done if your group has a problem that has not been resolved, despite efforts of the Kingdom officers to work with the local officers to do so.

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## Impact of suspension

If your group is suspended, it may not:

- hold events, or schedule events on the kingdom calendar, and any events you do have on the calendar will be removed.
- hold demos or fighter practices, and may only meet to work on removing the cause for the suspension.

If a group is suspended for more than one quarter without substantial progress being made on resolving the difficulty, the Kingdom Seneschal and the Crown will probably recommend to the Board of Directors that the group be dissolved.

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## Reasons for suspension

A group may be suspended for any of the following reasons:

- Failure to submit financial reports to the Kingdom Treasurer, particularly the Domesday report.
  - Failure to fill a required office for longer than three months.
  - Lack of a seneschal (if you don't have a seneschal, you don't have a group).
  - Failure to follow Society or Kingdom directives.
  - Interpersonal or political problems or in-fighting that are so severe in nature they cannot be resolved without drastic measures.
  - Failure of any required officer in the duties of office (i.e. non-reporting) when the problem cannot be resolved by replacing the officer.
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# Public Relations and Recruiting and Retaining New Members

## Overview

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**Purpose** This section provides guidelines on working with the media, including examples of press releases and letters, as well as guidelines and procedures for recruiting and retaining new members.

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**In this section** This section includes the following topics.

Topic	See Page
Guidelines for Dealing with the Media	66
Sample Press Release	68
Sample Introductory Letter	70
Recruiting Newcomers	71
Retaining New Members—A List of “Do’s”	73
Retaining New Members—A List of “Don’ts”	75

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# Guidelines for Dealing with the Media

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**Introduction** Exposure in the media (local television, radio, newspaper, weekly magazines) is extremely helpful to your group in recruiting new members. It also helps with public goodwill, which can be instrumental in gaining access to sites. This section contains guidelines for dealing with the media.

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**Authorization for interviews** The seneschal is the primary spokesperson for the SCA in a local group. You may share this responsibility with a responsible, informed member (a chatelaine often takes on this job). If you are relatively new to the SCA, obtain a solid understanding of the history of the SCA and how it operates before speaking to the media. Reading the *Known World Handbook* and *Good Gentles All*, and talking to long-time members will help. Make sure the members of your group know who is authorized for media interviews, and that only those people are to be interviewed. All requests for media contact must come to you.

---

**Interview guidelines** When being interviewed, do not use SCA jargon. For example, instead of “mundane,” say “the general public”; for “garb,” use “costume.” If the interview is for the print media, ask to review the story before it goes to press.

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**Photographs** The SCA is a colorful subject for the photographs in local papers. When (not if!) the press or local populace start snapping photos, approach them with an informational handout, ask what paper they are with, and offer to answer questions. The photographer may or may not also be a reporter. Often the paper just wants photos to liven up the people page, and the only print you’ll get is in the cut-line below. Try to ensure that the information in the cut-line is accurate. Carry handouts whenever your group is out in public.

---

**Taking the initiative** Take the initiative and send out a press release whenever your group has a public demonstration or informational meeting scheduled. Be cautious about notifying the media before an event. Unless you are very careful, you may find your event being promoted to the general public as a kind of ‘Ren-Fest’. Are you really equipped to put garb on that many people?

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## Guidelines for Dealing with the Media, Continued

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### **Press release guidelines**

Many newspapers have a ‘press release kit’ that will help you put one together. The kit also tells you which ‘desk’ at the newspaper to send it to. Radio and t.v. stations may have similar directions for public service announcements.

- **Timing**—Be sure to submit your press release by the deadline, which is usually a few days before the publication date.
  - **Length**—Keep your press release as brief as possible.
  - **Content**—Include the name and phone number of the group’s primary media contact person and when that person can be reached by phone. Include who, what, where, when, and if space, why (enjoyment of history, recreating another era, etc.)
-

## Sample Press Release

To: The Newspaper to read  
1234 Street, Suite 56  
Your City, ST 12345

From: Shire of Your Group  
c/o Contact Person  
12 Fun Street  
Your City, ST  
Ph: 600-1600 (evenings only)

### PRESS RELEASE FOR COMMUNITY CALENDAR

Name of event: Informational meeting for the public; see text on the following page.

Sponsoring organization: Shire of Your Group, The Society for Creative Anachronism

Person to contact for more information: Contact Person 600-1600 or Alternate Contact 410-1234

Place event will occur: Your City Public Library, 321 Tourney

Time event will occur: Month, Date, Time (am or pm)

No admission charge

## Sample Press Release, Continued

### PRESS RELEASE FOR COMMUNITY CALENDAR TEXT

#### Romance! Chivalry! The Flowering of the Middle Ages

The costumed Lords and Ladies of the “Shire of Your Group” invite the public to share our enjoyment in the arts and sciences of the Middle Ages and early Renaissance. An informational meeting will be held on the Month, Date, Time am or pm at the Your City Public Library, 321 Tourney.

Individual members will display handicrafts of the period 600 to 1600 AD, and will answer questions about the Shire and our national organizations, The Society for Creative Anachronism (SCA). The SCA is a nonprofit educational organization which makes a hobby of recreating the Middle Ages “as they should have been.”

#### Contacts:

Contact Person, 12 Fun St., Your City, ST 12345, phone: 600-1600

Alternate, 730 Feast St., Your City, ST 12346, phone: 600-1234

## Sample Introductory Letter

Society for Creative Anachronism  
Shire of Your Group  
Office of the Seneschal  
c/o Your Legal Name  
Street Address  
Your City, ST 12345  
(000) 600-1600

Greetings to (whoever you are writing to)!

I write to share with you some information about the Society for Creative Anachronism (SCA) and our local branch of the national organization, the Shire of Your Group.

The brochure accompanying this letter will give you a good deal of information about the SCA, our Kingdom (regional), and Shire (local). Here in Your City, we have over (#) members now active, half of whom are university students. The rest of our membership draws from the community—administrators, professionals, and homemakers are part of our diverse group. What we all have in common is an interest in the arts and sciences of an earlier time and a desire to recreate that time as an occasional alternative to our 20<sup>th</sup> century perspective.

The local group, The Shire of Your Group, is a registered student organization on the University of Right Here campus. We will be celebrating the tenth year of our branch's existence in October of this year. We have enjoyed steady growth over the years, relying on word-of-mouth to spread the news of our existence. Regular meetings are held (when) on (where). Special interest groups meet on an occasional basis throughout the week. Anyone, student or not, is welcome to attend. If you would like to talk to someone about the SCA, feel free to call me or either of the two people noted on the brochure.

Information is also available from the SCA national office:

The Society for Creative Anachronism, Inc.  
Office of the Registry  
P.O. Box 360789  
Milpitas, California 95036-0789

Sincerely,

Your Legal Name

# Recruiting Newcomers

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## **Purpose**

This section contains guidelines on how to recruit new members to the SCA.

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## **Information**

Before you begin looking for new members, make sure you have flyers or another source of information to hand out to any and all people who ask for it. This must include phone numbers and addresses of contact people and a description of who and what the SCA is.

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## **Group agreement**

Also, before you start your recruitment efforts, make sure your group as a whole agrees with you on these points:

- You are lacking members.
  - You know what type of new member would enhance the group.
  - Members are willing to help recruit and welcome all newcomers.
- 

## **Decide the type of people needed**

Decide what sort of people your group needs the most. Does your group lack people established in the community? Families? Young, enthusiastic types? Fighters? Artistic talent? Diversity?

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## **Be seen**

Hold meetings and fighter practices in a public place, such as a park or community center. If people can't find you, they can't become members. Also, participate in local fairs, celebrations, malls, grand openings, theatrical events, student orientations at colleges, concerts, etc. Be sure that your group is welcome and invited to all of these events and that the event itself is one you are willing to be associated with.

---

## **Be seen being spiffy**

We get used to seeing duct tape, last year's garb with the holes in it, and rusty or carpet armor. But, is this the image we want to portray to the public? Remind your group that they are in public trying to impress people and request that they look as good as possible.

- Hang banners, make tabards, and invite the musicians to practice before and after meetings.
  - Hide as much of the modern stuff as possible.
  - Discourage black cloaks, pentagrams, and any other items which might frighten away newcomers or give a negative impression of the SCA.
  - Always, always remember to leave any site you use cleaner than you found it. Nothing will ruin public relations faster than leaving a mess.
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## Recruiting Newcomers, Continued

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### **Be seen being helpful**

Do demonstrations for libraries, scout groups, retirement communities, and other organizations that would enjoy what you have to show them. Volunteer for your local public television fundraiser and get them to give you some air time in exchange. Adopt a section of highway to clean up (and clean it up frequently and well). Make your group a respected and respectable part of the community.

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### **Be seen in print**

Make sure your meetings are listed in the local or college newspaper in the activities and announcements section. Make it clear that newcomers are welcome. Get the local paper to do a story on you—an event in your community can be newsworthy for many smaller newspapers. Contact the Kingdom Chatelaine for pre-written press releases to help with making sure the paper gets the story right.

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### **Be seen everywhere**

Put up posters and arts and sciences displays wherever you can get the space. Some good places to try are libraries, game stores, community art centers and student unions. Make sure that in all cases you include an explanation of what the SCA is and how to contact the local group.

Ask your local library if you can place informational bookmarks in books that would be of interest to SCA members. Get on the internet. If your group does not have anyone able or willing to host a web page, make sure that your group's contact information is up to date on the Kingdom web page.

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## Retaining New Members—A List of “Do’s”

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- Introduction** All your hard work may be for naught if those people who seem interested never come to a meeting, or worse, attempt to join but are ignored or discouraged. This section contains some guidelines on how to get new people involved and make them feel welcome.
- 
- Contact them** If you get names and phone numbers of interested people at a recruitment demonstration or other occasion, contact them!
- 
- Hold orientation meetings** Offer new members specific times when they will feel welcome. Have a newcomer-oriented meeting once a month or directly after recruitment drives and demos. Let interested people know when these will be and assure them that they will not be the only newcomers. Mail them directions, offer them rides, and do anything else you can think of to make it easy for them to get there.
- 
- Involve established members** Get the established members of your group involved. Invite them to the newcomers meetings, ask them to teach a class or demonstrate a skill. Have a get-to-know-us revel (in modern clothes) so that new and established members can meet each other in a relaxed environment.
- 
- Hand out newcomer’s packets** In your newcomer’s packet, include all the information you think a new member will need so that they are not overwhelmed by it all. Make sure you include a membership application. If your budget will not allow printing these, purchase a copy or two of the *Known World Handbook* and put them out at meetings for newcomers to peruse.
- 
- Organize a mentoring program** Some groups have people who do this automatically. Find those friendly people and ask them to take newcomers under their wing for a few months. It is a great help to have someone specific to go to for direction, assistance, and answers to questions. Make sure you choose your mentors carefully and try to match them with compatible newcomers.
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*Continued on next page*

## Retaining New Members—A List of “Do’s”, Continued

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**Encourage  
new people to  
attend an  
event**

Get the new members to an event and make sure they are prepared for it. The events are what make the SCA special, not the local meetings and fighter practices.

---

**Offer  
interesting  
activities**

Cater to the interests of the new members. If you were trying to recruit artisans, realize that they will not be interested in the finer points of fighting with a shield. New members will not just transfer their interests to the SCA to fill the niche you need without active encouragement from you. Make sure there are activities at your local meetings and events that they will enjoy.

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**Give new  
members a  
job**

Give the new members a job and make sure they know that you appreciate them for doing it. Ask them to help with the pre-cook for an event, or get them to teach the group a skill they know modernly that applies to the SCA.

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## Retaining New Members — A List of “Don’ts”

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<b>Introduction</b>	The SCA may be a very different experience for your newcomers. This section includes a list of some of the things that can scare newcomers away.
<b>Lecturing</b>	There is a lot to learn to understand the SCA. Don’t try to get them to absorb it all at once. Explain important things simply and let them ask questions that interest them.
<b>Jargon</b>	We use a lot of words that will not make sense to newcomers. Provide them with a glossary and try to explain words as you go along. Avoid the words “newby” and “mundane” as they can be insulting. “Newcomer” and “modern” work just as well.
<b>Flirting</b>	Flirting with the opposite sex is fun, but many new people will see a serious come-on in something that was meant to be innocuous or flattering. Encourage your established members to be polite and friendly, but not over-enthusiastic.
<b>Boredom and being ignored</b>	Make sure that you know who is new and get them involved as soon as you can. Show them what the fun things are. Make sure lots of people know who the newcomers are and what they are interested in.
<b>Shyness</b>	Many people are very shy and need to be drawn out. An SCA meeting can be a scary place, and newcomers need someone patient and friendly to break the ice. Don’t assume that because you spent 5 minutes talking to them and things seemed to go well that they are now able to meet people on their own.
<b>“Odd ducks”</b>	You know who they are. Every group seems to have at least one member who is exceptionally odd, pushy, or scary in some way. They may have an agenda to push and can give newcomers an entirely skewed impression of the SCA. They may also be valuable members of the group who are interesting to get to know once the newcomer is comfortable with the SCA. You probably will not be able to keep this person away from your new members, but you should be prepared for damage control and debriefing. At the very least, let your new people know that the SCA is far more than one person’s view.

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## Retaining New Members — A List of “Don’ts”, Continued

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**When new people choose not to participate**

Some people will never become long-term members. Remember that this is not something that will appeal to everyone and respect the wishes of those who choose not to participate. If new members do leave your group, try to find out why and ask if there was anything that could have been done to hold their interest. Let them know that they are always welcome, and that the SCA is a hobby that they can put as much or as little time into as they wish. In any case, if someone chooses not to participate, let them go gracefully and leave them with the best impression that you can.

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# Events and Demos

## Overview

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**Purpose** This section contains information, guidelines, and procedures on events and demos.

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**In this section** The following topics are covered in this section:

Topic	See Page
Events	78
Demos	82

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# Events

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**Introduction** Perhaps one of the most important aspects of the Society is the event. An event is any official meeting of the Society including feasts, tournaments, and other activities representing recreation of the time period of 600-1600 A.D. This also includes demonstrations held to promote the Society.

Events are our main opportunity to showcase our skills and activities. But when it comes right down to it, events are a place to socialize and just have fun! Having fun, however, does take a little bit of planning. Having fun at an event of the Society also has a few rules. It would be impossible for me to list every possible thing that goes into planning and running an event. That is not the intent of this section of the Handbook. This section is intended to provide you with the basic rules of the game.

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**Official event** An official event is one at which official SCA business may be conducted, including a change of a Kingdom Great Officer, the giving of awards by the Crown, etc. This is what most of us think of when we hear the word “event.”

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**Requirements for official SCA business** The requirements for an event at which official SCA business may be conducted include the following:

- It must appear on the Kingdom Calendar in the *Mews*, for at least the month of the event; the month before if it's the first weekend of the month.
- A flyer must be printed in the *Mews* which includes all the information required in the *Mews* submission policies.
- A warranted officer of the SCA must be present at all times. If it will not be possible for a warranted local officer to attend at all times, you need to arrange with a neighboring group for a warranted officer to be present.

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**Unofficial events** Groups often hold local revels, potlucks, and mini-events that are primarily for the enjoyment of those living in the group. These don't need to (and should not) appear on the kingdom calendar. However, you might want to inform the Reeve that you're doing this; a secondary calendar is kept of local happenings, so that if someone from a nearby group schedules an event that weekend, they know your group is tied up. Likewise, it is a very good idea to let the seneschals of surrounding groups know when your group has a major demo or local revel scheduled! Invite them to attend, and try to attend their big demos if you can.

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## Events, Continued

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### **Covered event**

The Society Seneschal draws a distinction between “official” events and “covered” events. A “covered” event is any gathering that is covered by the SCA’s insurance. To be covered by the insurance, a meeting, fighter practice, local revel, etc. must:

- be open to any SCA person who wishes to attend,
- conform to SCA policies, and
- be publicized by whatever means the group customarily uses to publicize such things—i.e., announcements at meetings, details printed on the web page, appearing in the local newsletter, etc.

➤ NOTE: If it is not open to anyone who wishes to attend, or if it is not related to group business, it is not covered by the SCA’s insurance! This means that a birthday party, unless held in conjunction with a demo, tournament, potluck feast, or some such, is not a “covered” event; and an invitation-only fighter practice is not a “covered” event.

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### **Event ideas**

The best resources for event ideas and helpful hints are probably members of your very own group. If someone in your group has run an event previously, ask them lots of questions. Quiz your members as to activities that they think would be fun. Another excellent resource is the Autocrat’s Handbook. If this is not one of the reference books in your files, you should attempt to acquire one. Those old event reports in your seneschal’s files can also be very helpful.

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### **Selecting and setting the date**

In the “olden days” it used to be possible to plan and hold an event with as little as 3–4 months of lead time. As a general rule this is just not possible to do anymore. If you can, try to begin planning your event about a year in advance. If you have a particularly great site that books up fast, you may want to reserve the site 18 months prior to the date of your event.

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### **Contacting the Kingdom Reeve**

You need to contact the Kingdom Reeve (the person that schedules all official Kingdom events) at the time you begin planning your event. You may hold an event on the same weekend as another group as long as there is a distance of at least 150 miles between the two groups. (The Handbook has a distance chart that makes figuring this very easy.)

There are some exceptions to this rule. If you are closer than 150 miles, you can have events on the same weekend if the focus of the conflicting events would draw two different interest groups, i.e., Costume Seminar and Heraldic Symposium. As a general idea, however it is in everyone’s best interest not to have events closer than 150 miles.

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## Events, Continued

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**Finding a site** Finding a site can be quite a challenge. Some areas have a lot of great places to choose from and others are very limited. It is helpful to have an idea of what you want to do at the event when you are trying to find a site. For example, an event featuring fighting as the main activity will have completely different needs than one featuring musical activities.

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**Meeting with the site contact** Once you find a site that is available and within your budget, you will need to meet with the site contact in person (a really good idea) to discuss your needs and find out all the rules and regulations of the site. If an event steward has already been chosen, that person can do all of this.

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**Signing the contract** Ultimately, because it is your signature that will go on the site contract, you may want to make sure that you personally know all the pertinent information. Let me reiterate: the seneschal is the only person that is authorized by the Society to sign site contracts. While this authority can be delegated in specific instances, you should only do this if it is really a problem for you, rather than the event steward, to sign the contract.

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**Publishing an event flyer** Guidelines for flyers to be published in the *Mews* are published in every issue of the *Mews*. An event must be published in the *Mews* in order to be considered “official.”

The seneschal must sign the event flyer or it will not be published. You should check the flyer before you sign it. Make sure it includes those items required by the *Mews*, such as site address, date, and a statement that checks are to be made out to “SCA, Inc., Shire of Whosiwhatz.” Also, remember that the flyer for the newsletter may be seen by any number of people. It should be in reasonably good taste and not portray the SCA in a questionable light. If you are the seneschal of a barony, at least one of the baronage must also sign.

It is also a good idea to send more detailed flyers to the rest of the seneschals of the Kingdom. You will be able to provide a lot more information than you can on the *Mews* flyer.

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## Events, Continued

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### **Obtaining insurance**

Some sites will request proof of liability insurance. The insurance letter in the Handbook is updated annually and a copy given to the site manager should suffice.

A certificate naming the site owner, specifically, as an insured party is available through the Society offices in Milpitas. The certificate costs \$40 and can be used on multiple dates but must be used at the same site. The process to obtain additional insurance takes at least a month so plan ahead on this one!

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### **Holding the event**

All this preparation! As seneschal, it is strongly recommended for you to be present at the event. The autocrat is, however, your deputy for the duration of the event, so it's okay if you're not able to attend. Remember that as a temporary officer of the Society, the event steward must be a member of the SCA. There must also be at least one warranted officer present at the event.

The seneschal needs to provide the event steward with site rosters and waivers for use at troll. Minors have special forms for participation and medical authorization. All of these forms can be found in this Handbook. The treasurer's reconciliation form cannot be substituted for the site roster.

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### **Filing waivers**

Waivers for adults need to be kept on file for seven years. Waivers for minors must be retained for 20 years! Fortunately, you don't have to keep them in your files. As soon after the event as possible, all waivers should be sent to the member services office in Milpitas. Make sure they are clearly labeled with the event, place, and date.

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### **Completing an event report**

After the event the event steward should complete a report. The report should include a synopsis of the day's activities. Who was in charge of the activities, i.e., marshal in charge, event steward, etc.? The report should also include an expense report of some sort including debits and credits to your group. You can use this when you complete your quarterly report to the Kingdom Seneschal, which contains a section about events your group has held.

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# Demos

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## Introduction

Demos are essentially mini-events. However, instead of focusing on providing entertainment for other members of the Society, the demo focuses on representing the SCA to the rest of the world. Demos generally fall into one of three categories, although some will overlap: public relations, educational, and recruiting.

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## Public relations

The public relations demo often comes in the form of participation as an “act” in a parade, or some kind of civic function. It is best not to have activities that are too involved or take more than a 10-15 minute time commitment on the part of the observer. Activities such as painting a medieval bookmark, writing your name in calligraphy, or trying on a costume or armor work well.

- **IMPORTANT:** Remember that members of the general public may not participate in combat-related activities at a demo. If somebody is interested in SCA combat, tell them when fighter practices are held and invite them to attend the next one.
- 

## Educational

Educational demos are pretty self-explanatory. Generally educational demos are done for schools (elementary through high school). The school and/or teacher usually will let you know what they would like to see at the demo. Design your program to be entertaining to the appropriate age group. Try not to be pedantic. Remember, our job is to make learning history fun and alive!

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## Recruiting

The recruiting demo is the toughest demo to do. Once again, provide some fun and brief activities that people can have some hands-on interaction with the Society. It is also a good plan to provide some scheduled shows. One idea that works well is to alternate between fighting and fashion shows. That gives people a good idea that we have very diverse activities in the SCA.

Make sure that you have plenty of written materials for people to take home with them. Flyers should include general information about the SCA, your group, and who to contact if interested. Make sure these flyers are updated as information changes. You won't draw anyone new into the Society if they don't know how to find you! Some groups have also printed business cards with the local contact information on them. These are inexpensive and easy to grab, and if someone in particular has been talking to a potential recruit, they can also jot their own phone number on the back of the card.

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*Continued on next page*

## Demos, Continued

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### **Event steward d**

Depending on the scope of the demo, you may or may not need to have an event steward. Larger demos like Renaissance Fairs definitely need a steward, but a one-hour school demo does not. Many groups find it helpful to have an officer whose sole job is to act as a liaison for planning demos. If there will be no steward at the demo, at least one of the participants must be a member of the Society.

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### **Demo safety**

No matter what type of demo you are having, remember that the idea is for both the SCA members and the guests to have a good time. If someone gets hurt, that will put a damper on things! Make sure that if there is fighting, you have an adequate number of constables. We all know what is dangerous, but a spectator may not. Common sense suggests that activities involving fire and toxic chemicals should also be avoided.

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### **Bash A Knight**

Some groups have historically allowed the general public to participate in the activity known as “Bash A Knight,” wherein members of the public (often children) are allowed to use a rattan weapon to hit an armored fighter. This is only permissible under specific safety guidelines, which are included in the Appendix of this Handbook. These safety guidelines were specifically approved by the Society Seneschal and Society Marshal, and amount to a variance in normal SCA rules. If your group is considering doing “Bash A Knight,” make absolutely certain you’ve read, understand, and plan to follow the safety guidelines!

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# Officers

## Overview

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**Purpose**

This section contains general guidelines on being an officer, as well as descriptions of all the group's officers and deputies.

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**In this section**

This section contains the following topics:

Topic	See Page
Officer Guidelines	86
Job Descriptions of Group Officers	87
Some Deputy Officers	89

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## Officer Guidelines

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### **Required officers**

All groups except baronies are required by Corpora to have a seneschal, a herald, a treasurer, and either a marshal (if there are any fighters this is required, except in cantons) or a minister of arts and sciences. Other offices may be filled if the needs of the group so dictate. Baronies are required to have all the above-listed offices, plus a chronicler; it is strongly advised that baronies also have a chatelaine.

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### **Appointment of local officers**

Local officers are appointed by the Kingdom Great Officer and are warranted by the Crown, as is discussed elsewhere. The seneschal and current local officers usually have some input on the appointment of new officers.

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### **Interaction with other officers**

In most groups, the seneschal acts as the administrative director of the group's activities. The seneschal will serve as a member of the Financial Committee, run meetings, and in general, oversee the other officers. This is not to say that the seneschal directs the activities of the officers—and micro-managing your fellow officers is a big no-no—but the seneschal should receive quarterly reports from the other officers and know what is going on within these offices.

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### **Failure to provide reports**

If officers fail to provide reports to the seneschal, a gentle reminder is usually sufficient to produce the needed report. If, however, that fails, the seneschal should contact the appropriate Kingdom Great Officer. If the officer in question is not reporting to the Kingdom, the seneschal is responsible for completing the missing report to the best of his/her ability.

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## Job Descriptions of Group Officers

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### **Treasurer/ Exchequer**

The group treasurer reports to the Kingdom Treasurer and is responsible for:

- Maintaining the group's financial records.
  - Maintaining the group's double-signature bank account (which includes balancing the checkbook regularly).
  - Monitoring compliance with and enforcing financial policies set forth in Corpora, Kingdom law, and the group's financial policies.
  - Filing accurate and timely quarterly and annual reports with the appropriate regional treasurer (if there is one for the group's region) and the group seneschal in a form acceptable to the Kingdom Treasurer.
  - Serving as a member of the group's Financial Committee.
- 

### **Knight Marshal**

The knight marshal reports to the Earl Marshal and is responsible for:

- Ensuring the safety of all martial activities and equipment, including armor, weapons, and archery equipment.
  - Running fighter practices or arranging for the running of fighter practices under an authorized marshal and otherwise in accordance with the requirements set forth by the Earl Marshal.
  - Compiling and maintaining records of the authorized fighters and archers in the group.
  - Filing accurate and timely quarterly, annual, and event reports with the Earl Marshal or his or her deputy.
  - Filing authorization paperwork on a timely basis.
- 

### **Herald/ Pursuivant**

The herald reports to the Gold Falcon Herald and works with the Saker Herald on submissions. The herald is responsible for:

- Furthering heraldic activities within the group by actively assisting group members with help, when requested, designing heraldic devices and names.
  - Filing timely and accurate reports to the Gold Falcon Herald.
  - Processing heraldic submission forms in a timely and accurate manner.
  - Processing all financial transactions that arise from name and device submissions in a timely fashion.
  - Keeping accurate records of office activities, including submission and financial matters in accordance with policies and procedures set forth by Corpora, Kingdom law, and the Financial Committee.
  - Performing any ceremonial duties as defined by the kingdom and local laws and customs.
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## Job Descriptions of Group Officers, Continued

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### **Minister of Arts and Sciences**

The minister of arts and sciences reports to the Kingdom Minister of Arts and Sciences and is responsible for:

- Furthering the practice of arts and sciences by assisting group members with finding resources for group or personal projects.
  - Creating environments where the practice of arts and sciences is encouraged.
  - Providing information to group members about arts and sciences activities throughout the kingdom, such as Queen's Prize Tourney and Kingdom A&S.
  - Filing timely and accurate reports on arts and sciences activities to the Kingdom Minister of Arts and Sciences and the group seneschal in a form acceptable to the Kingdom officer.
- 

### **Chronicler**

The chronicler reports to the Kingdom Chronicler and is responsible, directly or indirectly, for:

- Publishing the group's newsletter in accordance with SCA requirements.
  - Filing timely, accurate, and acceptable quarterly and annual reports to the Kingdom Chronicler or designate, branch seneschal, and baronage, if applicable.
  - Processing and maintaining records of any monetary transactions resulting from office activities in a timely manner.
  - Keeping records of any subscriptions.
  - Maintaining or arranging for maintenance of electronic communications such as web pages, if applicable.
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## Some Deputy Officers

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**Introduction** This section includes descriptions of the three deputy officers that many groups have. These officers have rather specific duties and each one of them also has a kingdom-level counterpart with whom they should be in contact.

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**Chatelaine** The group's chatelaine is a deputy of the seneschal. The chatelaine's primary responsibility is the care and feeding of newcomers. Sometimes the chatelaine also coordinates the group's demos, and/or maintains the group's phone list. But the recruiting and welcoming functions are paramount. For more information on the chatelaine's duties, as well as on recruitment and retention of new members, see the section on those subjects. There is a chatelaine's report form; if your group has a chatelaine, that person should be reporting quarterly to you and to the Kingdom Chatelaine.

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**Minister of Children** The minister of children is responsible for providing educational activities for children in the group, as well as for visiting children attending events the group hosts. The MoC is a deputy of the seneschal. The Ministry of Children can cover an age range from three to seventeen, depending on the needs of the group. It is of paramount importance to stress that the minister of children IS NOT a babysitter! Parents are not to "dump" their children on the MoC during meetings or events, and children who can't handle themselves may be returned to their parents.

The minister of children is likewise not responsible for the behavior of the group's children during meetings; that is first, last, and always the responsibility of their parents or other adult who brought them. There is a MoC report form; if your group has a minister of children, that person should be reporting quarterly to you and to the Kingdom Minister of Children.

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**Archer Marshal** The archer marshal is a deputy of the group's knight marshal. The archer marshal is responsible for running archery practice, keeping track of archery authorizations in the group, and enforcing all safety requirements in any missile weapon activity. If the group holds an event with archery or thrown weapons, the archer marshal should be involved in these activities, even if he or she is not actually running them. Finally, like all other offices, the archer marshal is responsible for filing a quarterly report with the Kingdom Archer General, with a copy to the group knight marshal and group seneschal.

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# Officer Transitions

## Overview

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### Introduction

Officer transitions can be smooth or rough. In an ideal world, the outgoing officer starts planning ahead early, makes a considered choice with input from the rest of the group as to who among the many eager candidates would best serve the group's needs, obtains his/her superior officer's approval for the recommendation, and then works with that person for three to six months in order to train the new officer to assume the duties of office so the business of the group continues with nary a hitch.

Hah, you say...with reason. The real world virtually never works like that. But neither does an officer transition have to be a time of chaos, or of battles and political schemes. Here are some truths and suggestions about officer turnovers, most of which are applicable to all offices, not just the seneschalate. Hopefully these suggestions will make your group's officer changes resemble the first scenario more closely than the second.

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### In this section

This section contains the following topics:

Topic	See Page
Officer Selection Guidelines	92
Roles in Officer Transitions	93
Stages of Being an Officer	96
Burnout: A Commentary	98

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# Officer Selection Guidelines

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## Do's and don'ts

The following is a list of some do's and don'ts for choosing an officer, and particularly for selecting a replacement for the office of seneschal.

- **Experience**—It's best if the person is not brand new to the Society and to the group. General SCA experience and a certain level of maturity will help someone to be effective in any office, particularly the seneschalate.
- **"Musical officers"**—If possible, it's generally best to get someone who hasn't held an office, or at least not one of the more time-consuming offices, just prior to taking the office. However, in small groups, "musical officers" is a way of life.
- **Burnout**—Be careful that the new prospective officer won't enter office already burned out.
- **Multiple officer households**—Also, as a general rule, the Kingdom Seneschal will not warrant someone who lives under the same roof or is closely related to the outgoing seneschal. This is because it's important that the group be served by a wide variety of people, with different viewpoints. Also, the office of seneschal is rarely an individual commitment, and if it lives in one house for too long, the inhabitants are apt to get heartily sick of it.

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## The final say

The first important truth that you, and all the officers in your group, must understand is that the final say in any local officer selection (other than deputy officers) is the right of the relevant kingdom officer, in consultation with the Crown. The kingdom officer appoints the local officers, and the Crown warrants all officers. Although it appears that local officers appoint their successors (and in practice it does tend to work that way), the appropriate Kingdom Great Officer always has the final word.

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## Roles in Officer Transitions

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### **Role of the outgoing officer: Recommend the new officer**

The outgoing officer is expected to recommend a replacement to the Kingdom Great Officer. In practice this recommendation will usually be accepted, since the local officer should know best the requirements of the job and who among the available people is best suited to do the job.

Only if there is some problem with the proposed new officer will the kingdom officer refuse to let that person assume the office. Examples of problems might include:

- Opposition from a number of people within the group.
  - A poor prior performance in that particular office of which the kingdom officer is aware.
  - The person does not meet the requirements of the office (for example, a branch treasurer cannot live in the same house as the branch seneschal).
- 

### **When an outgoing officer does not wish to recommend**

While the outgoing officer is generally expected to make a recommendation, in cases where there are political factions vying for an office and the officer feels it would be best not to make a recommendation, or if the officer is honestly unable to decide between two candidates, it is possible to use the deciding vote of the kingdom officer to sidestep the situation. This is done by notifying the kingdom officer that you don't feel you can make the choice, and forwarding information about the candidates to him/her for a final decision.

In cases where many people are apt to be unhappy no matter what is done, this takes the heat off the local level and enables people to be annoyed at someone who is conveniently removed. If you are in a situation where you feel this is the best choice, it is wise to discuss it with the kingdom officer beforehand.

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### **Role of the other officers**

A wise officer who is faced with a choice of replacement candidates will consult with the other officers in the group. After all, they'll be working closely with the new officer, and their opinions can be quite valuable, as they are frequently among the more experienced people currently active in the group. Some groups hold closed officers' meetings to discuss difficult turnover situations; and some groups submit a joint recommendation to the kingdom superior officer. Some kingdom officers may solicit the opinion of the other officers, particularly if the outgoing officer did not recommend a replacement. However, the officers don't "choose" the new officer, any more than anyone else does at the local level.

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## Roles in Officer Transitions, Continued

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### **Role of the group's populace**

It is often stated that the SCA is not a democracy. This means that your group should not be holding “elections” to choose officers. Nothing in the organization is done by majority vote, and local office choices are no exception. However, this does not mean that the local populace has no right to participate in officer selection.

Instead of being a “one-man, one-vote” democracy like the clubs we belonged to in high school, the SCA at the local level tries to run by consensus. Consensus means that pretty much everyone can live with the decision that is reached, even if it may not be their personal favorite option.

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### **Discuss qualities of good officers**

While it is most unwise to devote time in an open meeting to discussing the pros and cons of individual applicants for an officer position, it is valuable to spend some time discussing, in the abstract, what qualities would make a person a good seneschal, or chronicler, or whatever the relevant office is.

This can lead to nominations of a sort; somebody might say, “I think Lord Fifflesnazz would be a really good seneschal.” If this statement is enthusiastically seconded by other members of the group, and Lord Fifflesnazz doesn't recoil in horror or run screaming from the room, you've got yourself a candidate. (You may have a candidate even if he did run screaming from the room, but that's called a “hard sell.”)

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### **Opinions on specific applicants**

If you have more than one applicant for a position, you can also invite people to share with you, privately, their opinions about which one would be best for the group. Be careful here—a person's “people skills” are certainly relevant, but you don't want to be dragged into listening to insults. If people share their opinions verbally, listen and don't openly argue with them, but don't let anyone get into personal attacks.

If someone tries to address something other than the person's ability to do the job, remind them that the topic at hand is their ability to hold an office and benefit the group. If it seems there's no help for it, suggest that the person write their opinion down and give it to you. Most people will hesitate to commit a personal attack to writing and give it to a third party.

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## Roles in Officer Transitions, Continued

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### **Local opposition to a candidate**

One of the things that might cause a kingdom officer to reject a recommended candidate, or at least take a good, hard look at things, is if that kingdom officer becomes aware that a substantial number of people in the local group oppose the appointment. A “substantial number” is one of those quantities that can’t be clearly defined, but if more than one or two complaints are received, it’s usually enough for the kingdom officer to look into the situation, at least...particularly if the people objecting are known to be solid members of the group.

Also, if people are unhappy with the local officers, they are likely to expend less effort on helping the group, possibly even dropping out altogether. So, while the local group has no “official” role in choosing officers, their opinions cannot be discounted. Without the local populace, there is nothing to be an officer of.

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### **Role of the seneschal**

The local seneschal is NOT the “boss” of any of the other officers, except for deputies of the seneschal such as the chatelaine or the minister of children. This being the case, the seneschal does not have any more say in who assumes another office than anyone else.

However, your opinion may be solicited by a kingdom officer, particularly in the case of a difficult transition, and some kingdom officers may require that the seneschal write a letter of recommendation or sign a request that the new officer be warranted. This is usually done to ensure that the new officer does indeed have the support of the group. If you’re asked to do this, take the responsibility seriously; you are really being asked to speak for your group.

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## Stages of Being an Officer

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**Taking office:  
Contact the  
kingdom  
officer** When the local group, or outgoing officer, has a new officer to recommend, the kingdom officer needs to be contacted. This should be done by both the outgoing and incoming officers. The outgoing officer should write to the kingdom officer to resign the office and name the recommended replacement.

The new officer should also write the kingdom officer to state his or her willingness to assume the office, and give a brief overview of SCA and relevant real-world experience, particularly if the kingdom officer does not know the person. It's also a good idea to include a photocopy of your membership card at this time. All officers, at all levels, must be paid members of the SCA. This is required by Corpora and is not negotiable.

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**Taking office:  
Sign the  
Agreement to  
Serve** New seneschals (and some other officers as well) will be sent an Agreement to Serve form. This is a form which you complete and sign. It affirms your willingness to serve, and may state some requirements of the office or circumstances under which you can be removed from office. Make a copy of the Agreement to Serve form for your files before sending it back, and enclose proof of membership if you have not already submitted it.

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**Taking office:  
Receive files** New officers should also receive all the existing files for their office. Not receiving the files in a timely fashion is a frequent cause for complaint by new officers. As seneschal, try to make sure (in an unobtrusive way) that the files for an office are turned over to the new officer as soon as possible. In particular, copies of reports and correspondence pertaining to the office, as well as any pertinent handbooks that were provided by the kingdom officer or purchased with group funds, need to be turned over.

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**Taking office:  
Training** Ideally, the new officer has a few months to train under the outgoing officer before assuming the position. This allows the outgoing officer to show them how to complete a quarterly report and to teach them most of the duties of the office. Of course, we all know this doesn't always happen. Sometimes a new officer comes into the position rather abruptly and with no training. In that case, the new officer will need to use the kingdom officer and the other officers of the group for guidance.

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**Staying in  
office:  
Warrants** As a general rule, most officers are warranted for a two-year term. Most people are ready emotionally to be done with the office by that time. On occasion, warrants may be extended for a period of time if the officer appears reasonably "fresh," is still doing a good job, and the dynamics of the group do not warrant a change at that time.

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## Stages of Being an Officer, Continued

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- Removal from office** Failure to file required quarterly reports in a timely manner can cause an officer to be removed from office, as can other failures in duty. These might include but are not necessarily limited to:
- Constantly failing to attend meetings and other group functions.
  - Not being available to the group to perform the duties of office (for example, nobody can connect with the treasurer to get a check when needed, or the local herald does not provide submission forms when requested).
  - Getting heavily involved in factional politics and disputes. Offices are not to be used to play political power games within a group.
- 

**Leaving office** As noted above, a normal term of office is two years. But sometimes an officer will decide to step down from the position prior to completing the standard two-year term. This may be caused by a major life change, such as moving out of the group, illness, a change in family status, or a change in jobs that cuts into spare time. Or the person may simply decide that they no longer wish to hold the office. This is not necessarily a bad thing.

It is an officer's duty to arrange for the orderly transition of the office, insofar as possible. If something unexpected, such as a sudden move to other climes, comes up, do the best you can in the limited time you've got. You may need to contact the kingdom officer and arrange for a temporary replacement until someone can be found who wants to take office for a full term.

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## Burnout—A Commentary

Sometimes an officer will avoid giving up an office when it appears that it is time to do so to everyone except the officer in question. A burned-out officer often feels that no one is capable of doing the job except him or her. Usually the quality of the officer's work begins to deteriorate during this period. In addition, there is also a general lack of interest in starting projects or seeing them through.

The SCA is a hobby, and it's supposed to be fun. While holding an office does carry with it certain obligations, and not all of those obligations are going to be fun (few people, for example, look forward to the end of the quarter because they're thrilled to have an opportunity to write a quarterly report), in general the rewards should exceed the frustrations, and the parts of the job you enjoy should exceed the parts you don't. When this ceases to be the case it is time to leave office. In fact, it's better to leave while you're still enjoying the job. Usually if you're enjoying the job most of the time, you're being effective; and isn't it better to leave office while you're still effective, so the rest of the group is sorry to see you go, rather than relieved?

If you have pangs when you turn over the office, don't worry; that's natural. Particularly if you have put a great deal of yourself into the office and done it well, it's normal to identify closely with it and feel a little "lost" when you prepare to give it up. But give yourself a chance to try some other things you haven't done before, or haven't done in awhile, both in and out of the SCA. Soon life will be full again and you'll find other projects to occupy your new-found spare time. And, not to worry, opportunities to hold local offices come around quite regularly in most groups, and it's relatively rare for there to be a large pool of applicants. Eventually, your number will come up again in the office lottery if you want it to, particularly if you're remembered as a good and effective officer by those in your group. It's in your interest as well as the organization's to leave office while you're still relatively "fresh" instead of when you're reduced to crisp cinders.

It is sometimes possible to "step back" from the office briefly, and return with new enthusiasm. This is particularly true if it's relatively early in your term, and a bothersome but solvable problem came up that occupied a lot of time and energy for awhile. If something like this happens, you might consider a couple of possible solutions. If you can arrange it, take a weekend "off" from the SCA—either go on an out-of-town pleasure trip that has nothing to do with the SCA, or just stay home and devote yourself to non-SCA pursuits—preferably while letting your answering machine deal with the phone. If this isn't possible, perhaps you can carve out one night a week when you don't do SCA business—then stick to it, religiously. Or if there's a particular aspect of the job you're really tired of, see if you can delegate that to another person for a time.

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## Burnout—A Commentary, Continued

The burnout victim may not be you. Sometimes, as seneschal, you're the one to realize that a local officer is crispy. Some signs of burnout are noted above; others include failing to do routine duties, such as returning phone calls or doing minor paperwork (especially if the person has been fairly efficient in the past); finding fault with every proposed replacement; coming up with excuses not to turn the office over at a certain time; and lessened attendance at group functions. Beware the person who says they want to stay in office until they finish Project X, particularly if Project X is a large undertaking with no definite timetable.

If you suspect you're facing an officer who's burned out, try to talk to the officer about the problem in a friendly, nonthreatening manner. Do this in private, and try not to put the other person on the defensive—although this can be difficult. It's best to start out by expressing general concern about the person; then work up to what you think is the specific cause of any problems. If you don't think you're on good enough terms with the officer to do this yourself, try to enlist a friend of his or hers to do it, or else a trusted neutral party. If necessary, discuss the problem with the Kingdom Seneschal or the person's superior officer, and get their advice on how to proceed.

And, if somebody approaches you and suggests that you may be burning out, pay attention to their words. They may not be right—sometimes a stressful but decidedly temporary problem, in or out of the SCA, will cause a person to act burned out when they really aren't. Also, sometimes it's possible to take a brief “step back” from the office and return with a fresh perspective. But do consider whether the burn-out monster is attacking you, and whether it might be time to look for a replacement or speed up your plans to turn over the office, keeping in mind that it's best to leave 'em wanting more.

Finally, a bit of personal philosophy: Sometimes personal or work life makes it impossible to continue to perform your duty as an officer. When this happens, it seems very difficult to give up the job. Please remember that there is nothing wrong with giving up your office early. It's better to do that than to continue to hold the office and not be able to do it well. It is all right for your personal life to supersede your hobby.

# Appendix

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The following items are located in this Appendix.

Seneschals' Quarterly Report Form

Award Recommendation Form

Consent to Participate and Release of Liability ("Roster Waiver")

Minor's Consent to Participate and Hold Harmless Agreement/Medical Authorization for Minors ("Minor Waivers")

Event Site Roster/Sign-In Sheet

Event Scheduling Policies—Reeve's Office

Group Distance Chart

SCA Proof of Insurance Document

Agreement-To-Serve Form—Local Seneschals

Calontir Minors Policy

Safety Guidelines for "Bash-A-Knight"

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