

Stewarding for Beginners.

Stewarding can be hard work but it's also very rewarding. The following is a very basic guide to stewarding your first event. We suggest you use this as a starting point, and consult a more experienced steward if you have problems or questions.

Events need to be given the go ahead by the sponsoring SCA group, and they will usually want to see your plans on paper beforehand, and expect some written and financial reports after the event. Because you will be ultimately responsible if anything goes wrong you need to be a paid member of the society, or have a paid member who is prepared to supervise your event.

Remember: Start small; don't feel you have to do a monster event your first time out.
Make lots of lists and tick things off as you go.
Be the leader of a team, don't try to do it all yourself.
Communication is the key.

First things first:

What sort of an event do you want to do?
Will it involve fighting, feasting, other activities?
Is it a special occasion?
Will it have a theme?
What sort of a site are you going to need? A park? A hall with a kitchen?
What date will the event be?

You will need to know at least this much before you go looking for a site.

Find a site: Does the site have the facilities you need?
Is the kitchen suitable?
What about parking, toilets, changing rooms, tables and chairs, rubbish removal?
How accessible is the site?
Can you do something to work around any problems with the facilities?
Is the site available for the date you want it?
What does it cost and can you afford it?
Do they allow alcohol? Pets? Archery? Fires? Whatever else you have planned?
What time can you get the site from and when would they want you out by?
Who locks up and where do you get the keys?
Wet weather options?

You should pencil in your booking as soon as possible, but the Seneschal of your sponsoring group needs to confirm the booking or give permission for you to confirm it.

Find a team: What jobs will need doing to make your event happen? Make a list.
 Will you need a Head Cook? A Marshal? A gate keeper? A lists officer?
 What tasks will each person have? What will be their areas of responsibility?

The larger your event, the bigger your team will need to be. Go out and ask people to be a part of your team, don't just expect them to volunteer. As steward your job is to make sure all the jobs are allocated, that everyone on the team knows what's going on, and that they are all doing their bit. You need to be flexible enough to let your team members do their jobs in their own way, but be sufficiently aware of what everyone is doing so that you can make sure that everything is on schedule and to be able to step in if anyone has to pull out suddenly. Regular meetings of your team are a very good idea. E-mail can also be very useful in this regard.

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Budgeting: Work out how much your event is going to cost.
 Use the attached forms to help you.
 Include things like site hire, equipment hire, food and supplies.
 Include essentials like toilet papers, cleaning gear, rubbish bags or removal.
 Include things like decorations, candles, site tokens or subtleties.
 Will you have complimentary tickets for Royalty or discounts for staff?
 Do you need to add any extras like Kingdom fund levies or event-memberships?
 Add 10% to your budget, to cover any unexpected costs or budget overruns.

How many people do you expect to attend? If you have no idea, look at the last few similar-sized events your group has run and use that as a base line. Some types of events will cost more if more people attend, e.g. a feast where you will have to supply more food. In this case it pays to work out two budgets. One for if you get fewer people than you expect, and one for if you get about the number you expect or somewhat more. Divide your costs between the lowest number of people you expect to get a ticket price. Is that a fair price? Is that about what people expect to pay for this type of event? If it's too high you may need to go back to the drawing board and try to cut your costs. Some groups will already own some of the things you may need, either left over from other events or purchased by the group. Ask the Seneschal or other officers what is available.

Making your event bid:
 Get your team to write everything up.
 Including a menu, costing, theme ideas and as complete a budget as possible.
 Use the event forms on
<https://sg.lochac.sca.org/documents-and-policy/for-events-and-stewards/> to help you.
Submit your event bid to the sponsoring group a minimum of 3 months in advance.

The council looking at your event bid may have suggestions, ideas on where to shop, or hire things or questions about things you didn't mention in your written event bid, so if you can, go along to the meeting to present your bid in person. They will check your date doesn't clash with any other

up-coming events and compare your bid with any others they have. Most times yours will be the only bid on the table, and if it is acceptable you will be given the all clear to go ahead.

Getting the ball rolling:

- Book, or have your Seneschal book the site.
- Get advance money for food and materials from your Reeve.
- Plan the time table, layout of the venue and decorations etc with your team.
- Consult the B&B or other attending dignitaries re: courts, high table seating, etc.
- Recruit a set up crew *and clean up crew*, kitchen hands, gate keepers, marshal etc.
- Organise any equipment that will be needed for the event, tables, cooking gear etc.
- Don't* assume a Baronial officer (e.g. Lists, Chatelaine, Herald) will be on deck automatically -- *ask* them if they will be available, or can suggest a deputy
- Talk to the Quartermaster to schedule pick-up and return of items you'll need -- don't leave it to chance!

Advertising:

If people don't know about your event, they won't come, so advertise the event in local newsletters, your Kingdom newsletter and on mailing lists. Event notices need to include the following details:

- Date of the event (day, month and year).*
- Times of the event - when the site opens and closes.*
- Name of the sponsoring group.*
- Location and address of the site, and directions. Maps are optional.*
- Steward information: both SCA and legal names, address, and telephone number.*
- Ticket prices or fees and details for how to pay.*
- Wet weather, postponement or cancellation options.*

Get your advertising out as soon as possible and include the cut off date for ticket sales if you are having one. If you are doing a feast it is essential to have a cut off date of at least a week before your event so that the cooks know exactly how many they need to feed and can buy in supplies accordingly.

Regular notices and reminders to mailing lists are vital. Publicise your event as soon as you get the go-ahead from your sponsoring group, and again at four weeks, three weeks, two weeks and one week out. Include the date, time, site, cost, details of what to bring, timetable and wet weather options.

Handling the Money:

- Get advances you need to pay for food, the site etc before the event from the Reeve.
- Keep a complete record of all the money you collect and all the money you spend.
- Keep all your receipts, hire agreements etc.
- Keep a record of all the tickets you sell, and to whom.
- Get all of your team to keep all of their receipts and hand them to you.

DON'T spend money you take in for tickets on the event. ALL of the money you collect for the event should go to your Exchequer/Reeve. ALL receipts for expenses should be given to the Exchequer/Reeve, who will re-reimburse you. Keep a note book or a spreadsheet to record every cent in and out. Keep an eye on the spending to see that everything is keeping to budget.

On the Day:

As early as possible, make a weather call and announce on your mailing list any cancellation or postponement if the weather is not co-operating.

Plan to be the first on site and the last to leave.
Let your setup crew in and show them what is going where.
See that tickets/money is collected from those arriving.
Make sure money is handled and accounted for correctly.
Remind people when it's time to get things started or wound up.
Check that everything is running to time as much as possible.
Supervise your clean up/pack down crew, and lock up.

Any of your crew who are old hands will probably know what needs doing and do it without being asked or reminded. Others may need some instruction. It's your job to make sure that someone has been assigned to do all of the things which need doing.

You can save yourself a lot of sanity by making lists of things that need doing ahead of time, but be flexible. Go into your event expecting that something will go wrong at some stage. Then when something does you won't be overly surprised. Just do your best to work around the problem calmly and there is every chance that those attending won't even notice.

It is the nature of the SCA game that the dignitaries with the tin hats may need to change something at the last minute. Courts end up longer or shorter than they expected, seating at high table needs to be rearranged, etc. As event steward you should let these people know what **your** plans are and then have them tell you what changes they need made. DON'T say "We are totally flexible your Majesty, your whim is my command" as this is not helpful to the dignitaries involved (and your cooks will kill you).

Make lists! Make lists! Make lists!

After the event:

Make sure that:

- All of your requests for reimbursement/payment are sent to the Reeve promptly
- All of the Baronial gear for the event is returned to storage in clean and good condition. If it is need of repair, let the Quartermaster or Seneschal know - don't just put it back!
- Complete a Post Event Report and Financial Report (see <https://sg.lochac.sca.org/documents-and-policy/for-events-and-stewards/>)

Some hints:

1. Find your site early. Make reservations early. Get everything in writing including after-hours contact info in case of site problems.
2. When making a timetable, remember that in the SCA things very rarely happen on time, so it's a good idea to leave a bit of invisible "slack". Do your best to kick each activity off at the time you planned, but leave some room in case things run longer than anticipated.
3. Meet with your crew regularly to see how things progress and keep the whole together.
4. Brainstorm: What have you seen gone wrong at events you were at? How can those things be avoided? What will you do if a fuse blows, the fusebox is in a locked room, and the venue gave you no after-hours contact number? (this happened at Coronation 2007!)
5. Do not set too late a closing time for the site as the clean up crew are likely to be very tired.
6. DO appoint a clean-up crew in advance of the event, don't leave to chance, or the same (tired) people who did the setup and/or main event running.

7. If you cannot be the first person to arrive on site and the last to go, find a trusted deputy who can.
8. Keep a tight rein on expenses. The little things add up fast.
9. When everything's over, hold a debriefing. Write down what was done for future reference, and note everything that went wrong. Don't assign blame. It will just make people reluctant to work with you in the future. As the steward the buck stops with you in any case.

See also:

Steward resources (inc. Budget and Proposal forms):

<https://sg.lochac.sca.org/documents-and-policy/for-events-and-stewards/>

Officer list (remember, officers have to be *asked* to be on duty, or to suggest a deputy; do not *assume* a Lists officer and herald will turn up just because you're running a tourney!)

<https://sg.lochac.sca.org/contacts-regnum/>