

EVENT PLANNING 101

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Event Timeline

Timeline and summary of events leading up to a weekend campout event.

8 Months to One Year	<i>Before booking or promoting anything...</i> • Determine scope and budget • Determine volunteer capacity
6-8 Months	• Confirm event date, secure venue • Create event page and send invitations • Confirm leadership roles
4-6 Months	• Open pre-registration <i>unless funds are needed sooner</i> • Confirm vendors, rentals, contracts, insurance, and catering • Ensure timely payments or services, double check budget
1-4 Months	• Confirm and promote event schedule and activities • Continue recruiting volunteers for key areas—weapons checkers, heralds for field battles, etc. • Continue advertising the event with new images, new pieces of event information, etc. • Connect with section heads, address any concerns
2 Weeks	• Close pre-registration, send final headcount to catering • Increase availability for answering online questions • <i>Post most <u>interesting</u> information during the last two weeks</i> • Gather supplies, confirm volunteers shifts, address gaps
Event Week	• Hype events by posting daily, answering questions • Withdraw cash for cash box, order firewood • Share parking, “upon arrival” details, etc. the day before • Ensure strong event “set-up” team arrives early • Be alert at all times, but have fun! • Start activities on time and keep to the schedule provided • Post updates and photos often via Facebook event page
3..2..1..Lay On!	• Ensure strong event “set-up” team arrives early • Be alert at all times, but have fun! • Start activities on time and keep to the schedule provided • Post updates and photos often via Facebook event page
Post Event	• Celebrate! • Consider post-event survey for honest, anonymous feedback • Hold a post-event realm meeting to debrief to collect more feedback, share survey results and take notes for next year

Practices vs. Events

There are two types of Belegarth functions:

- **PRACTICE:** Held regularly by each chapter for their own fighters.
- **EVENTS:** More limited but typically draw more participants from outside the host chapter. Events are most commonly **single-day battles**, held over a single weekend day, or **multi-day battles**, lasting two or more days **up to a full week**.

Mittelmarch Monthly Melees – monthly battles where the “host” changes within the realm

Mittelmarch Olympics - nationally recognized four-day event with a full schedule of activities. The Olympics is typically held in April (~450 attendees)

Mittelmarch WAR - nationally recognized day battle where two teams battle to conquer and defend territories along several terrains. WAR is typically held in October (~250 attendees)

First Steps of Event Planning

At the very beginning of the event planning process, it is important to determine the basic logistics of the event before any reservations, commitments or requests are made:

- **Determine the scope.** Decide if the event is a single-day event or multi-day event.
- **Determine your budget.** Be sure to have realistic expectations for attendance and cost.
 - If funding is a primary concern, consider hosting a smaller event now and planning a larger event in the future.
 - If you don't have a budget, start small, supply water and a compelling story.
 - Many realms use smaller events to fundraise for their larger events.
- **Determine if you have enough volunteers.** Does your realm (alone) have the numbers to support hosting the envisioned event? GET REALM SUPPORT.
- **Determine (carefully) the event date.** Be sure to check the calendar for other surrounding area Belegarth, Dagorhir or Amtgard events, national holidays or other local activities taking place that could impact your event.
- **Confirm the venue, sign contracts, and only THEN begin promoting your event!** Facebook is a good option for creating an event page and promoting it, but word of mouth is also important. We will talk more about event promotion later in the class... stay tuned!

Venues & Contracts

It is important to locate a **venue** that can accommodate your needs.

- **Single-day events**
 - local park for free—**gain permission and confirmation** from the park's offices, land owners, etc. before you proceed—keep records.
 - Make sure you have **easy parking** particularly for a day battle.
- **Campout events**
 - Established campsite that you can rent out completely
 - There is nothing wrong with using a section of a public park but it opens you up for non-attendees potentially disrupting your event.
 - Ample of field battle space, BATHROOMS or ability to rent Port-O-Johns
 - Flexibility with camping (can participants dig up the ground for a campfire?)
- **General Venue Advice.... You don't want any complaints, surprises or fees later.**
 - CONFIRM UPFRONT if the venue requires a contract and payment for renting. SIGN the **contract** before promoting the event. **Confirm if insurance is required.**
 - Ask upfront about **noise tolerance** or any restrictions on **modifying the terrain** (digging fire pits, putting posts in the ground for battles, etc.).
 - Sites with **electricity** for campsites are not essential but really nice to accommodate CPAP sleepers and other medical needs.
 - Any events longer than **two nights** really should have a **shower house**.

Legal & Liability

,the undersigned assumes full responsibility for any bodily injury and/or property damage arising out of or related to my attendance and/or participation. I fully release Belegarth, its members, participants, observers, officers, officials, owners and/or administrators of land upon which the event/activity is being held.....

- **Waiver:** waives liability to the hosts, venue of a personal injury. The waiver is a deterrent, it does not prevent a lawsuit, but it can help deter one and it helps in defense.
- **Liability Insurance:** Often required by a venue that the organization hosting the event it in the event of a lawsuit, the venue will not have to use their insurance.
 - You can find liability insurance with a basic Google search, but read the fine print to ensure it covers everything you need it to cover
 - Mittelmarch must list "Consolidated City of Indianapolis" as a covered venue on our insurance in order to host events at the park we use for WAR.
 - We go through eventhelper.com It's Progressive Wedding and Event services, where you can customize your event type and coverage needs. It allows us to select venue locations/dates of coverage. Very smooth set up process with affordable options.
- **Liabilities in hosting an event include damage to the venue or injury** of your staff or participants, including heat exhaustion or other illnesses.
- **Make vendors show proof of insurance and liability coverage or food permit.**

Cost & Building a Budget

- **Set a reasonable fee for the event to cover expenses—unreasonable prices will discourage attendees.**
 - Day events should be in the \$5-10 range
 - Campouts have a greater range of \$20-60 (~\$10 per day depending on food costs)
- Event cost should align with the “offerings” to your attendees...
- Small events should be FREE if it is virtually free to host and there is little offered in terms of refreshments.
- If you need to cover expenses for renting your space and need to charge admission, you should consider having some sort of refreshments (snacks)

That being said.... you need to charge enough to cover your event expenses!

- **Make a Budget.** Complete an “Event Checklist” of set expenses and supplies that you’ll need to consider when determining your budget.

Venue: \$150-2000 /day

Catering: \$10/person (+snacks, water)

General Supplies (\$300)

- First Aid Kit
- Troll Waivers/Pens
- Event Tags/Tokens
- Battle Scenario Supplies (Headbands)

Tent Rental?

Porta-John Rental: (\$200 /day)

Weapons Check Templates/Tape: (\$50)

Tabards (\$50-100)

Questions to ask yourself:

- Does the event cost exceed your budget and/or expected revenue from gate fee?
- What is your estimated attendance?
- Will that revenue cover your expenses?
- Are there ample funds available for event materials, weapons check supplies, etc.?
- In lieu of purchasing items new, are there local fighters or organizations that can donate any items needed?

Event Roles & Responsibilities

Single-day vs. Campout events will have different requirements. As an example, below are roles and responsibilities for the Mittelmarch Olympics (weekend campout event):

- Head of Event – person responsible for the event overall and recruiting section heads and other volunteers.
- Head of Troll/Gate – person responsible for collecting event fees and handling event funds, ensure all attendees sign waivers and maintain the event headcount.
- Head Herald – person responsible for running field battles and recruiting volunteers to serve as heralds; this role may be shared.
- Head of Weapons Check – person responsible for the weapons checking process overall, ensure the event has a knowledgeable team of volunteers to check all weapons for safety and compliance and ensure passed weapons are properly marked and failed weapons are marked as such and stowed.
 - Melee Head – an appointed position from the Head Herald that is primary point on all checking for melee weapons, such as swords, shields and spears.
 - Ranged Head – an appointed position from Head Herald that is primary point on all checking for ranged weapons, such as bows, arrows and javelins.
- Head Medic – medically-trained person responsible for serving as first responder to those with an injury at the event, and recruiting medically-trained volunteers.
- Head of Security – oversees safety and security of an event. Your Head of Event can serve in this capacity, too. Everyone in the host realm should be on “security” duty all the time.
- Merchant Coordinator – person responsible for reviewing Merchant applications, determining the final list of approved Merchants and coordinating Merchant’s Row placement and inquiries from Merchants throughout the event.
- Activities Coordinator(s) – arranging classes and supporting class instructors, Bardic Competitions, Arts & Sciences Competitions.
- Tournament Coordinators – persons responsible for coordinating and facilitating various tournaments throughout the event; this role is often shared by multiple people.
- **How do you fill all of the necessary roles if you lack the manpower internally?**
 - You don’t have an event that large of scale?? Don’t rely on outside for anything unless you ask other realms for help in advance. If you get help, GREAT.
- **What is the proper ratio for staff to fighters?**
 - No magic number, it depends on the dedication of the volunteers you have.
 - Mittelmarch has < 20 volunteers for 450 people.
- **How do you ensure that individuals who have volunteered don't "disappear" when the time comes to do the job they volunteered for?**
 - Building buy-in upfront. Giving control and ownership to your leaders
 - You can tell if a person is going to “flee” if they are disengaged during the preparations for the event. Look at a person’s character.
 - Use Walkie Talkies for immediate contact to leadership positions.

Event Development

Once the logistical details are confirmed, there is still a lot of work to be done:

- **Confirm vendors, rentals, contracts, insurance, catering.**
 - Are you offering a feast at the event? Who is cooking or catering the food?
 - Are there adequate facilities (restrooms, kitchens) at the event venue?
 - If you are cooking the food, do you have someone trained in this area?
- **Determine what payments are necessary** upfront vs. day of the event, or afterward.
 - Are there enough funds available to pay for expenses in advance of the event?
 - **If not, how will you cover it?**
- **Check your budget (again).** Does the event cost exceed your budget and/or expected revenue from gate fee? Are there ample funds available for event materials, weapons check supplies, etc.?
 - If you are over budget, start cutting optional/non-required expenses;
- **Make sure you have opportunities for non-combatants.** The event needs to be enjoyable for anyone and everyone that might attend.
- **Events are supported entirely by volunteers**, so the Event Coordinator and administrators should check-in with section heads throughout the event planning and development process.
 - Does the head weapons checker have enough supplies?
 - Does the head of gate have enough waivers printed?
 - Does the head herald have enough volunteers for day battles?
- **Hold section heads accountable, but step in if needed.** Ultimately, as “heads” of their section it is their responsibility to ensure they are prepared for the event, but administrator support can go a long way! **If there are any concerns, address them NOW and not at the event (head event coordinator or realm leadership)**

Event Marketing & Communications

Once the event details are determined, the various event roles have been identified and there is a plan in place for confirming and completing the remaining event tasks, promote the event:

- **Update the Chapter website** with information about the event information.
- **Create a public event page (Facebook) to invite attendees and post often.** Posting often on the event page creates hype/excitement, keeps your event in the forefront of everyone's mind and allows a slow and steady stream of information about the event.
- **Develop a regular schedule of event communications.** For annual events, the communication may be the same year after year. Keep all your standardized posts in one document and develop a calendar of making those posts (basic event details like entry/pre-registration and feast information first, tournament information in the middle, and field battle information and 'before-you-arrive' details for the last 2-3 weeks leading up to the event.

How do you project event headcount?

- **Best method for projecting headcount (planning supplies, field size, etc.)....**
Event planning experience suggests ~%80 of your invitation list will attend (weddings)
 - Facebook "going" and "interested" are unreliable, but can help
 - Going: 70-80%
 - Interested: 50%
 - Also compare to previous year attendance and expected weather

What is the ROI for Marketing Ad spend?

- Ad spend is better utilized on local recruitment vs. event attendance.
- Use free promotional options (facebook events, word of mouth, etc.) for promotion.
- Unless your event/realm structure is set up to accommodate an influx of brand new off the street people with garb/weapons/training, paid social advertising **could actually end up being a detriment to the event** - unless you're a wizard at audience targeting.
- Overall though, having a process in place to ask attendees how they heard of the event at troll, and tracking those statistics. If you spend \$500 bucks on Facebook ads, and 25 people show up paying \$20 saying they found out about the event from your ad, you broke even. Get more the. 25, you were successful.

How do you build your realm (generally)?

- **Never stop recruiting. Period.** Encourage word-of-mouth promotion from realm members and friends. Advertise in local game stores, college campuses, material arts studios, etc.,
- **Attend other events.** The more support you give other realms, the more likely they are to come and support you at your events.
- **Host events!** Foam fight is built on community, hosting events is a great way to grow!

Arriving & Event Gate

Be sure that the check-in team (the Head Event Coordinator, Gate/Troll, and other volunteers as needed) arrive early; the event staff should always be the first participants on-site.

- On the way to the event, particularly if the event is not on a main road, put out large road-side directional signage to direct participants to the event.
- **Conduct an initial walk-through of the venue to check facilities and record any concerns.** Take photos with a timestamp of damaged items (to prove later that your event attendees did not cause the damage).
- **Set up a registration table *before* the start of the event—be ready when the gate opens.**
- **Ensure the cash box and all receipts for the event are in the hands of trusted volunteers** and kept in a safe and secure place (such as in the trunk of a car). As long as Gate is open, the registration table should be staffed at all times.

Remember, as members of a legally recognized non-profit association, each Chapter's records must be open for review by members, as well as federal, state, and local government organizations, at all times.

- The Treasurer is responsible for maintaining these records, and therefore ultimately responsible for the event funds along with the Head of Troll.
- These two positions, if not the same person, should work hand-in-hand throughout the event planning and facilitating process.

Efficient Troll

Troll/Gate is the very first thing attendees experience when they get to the event. It sets the tone for the event and helps your attendees feel like everything is organized.

- **Efficient troll starts with efficient pre-registration.**
 - Make sure your pricing is clear upfront. (Early bird pre-reg pricing might seem like a smart marketing tactic but did you factor in the lower cost of gate fees into your budget?)
 - **Promote waiver in advance.** Online waivers help with the majority of traffic at Troll and help speed up the process.
- **Have clear signage and instructions (QUICK TROLL, three minutes total).**
 - Step 1- Complete a Waiver (or verify it is on file)
 - Step 2- Require Waiver, ID and Payment at the same time
 - Check ID for age requirements and against your Ban List
 - Step 3- Provide Event Token, other items
 - Step 4- Require sign in sheet for easy headcount
 - Step 5- Closing instructions (tournament signup, parking, etc.)
- **Train all event staff/volunteers on operating Troll.** Everyone should be able to help with all parts of the registration process if needed.
 - Troll is the one area in addition to security/medics that is on duty the most.
 - You need multiple people you can legitimately trust with realm money.
 - **Troll is a resource Center.** Have the non-emergency number for police, fire department and directions to the nearest hospital handy.
- **Troll is your first line of defense for your event... an extension of security.**
- **Protect your attendees, your volunteers and your realm.** Be sure you are checking the national Ban List for Belegarth and similar games and actively
 - Promote waiver in advance, use this as an opportunity to **scan the list ahead of time for banned players**, and flag them for Troll volunteers.
 - Print your **Banned/Suspended database** for volunteers.
- **Code of Conduct: Publicly post or note on the sign-in form(s) your realm/event Code of Conduct. If they don't abide by it...kick them out!**
Mittelmarch Code of Conduct can be found here: <https://mittelmarch.com/code-of-conduct/>

Facilitating the Event

Once Troll/Gate opens and attendees begin to arrive, a dedicated team of volunteers should be actively facilitating the event until it's over.

While facilitating the event is primarily the role of the Head Event Coordinator should not be afraid to delegate tasks that need done to other members of the realm. You all have a job to do and there has to be "Gold Leader"

As the event takes place, make sure you are staying on top of all the things you have scheduled:

- Are all activities on schedule?
- Are the common areas clean?
- Do trash cans need to be replaced?
- Are the bathrooms stocked with supplies?

Mittelmarch incorporates these responsibilities into Troll shifts.

How do you ensure non-combatants to feel like they are involved?

- A&S tournaments, Bardic, classes, merchant's row
- Volunteer opportunities

How do you adjust the schedule of activities on the fly?

- Everyone volunteering is responsible for actively communicate so everyone is aware of issues as they arise. **Walkie-talkies** allow instant communication.

Efficient Weapons Check

Weapons Check is one of the most important tasks at a foam fighting event; it ensures participants are using proper, safe weapons and reduces liability and injury.

On top of the **physical demand** of swinging and checking countless weapons, participants are often unhappy if their favorite weapon fails check.

Old/Alternative method is to sort all weapons by weapon type (all blue weapons in the same pile, all red weapons in a different pile) and for team of checkers to check weapons by type instead. This method, while popular at many events, **can lead to misplaced weapons** and confusion on why certain weapons fail.

Mittelmarch has proven to be fast, efficient and minimize lost or misplaced gear during the checking process:

- **Ensure your chapter has the appropriate materials** to facilitate Weapons Check (templates, tape, scales, measuring tape, etc.)
- **Don't rely on volunteers from other realms.** Additional help is great but don't completely rely on volunteers without recruiting them.
- **Group volunteers into teams of three** (two people checking weapons, one person applying marking tape to weapons). Using this method ensures all checkers have a partner to check two-handed weapons, a second opinion on questionable weapons, etc.
 - Establish clear "lanes" for participants to line up and wait for their weapons to be checked.
 - The number lanes depends on the number of volunteers available.
 - Projectile weapons should be checked in their own area by those with expertise in projectile weapons.
- Two people check weapons, third person adds stickers, switch roles to save stamina.
- As participants leave Weapons Check, encourage them to head to the fighting field for pick-up fights, which gives them a warm-up before the main battles begin.

Either method is suitable for a sword fighting event; the size and format of the event or the number of volunteers available will help inform the best method for Weapons Check.

Field Battles

It is the responsibility of the Head Herald to facilitate the field battles at the event, but like just any other leadership role at the event, the Head Herald relies on volunteers and a coordinated set-up to ensure battles are smooth and successful.

- **Establish a team of heralds, coordinated by the Head Herald.** This is typically solicited before the event begins but also during the day. Try to fill as many heralding positions as possible by the hosting chapter, to ensure all positions can be filled for each battle. If you need more assistance, do not hesitate to ask attendees for help (and do not hesitate to volunteer when traveling to events, too!)
- **Ensure all the volunteer heralds understand the rules for each battle before they begin,** and can clearly explain the rules of each battle to each team. Training for the heralds may take place before the event, or early in the morning the day of the event.
- **Set up the battlefield with all the planned battles, or as many as the field will allow, rotating where the battles take place.** Setting up the battle structures in advance helps maximize time for fighters to be on the field. Sample Battle Scenarios are included in the Appendix.
- **As fighters arrive to the field, direct new fighters to alternating sides of the field.**
 - Might help to pre-determine the teams of the largest units in attendance
 - If large units walk up together, let them join one side of the battle, just be sure to keep track and balance accordingly.

In-between each battles, allow time for all projectile weapons to be collected, and teams to reset for the next battle, or run the same battle again. Ensure all participants are hydrating throughout the day and the battle schedule allows water breaks.

Common Questions

What constitutes a successful event?

- A lot of things can go wrong and the event is still “good”
- Satisfaction survey? Did you attendees enjoy themselves?
- Did you have limited injuries?
- Did you make a “profit”

What are some things that you tried when first starting that didn't work out?

- Cooking our own feast
- Weapons check in “old” format
- Olympics was about to outgrow our site and then we flipped the fighting and camping fields and all of a sudden we could accommodate 200 more people.

How to handle conflict, and other issues that may arise, while on site?

- Think on your feet, Move quickly and quietly
- Allow people to sober up before they are asked to leave
- If people keep messing up, but prepared to “make good” on your code of conduct and make them leave

Do you ever feel like an event gets stagnant running it for years? If so, do you do anything to change it up?

- Certainly, if you do the same thing with no changes it can feel stagnant. You should always be thinking about how to improve your event, year after year.
- Olympics looks a lot different than it did ten years ago (now we offer classes, new tournaments, etc.) We saw gaps in the event experience and made adjustments.
- However, you have to balance the “new” with the “old.” **You gain committed attendees by doing the same things consistently well.** If your attendees know that XYZ aspects of your event will be an enjoyable experience for them, they are more likely to come back.
- **Volunteers are key... build a team of people that have a shared vision for what success looks like,** so the same 3 people are not doing everything every year.

Event Checklist

What are the most common items you will need at an event? Many realms host a variety of events each year, and the checklist of materials varies for each event type. The items outlined here are a guideline; needs for each event may change for any given year.

General Event Materials

- ☐ Event Banner(s) and Signage
- ☐ Walkie Talkies
- ☐ Easy-Up(s)
- ☐ First Aid Kit x2 for main pavilion and fighting field
- ☐ Flashlights/Batteries for overnight staff/security
- ☐ Ax/Hatchet for firewood
- ☐ (Optional) Porta-Johns
- ☐ (Optional) Loaner tunics and weapons for first-time fighters

Troll/Gate

- ☐ Waivers
- ☐ Sign-In Sheets
- ☐ Cash Box with cash added prior to event
- ☐ Pens and Clipboards
- ☐ Event Tags (wristbands, pendants, etc.)
- ☐ Troll Volunteers
- ☐ Table(s)

Weapons Check

- ☐ Copies of the Book of War
- ☐ Weapon Templates
- ☐ Marking Tape (red, yellow, blue, green, white)
- ☐ Duct or Cloth Tape for marking passing weapons
- ☐ Measuring Tape
- ☐ Scales and Bow Tester
- ☐ Utility Knife
- ☐ Sharpies/Markers
- ☐ (Optional) Repair 'kits' for weapons and armor

Field Battles/Tournaments

- ☐ Stopwatches
- ☐ Herald Tabards and Sashes
- ☐ Headbands
- ☐ Megaphone
- ☐ Rope
- ☐ Tent Stakes
- ☐ Hammer/Mallet
- ☐ Medals for tournament winners

Refreshments/Cleaning

- ☐ Bottled and Gallons of Water *if you provide nothing else...provide water!*
- ☐ Confirmation for feast catering
- ☐ Additional Snacks...chips, cookies or lemonade
- ☐ Water Jugs/Coolers
- ☐ Trash Bags
- ☐ Paper Towels
- ☐ Toilet Paper
- ☐ Hand and Dish Soap
- ☐ Hand Sanitizer
- ☐ Sponges
- ☐ Lysol
- ☐ Broom
- ☐ Sunscreen
- ☐ Bug Spray
- ☐

Thank you for reviewing my Event Planning 101 Class! Contact Tari at mittelmarch@gmail.com if you have any questions!

Be well,

Master Seneschal Sir Tári Tinehtelë
High Council of Mittelmarch
Chieftain of the Legion of the Dragoons
Knight of the Silver Order