

# On the Proper Use of Heraldic Titles and Insignia

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In a previous article I discussed some techniques for voice projection for use by heralds or anyone else that has to be heard without benefit of sorcery. The following are a few more useful points for heralds, based on my own experience (i.e. mistakes) and observations.

Remember that as a herald you are a Royal representative. When you wear a herald's tabard, or any other identifying regalia; your words are not your own, but can be attributed to the Crown, in whose name you act. This does not mean that you have any right to lord it over anyone, but you must act with proper dignity and decorum, and avoid personal remarks. Also, when you call for attention, do so with confidence. Do not be shy or tentative. Belt it out.

On the other hand, remember that you are a supporting player. All your actions should be to call attention to the ones whose court it is (the Royals or Baronials) or to the ones called into court, not to you.

Use the regalia when you are heralding. The tabard lends dignity and esthetic appeal. On the other hand, you should only wear the regalia when you are "on duty."

In fact, if you are called into Court when on duty, you should remove the tabard to signify that it is yourself, not the herald, that comes before the thrones.

Whether on duty or not, a herald should always maintain a degree of dignity in any situation where it is known that you are a herald. I recall an account of a junior herald being reprimanded for being too servile in dealing with his Kingdom Herald. "Heralds do not grovel!" Even to the Thrones you should maintain dignity. If you kneel, kneel upright and keep your head up. When you bow, make it simple and don't bow extremely low.

No matter how good your memory is, it can fail you. Keep a small notebook or some small file cards, and use them to recall agenda items, names, and the like. It does not detract very much to refer to a notebook, and in any case, it is better to do that than to go blank in the lists or at court.

## In the Lists

When heralding a tourney, assist the MoL in making up the cards. Get the names and titles of the fighters you do not know from the fighters themselves. Some fighters may ask you not to use their titles. Honor that request, but otherwise use a title if they have one. Any names that you might have trouble pronouncing, write them phonetically under the true spelling or on the back of the card. And also, as a memory aid, write down some identifying characteristic such as the main colour they wear.

If a fighter asks to be called by a nickname, use discretion. If a nickname has a certain dignity, then you might use it. But some nicknames are inappropriate, especially if they are demeaning or too obviously modern. If you use a nickname, give their full name in the first round, with "known as" the nickname. After that you can use the nickname.

Usually when you herald a tourney, you call fighters in two stages, as:

“Lord Hackenslash and Baron Wasteland, come into the Lists. Sir Cumference and Sir Perfluisse, make you ready.” Do not use mundane sports-related phrases like “on deck.”

The ones you call into the lists should have already been alerted, so they know their turn is imminent; but the ones you call to make ready may not be paying such strict attention. It is especially important to make certain they can hear you. So call their names with extra emphasis, and repeat each name twice. I am also a fighter, and I know how frustrating it can be to miss the first call and not be ready when called into the lists.

When you introduce fighters in the Lists, give some identifying description: The colour and style of their armour, or their weapons style if the two are different, or their heraldry if they are using it. When you describe their heraldry, use plain language rather than the Language of Blazon, and identify the most visible parts of the design. Although it may be our ideal to have the whole Known World understand The Language, a great many people do not. “The red saltire with gold anchors” means more to most non-heralds than “or on a saltire gules four anchors or,” (my own arms) even though the latter is a more complete description. Also, when you announce fighters in the Lists, indicate by gesture which one is which. Unless the Ruling Noble tells you otherwise, shorten the descriptions and introductions after the first round, but do the full litany in the final round.

When you call upon the fighters to honour the Royals or Their representatives, try to be aware of just where They are and indicate the direction to the fighters. If for some reason neither His Majesty nor Her Majesty is visible, make the reverence toward the thrones. In a helm, it is difficult to scan the gallery for a crown or other token of Royal identity.

Be neutral during the fight. If you see something that may affect an outcome (such as a blow that struck flat), tell it quietly to the marshal. I am also a marshal; and I sometimes forget what colour my tabard is! The one exception is that if you see a dangerous situation, you should cry “Hold!” as anyone should.

Wait for the marshal to tell you who won. It may seem obvious, but even so there may be some problem. If the marshal does not tell you on his own, ask him. Applaud lightly after you make the announcement.

Always address the marshal as “my lord marshal” or “sir marshal.”

## In Court

When heralding at court, you will probably have to read one or more scrolls. Try to read them in advance if at all possible. If you cannot, try to develop the technique of reading ahead of yourself. It is possible to read three or four words ahead of what you are saying. This is especially useful with elaborate calligraphy, because your mind has a second or so to figure out a word before you say it. The earlier comment about names applies here too, save that you will probably not be able to get the name from the recipient, to whom it is usually supposed to be a surprise. But do make every attempt to find out the correct pronunciation. It is frustrating to hear your name mispronounced in court, and embarrassing to mispronounce a name. Both of those are from first-hand experience!

When calling someone into court, remember that a King does not request - he commands. Some Kings have instructed me to say “please” in their name when calling a person before them (Shades of Sir Joseph Porter!), but unless instructed to do otherwise, make it in the form of a command, as:

“Lord Teghedizi Layback, come into Court.”

Or an indirect command, as:

“Lord Altissimus Airhead is called into Court!”

Or simply reference the Crown by saying:

“Their Majesties call Lord Mako Bigtooth into Court!”

If it is not Court as such, replace “into Court” with “before the Thrones” or “before their Majesties” or some similar phrase.

Finally, when you make a mistake, don’t let it get the better of you. Note I said when, not if. All performers make mistakes. You are probably more keenly aware of your mistake than anyone else who heard it, so don’t draw undue attention to it. If you mispronounce a name or give a wrong title (I once announced His Majesty the Quing), simply correct it and keep going. No one will think too ill of you for it. You will get kidded, especially by other heralds; but it is because such things are part of common experience.

The mark of a good performer is not a total absence of mistakes, though of course the fewer the better; but in covering one’s mistakes and carrying on.