

# **EFFECTIVE DEMOS**

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## **INTRODUCTION**

This class will deal with general planning of demonstrations, a few common challenges, and things to remember or avoid when participating in a demo.

## **PURPOSE AND EXPECTATIONS**

When planning a demo, the first thing to determine (aside from the date and time) is the purpose of the demonstration and the expectations of the host. Is the demo for recruiting, education, or a mixture of both? Is it in exchange for obtaining the use of a site for future events or practices? Are we there to add “color” to an already established event or to supplement historical lessons with very focused displays and demonstrations? What activities would the host like us to demonstrate, and is it a hands-on or static demonstration?

These questions must be answered in order to plan the demo in terms of activities presented and SCA members participating, to reach the target audience effectively, and to fulfill the overall purpose of the demo. Consider having a standard info sheet or form that can be filled out with the basic information, and then passed to the Demo Coordinator or Chatelaine (as appropriate). An example is found on the last page of this handout.

## **BRANCH APPROVAL AND RECRUITMENT OF PARTICIPANTS**

Getting branch approval in a timely manner is essential for a high quality demo because it gives adequate time to plan and recruit participants.

If the demo is an official “event” (by the definition in Corpora), advance notice is needed in order to list the demo in the Pikestaff and on the kingdom website. It can also mean the addition of a budget to cover the costs of items like water, ice, food, and list ropes.

Once the demo is approved, recruitment of the participants can begin. Try to get firm commitments in advance for the critical attendees (e.g., marshals). Consider announcing upcoming demos to surrounding branches, so that they can assist if needed.

## **SCA POLICIES**

In addition to following all applicable SCA policies (see References), demo planners should be aware of any policies from their kingdom and local group.

Under SCA policy, demos must be approved by the sponsoring branch’s seneschal in order to be covered by our insurance. If a demo is also an official event, then a paid member must be present and in charge of the demo, and waivers must be completed by participants (but not by spectators unless they become participants).

If martial activities are involved, warranted marshals must be present, and only authorized participants may take part. Members of the SCA may not hit members of the public with any weapon – regardless of consent and armored status - and vice versa.

If children are at the demo, a minimum of two unrelated adults must be present in order to comply with Society policy.

## **SITE INFORMATION AND GENERAL PLANNING**

If you have that demo info sheet that was mentioned earlier, now is the time to pull it out again!

After the date (and any rain dates) and time are confirmed, the Demo Coordinator should find out the details about the site: the approximate number and ages of attendees, how much space is available, the configuration of our lot, neighboring merchants and groups, access to our lot, the availability of electricity and water, whether we are indoors or outdoors, parking locations, and times for setup and breakdown. Ensure that there is a place for participants to change out of sight of the general public.

It is critical to find out any site restrictions (for example, weapons restrictions), and to get advance approval for the use of SCA weapons. This is especially important for school demonstrations, as laws generally prohibit any weapons from within school grounds.

Once the basic information is obtained, the pertinent information needs to be communicated to the demo participants, along with accurate directions to the site.

When planning, remember to include safety buffers, if needed, and to account for crowd control and access to the various displays. Tables, chairs, and pavilions may also need to be supplied by members.

## **HANDOUTS AND DEMONSTRATIONAL AIDS**

At a minimum, a general handout for the SCA should be made available to the spectators. Ideally, this handout should provide a brief description of the SCA, the web address for the local group, and contact information for the local chatelaine. I have also found it helpful to include contact information for the surrounding branches, as we often have non-local visitors. Consider having a signup sheet for those who wish to be contacted directly by the chatelaine.

Think about creating ambiance using music and heraldic displays. Encourage participants to bring banners to decorate the site, and to use period pavilions and accoutrements whenever possible. Disguise or hide overtly modern items as much as possible.

If you have the space and someone to babysit them, bring extra copies of publications such as *Tournaments Illuminated* or *The Compleat Anachronist*, the *Pikestaff*, and the local branch newsletter. Photo albums and books are usually well received by the public.

Employ a voice herald (or several) to drum up business and to announce start times for activities such as fighting.

## **PUBLICITY AND PRESS COVERAGE**

If members of the press will be present, be sure to have a competent spokesperson. The Kingdom Chatelaine can help put together a press release that briefly describes the SCA and identifies the key people involved with the demo.

## **THINGS TO REMEMBER AND/OR AVOID**

It's nice to have a wide cross-section of activities on display, but the branch has the right to restrict what is being demonstrated and who represents them to the public. Make sure that all displays and demonstrations are appropriate to the audience, and that they are family friendly.

It helps if you have a core team of participants who can demo in their sleep. That way, if you are short staffed or short on prep time, you can still give consistently successful demos with minimal resources.

Have the participants directly interact with the spectators as much as possible. (Mingle, mingle, mingle!) Keep descriptions brief and to the point unless you are asked for more details. Avoid using SCA-specific jargon whenever possible.

When giving a more focused, educational demonstration or discussion, make sure that the participants stress historical information and not SCA culture.

Participants are representing the SCA, and should be on their best behavior. Demos should be free of discussions of SCA politics, gossip, and partying. There is no need to air our dirty laundry to the public.

Remember to leave the site as clean (or cleaner) than you found it.

## **AFTER THE DEMO**

Contact the host to find out how the demo was received. If there were any complaints or criticisms, make sure that they are brought to the attention of the Chatelaine and/or Demo Coordinator.

Ensure that anyone on the signup sheet is contacted in a timely manner.

## **REFERENCES**

Society for Creative Anachronism. Society Seneschal's Handbook, Appendix E: Demo Policy.  
(<http://www.sca.org/officers/chatelain/demopolicy.html>)

East Kingdom. Policies of the Office of the East Kingdom Chatelaine.  
(<http://www.eastkingdom.org/chatelaine/policies.html>)

Clark JI. The East Kingdom Handbook for Local Chatelaines (rev. 2003).  
(<http://www.eastkingdom.org/chatelaine/handouts/handbook.html>)

Martines K. Demo in a Box. *Tournaments Illuminated*. Issue #160, Fall 2006, ASXLI.

## DEMO INFO SHEET

<b>REQUESTOR:</b>	
<b>Contact name:</b>	
<b>Contact phone number/email address:</b>	
<b>Demo Date(s):</b>	
<b>Location:</b>	

**Type of demo:**

- Educational (historically focused, not SCA focused):  
 Recruiting/entertainment

**Format:**

- Hands on demos       Static displays       Discussion

**Activities requested:**

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Heavy combat  | <input type="checkbox"/> Games  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Rapier combat | <input type="checkbox"/> A&S demonstrations (e.g., illumination, needlework, herbcraft) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Dance         | <input type="checkbox"/> Siege weaponry   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Metalworking  | <input type="checkbox"/> Performance (e.g., musical, theatrical)                        |

<input type="checkbox"/> Other (specify):	

**Spectators/audience:**

Approx. age range: \_\_\_\_\_ Approx. numbers: \_\_\_\_\_

**SCA Status:**

Event       Non event      Date approved by branch: \_\_\_\_\_

**Press:**

Confirmed       Unconfirmed       Unknown

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**Site Information** (pick all that apply):

- Indoor       Outdoor       If outdoor, roofed/shaded?       Electricity       Sound system       Water  
 Tables/chairs provided?

Approx. size of space for our use: \_\_\_\_\_

Site Restrictions: \_\_\_\_\_

Parking availability: \_\_\_\_\_

Other:	

*If known, sketch approx. layout of site on reverse.*