

AMTGARD:

A BEGINNER'S GUIDE





An Introduction to Amtgard

The passage is dark, vision blurred by the shadows that slink just out of view, the taint of corrupt magic that dulls both sight and the mind. Those whom you quest with murmur their unease. You wave them to silence, suddenly sensing the trap before you... there- a tripwire. Gently you reach forward, so intent in concentration that you almost miss the attack when it comes. Bowstrings hum. Your hands snap into a guard position, and you sidestep the arrows with ease, for you have been trained by the master monks of the temple. Your unseen enemies shout their challenge in guttural voices while your own warriors draw their blades. A high chanting reassures you that your wizard is preparing to cast her fireball. But there is no time to think as the dark shapes surge forward. You lift your katana high and prepare for the onslaught...

This is a scenario from Amtgard, a non-profit, non-sectarian group devoted to recreating elements of the medieval, ancient, and fantasy periods and genres. The thrust of Amtgard is both recreational and educational, with major group efforts devoted to reconstructions of medieval combat. Amtgard weapons are safe, foam-padded replicas of the real things, and unlike many other live action role playing systems, Amtgard has comprehensive rules for the use of magic classes in the battlegames and quests. Founded and copyrighted in El Paso, Texas in 1983 by the Kingdom of the Burning Lands, Amtgard International has groups ranging from California to Florida with chapters also existing in England, Germany, Finland, Sweden, and Russia.

Editors' Notes

This Amtgard: A Beginner's Guide is a tangible example of the ongoing effort by Amtgard, International to move into the late 90's and the century beyond, and as such, this work is a preview of more projects to follow, such as the revised Amtgard: Handbook on the Rules of Play edition 6.1. I would like to thank my fellow editor, Ivar, for his willingness to spend long hours both working on these projects and teaching his "net squire" <grin>. This guide, both in hardcopy and on the web, could not have been completed without his knowledge of html, pagemaker, and adobe acrobat. We hope, you, the Amtgard populace, enjoy the offering. Long live the dream...

-Aramithris (March, 1997)

Years ago, in Lubbock, Texas, I began a group which has become known as Irongate. I had no idea where to start or where to go with this fledgling group. This guide is an attempt to remedy the dilemma of what you do after you have your rule book and corpora but no one to fight with. I hope this guide fills this role for future founders.

Amtgard is entering a new era. The Internet is becoming a more dominant part of Amtgard. While the Internet in itself isn't Amtgard, it is a vehicle for us to communicate and spread Amtgard around the world. Aramithris, KalXen, and squeak! have been instrumental in the introduction of new and inspiring additions to the AmtNET. Thank you all for your contributions. This starter kit and all Amtgard publications are available on the Internet (see the FAQ).

This publication is dedicated to Mestoph who founded the Shire of Winter Moon in Sudbury, Ontario, Canada after finding Amtgard on the Internet.

-Ivar (April, 1997)



Amtgard: A Beginner's Guide
(a starter kit for newbies, new chapters, and new ideas)

Version 2.7 (PDF)

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So now you have your Amtgard starter pack in hand; Rulebook, Corpora, instructive materials, etc. The next step is actually getting a group started. This phase requires a great deal of time, work, dedication, and no small expense. You should initiate it when the weather is pleasant and you have plenty of free time available for several months.

First, you need to select a place to hold your first few battlegames. City parks or other public lands are your best choice for this. It should be a large area, with terrain and man-made features if they are available. You should select an appropriate day and time to meet, taking your area's lighting and weather conditions into account. Once you have selected the site and time, you or a responsible member of your group should always and without fail be present between the advertised hours of play. You should have weapons and be dressed in garb, displaying banners if possible. At least initially, you should have garb and weapons to lend. You may feel odd at first, sitting around in garb and being stared at, but in time both you and the local "mundanes" will get accustomed to the idea.

Having furnished yourself with garb, weapons, and other paraphernalia, it is time to begin seeking other members. Determine where you are most likely to find prospects. Here in the Burning Lands, colleges, high schools and military reservations have yielded the greatest number of players. Advertising at genre bookstores, science-fiction/fantasy/gaming conventions, city festivals, renaissance fairs, and other genre amusements is a successful method as well. Once you have established a core group, you can arrange to provide demonstrations at these events as well.

Once you have determined your target groups, you should develop flyer formats which are likely to pique their interest. Military people seem more interested in the combat aspects of the club, while a college crowd might be more intrigued by the role-playing or costuming aspects. The print on your flyers should be large, there should be artwork, and it should be printed on colored paper if practical. A flyer is not really intended to inform, it is intended to interest, and you should bear this in mind when designing it. The most important information appearing on the flyer is the club's name, and the time and location at which you meet. It is not really necessary to put a contact person, phone, or address on the flyers, since the direct physical nature of the group strongly lends itself to personal demonstration.

Your local newspaper and television news will very likely be willing to run an article on your group. Contact them and make arrangements to have your group in best form when they arrive.

When your new members do start showing up, welcome them. Immediately make them feel as if they are a part of the group. Lend them garb, weapons, let them look over a rulebook. Some people are intimidated by the idea of combat, don't pressure them, let them watch. Most of these people will eventually try fighting, some never will. In spite of

HOW DO I GET A GROUP STARTED?

by Grand Duchess Tawnee Darkfalcon

the club's strong orientation toward combat, non-fighters have many talents to offer as well, and should never be discouraged from contributing.

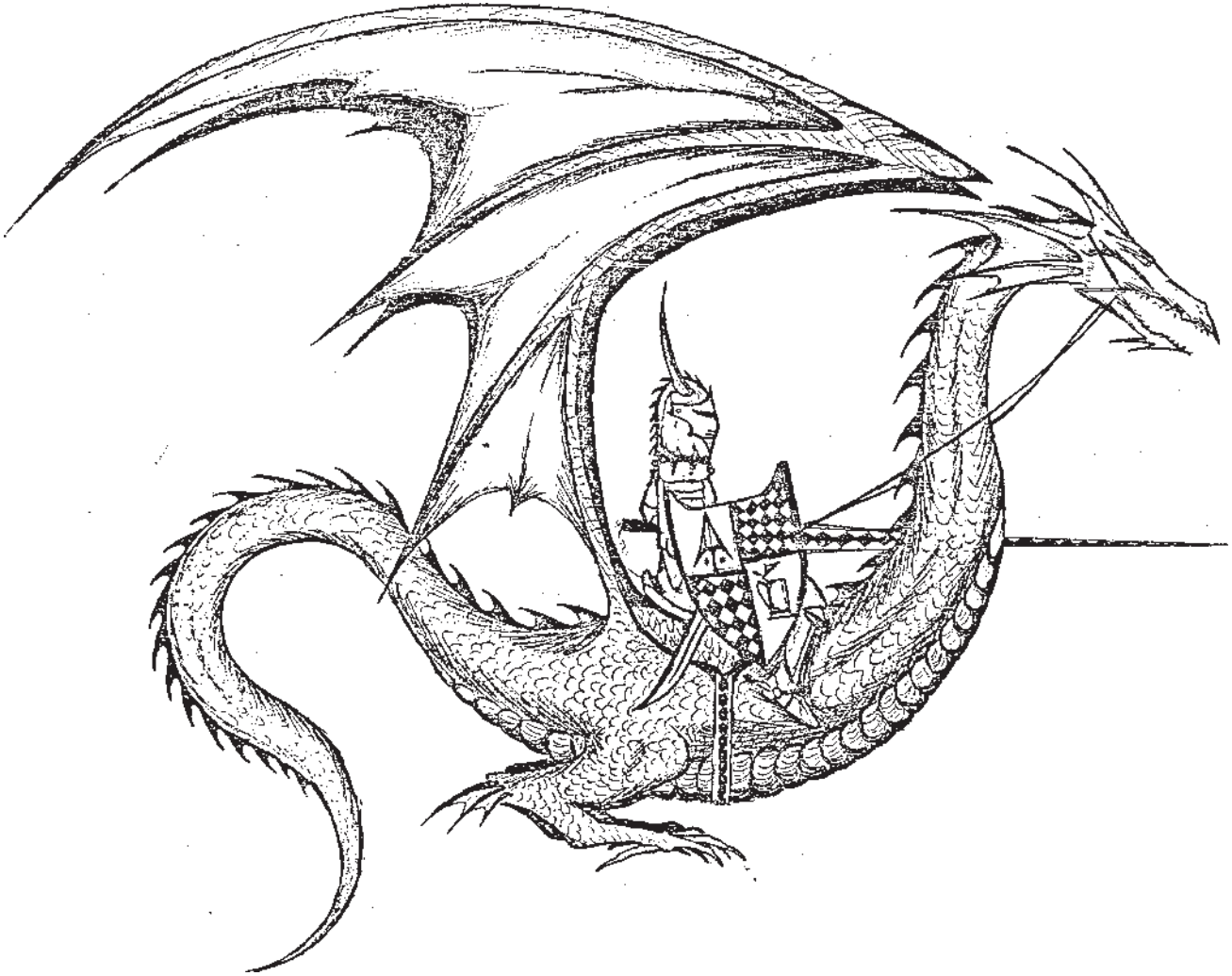
Once you have a suitably sized group, you can organize demonstrations, or "demos", at events. Five or six people can put on a quite credible demo, and for indoor demos you probably won't want any more than that. Arranging to perform demos is usually easy, people organizing events generally welcome groups willing to provide free entertainment. Simply contact them, explain what the group is all about, how much time and space you would need, etc. When setting up the demo, make certain to select participants who will make your group look good; well-garbed, well-armed, well mannered players who will take their hits. One person should serve as an Emcee, providing a brief description of the club's history and activities, weapons, personas, classes, nobility, and what counts as a hit. During this, flyers should be passed out. Then the members present should demonstrate combat through duels and melee. The last half of the demo should consist of members of the audience playing. If there are sufficient weapons and the audience is adults, then members can play along with the audience. If the demonstration is for children, or weapons are scarce, then club members present should serve as reeves. The Emcee should be available at all times to answer questions.

Demos need not be solely for the purpose of increasing membership. They can be used to generate goodwill and positive publicity in the community. We have done demos for Boy Scouts, Cub Scouts, churches and local telethons. We performed an informative demo for our Parks and Recreation Board. If your city government is a casual one, it is advisable to schedule a demo for your council or Parks and Recreation Board. Even if this is impractical, write your Parks Department letters of introduction and thanks for park maintenance, or the installation of water fountains, restrooms, benches, etc. Familiarize yourselves with them, more importantly, make them familiar with you. Invite the councilperson in whose district you play to come and watch a game. When the police cruise by to see what in the world is going on, go up to them, introduce yourselves, and invite them to watch. Establish positive and friendly relations with the "powers-that-be".

At all times, keep in touch with the main body of Amtgard. In most cases, this will be through your sponsor group- the group from which you obtained your starter kit. But, should you lose contact with that group, establish ties with another immediately. Especially in this time of rapid growth, new groups which fail to correspond will be lost in the shuffle, and left out of the general organization rosters. Don't get too discouraged if your sponsor group is slow to respond to you, remember, they may be supporting ten or fifteen groups such as your own, which is a tremendous workload.

Good luck, and keep in touch. We intend to offer you all the support possible.









Everyone would like to live in a fantasy world, and that is exactly what Amtgard seeks to simulate. Amtgard is a world of medieval fantasy- a place where knights, lords, elves and sorcerers mingle on magical landscapes. And, in order to become a part of this world, you must create a new identity for yourself, an alter-ego who exists side-by-side with the other denizens of this fantastical place. Whenever the society meets, you BE-COME this new persona, in dress and in speech, in attitude and in combat. As you play your character, you interact with the personae of other club members, in effect creating among yourselves the wondrous, imaginary society that is Amtgard. What follows are hints and guidelines that will help you in selecting the persona you will become to enter into this magical place.

The inspiration for your persona may come from any source- legends, history, fantasy fiction or your own wildest daydreams. For instance, if you like the idea of playing an elf, you may choose to be a traditional Germanic elf, a lighter, littler Tolkienesque elf, or even a sprightly Elizabethan spirit. Or perhaps an historical era appeals to you- a druidic sorcerer from ancient Ireland. When you draw your ideas, with a little research you can learn how to dress, fight and most importantly, act in character. Remember that Amtgard is a world of MEDIEVAL fantasy, which roughly translates into any time period from prehistory to the Renaissance. While this may not mean much in fantasy fiction set on alternate worlds, at least the medieval spirit must be maintained (in other words, no laser toting space pirates, although a low tech warrior from a post-holocaust Earth might work). Also, while you may be inspired by actual fictional or historical characters, the persona you create must be original, so that while it is great to play a Cimmerian barbarian or an Arthurian knight, you cannot choose Conan or Sir Lancelot as an alter-ego. Beyond these considerations however, the only limit to your persona is your own vivid imagination.

Something to keep in mind when selecting a persona is the Amtgard system of combat. In combat, there are several classes of character, such as warriors, barbarians, wizards, scouts, assassins, and so on. When you are on the battlefield you must elect to be one of these classes of character for that particular melee. However, in a different combat session (and there are usually no more than three at a weekly meeting) you may play a different character class- in other words, one week you might be in the mood to walk onto the battlefield as a heavily armored juggernaut, while the next week your fancy may be the elegance of a monk or the tenuous power of a thaumaturge. It is encouraged that you try each of the classes for yourself and experiment. For this reason, you may wish to choose a persona that can justify switching roles. For instance, elves are ideal for alternating between warrior, scout, and wizard. Likewise, an outdoorsman could equally be seen as a healer, archer, monk, scout or warrior. One crafty fellow could interchange as scout and assassin. But some combinations are harder (though naturally not impossible) to justify, such as a 10th century Danish Viking (a classic barbarian/warrior) becoming a sly, unarmed magician (which would probably roll the eyes of fellow Amtgardians). Later, of course, to counterbalance your first character, (a small and slippery thief, let's

say) you may create a second persona altogether, perhaps a knight who dabbles in the mystical arts. Initially, however, it is advisable that you develop one persona fully before spreading yourself (and your character's experience) out. Also, it is simpler at first to play a more physical (read: non-magic casting) character class in order to become accustomed with the rules of combat. Then, you may begin playing wizards and healers. Most importantly, keep in mind that these character classes are simply designed persona, but by no means a limiting or deciding one. The final factor in what your character is and does is your own, unique imagination.

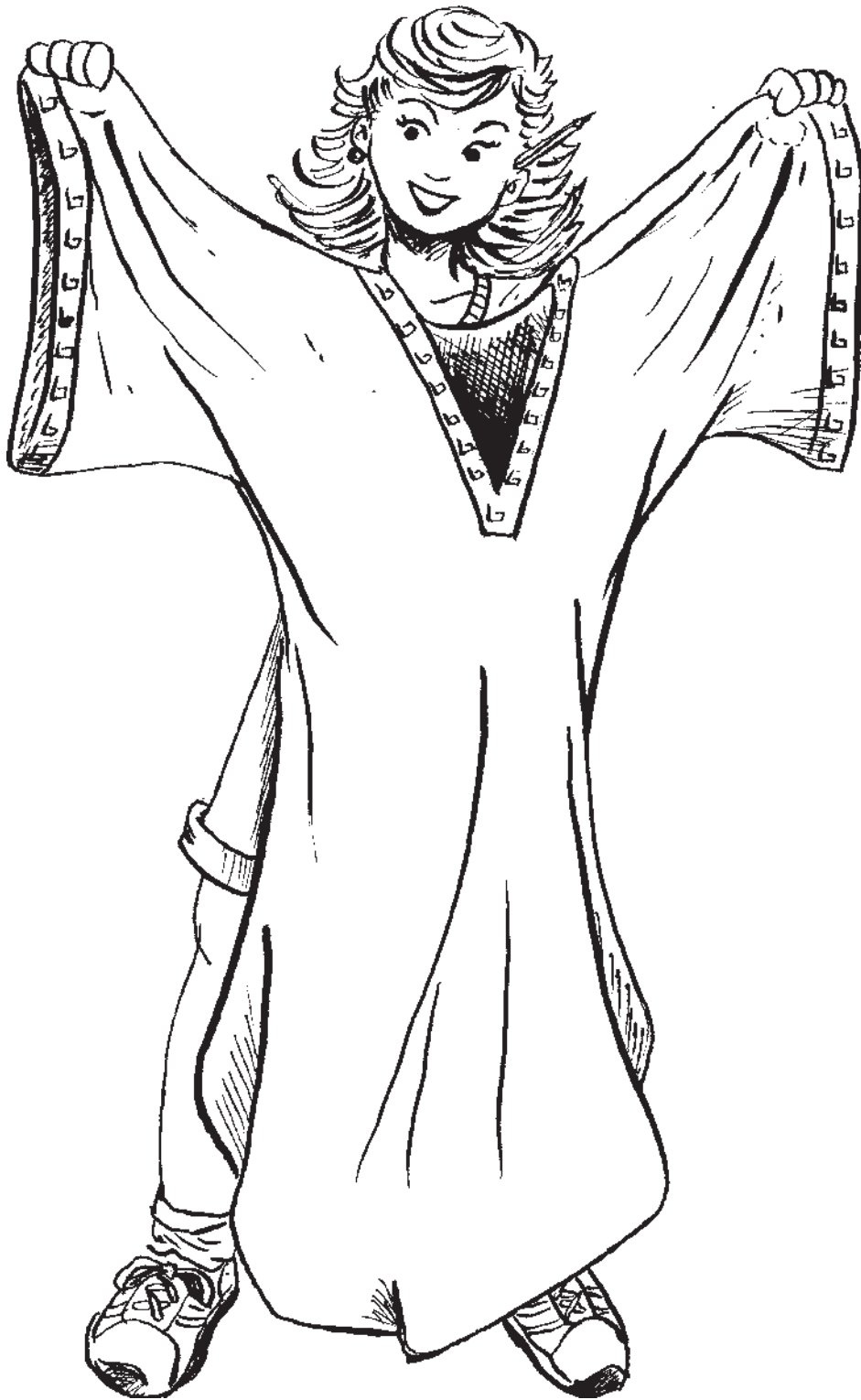
Lastly, something to consider in choosing a persona is your personal, physical attributes. This is not to say that if you do not consider yourself particularly quick or large, you should not be an elf or a Zulu warrior. But let's face it, a six foot four inch, two hundred pound hobbit just does not work. While such a character might be amusing, it is better in the long run to select a persona that (roughly) fits your body type. Not only will this paint a stronger picture visually, but I think it will give you a more positive attitude about the character and about yourself. Many people are unaware of their own, physical potential and what better way to explore this than in the fun and harmless thronerooms and battlefields of imaginary Amtgard? The closer your persona matches your own physique, the less you will rely upon abstract rules to equalize yourself with other Amtgardians and consequently, the more of your own potential you will be able to utilize. Of course, we all know that the object of fantasy is to allow you to be something you cannot be in the mundane world, and this idea is reinforced here by insuring that you are actually BECOMING your persona at every meeting of the society. One of the useful attributes of fantasy is its power to allow you to explore yourself. This very act in itself becomes an adventure. Remember that not everything in fantasy is combat and the same is true in Amtgard. Select an alter-ego with which you feel comfortable, both mentally and physically, and that much more of your energy can be channeled into having fun.

By now, you should have an idea of what type of persona you would like to create. From here you might want to perform a little research to come up with a background for your new self. As an example, let us say that you have chosen an Elizabethan elf as a race. This means that you will be much more magical in nature than say, a Tolkien elf, and you will be of the Oberon/Titania cycle. Minimal reading will tell you that these spirits were derived both from elements of classical mythology and elements of Celtic/Germanic legends. Now choose which (if not both) side appeals more to you, and explore it. For instance, your elf might be more Celtic in nature, a fairy tale rogue with a fleet foot and a flashing sword. Elizabethan elves as often as not had magical origins rather than biological ones: the birth of our example elf, might have come say, at the dawn when the sun opened the petals of a rose in a fairy ring, a rose on which the mightiest warrior of Ulster in Ireland bled his final drop after falling to the superior numbers of his foes: the rose bloomed at sunrise and an elfin infant awoke at its center. A brief life story will come with a little daydreaming; our elf was raised by fairies and leprechauns but, alas, the influence of the warrior's blood (perhaps his "father", making him a half-elf?) drove him to explore the world of men, and he became a magical, capricious wanderer; until finally he came to a Grand Duchy and established himself as the Duke's Champion. The name should catch the spirit of the character: our elf has the name Sionnach o' Ros Sidh, which is Gaelic for Fox of the Fairy Rose. From his origin, it is easy to decide a personal motif, which will be the rose: his clothing will tend to be scarlet in color, often he will bear a flower for his lady friends, etc. With a little effort and much delight, a persona is created and fledged; in this case, the elf is the character played by the author of this article.

Not all origins have to be as colorful as this. You may choose to be a dwarf from a mountain army, or the grandson of a Roman Centurion left behind in Saxon England. You may even simply explain yourself as a Norse Viking or a wizard in a tower. The more research and imagination you put into your persona, the more believable, interesting and downright fun it will be, both for you and for your fellow Amtgardians. After you have chosen and named your persona, you will have to form a mental image of what sort of clothing you will

wear, what sort of weapons you will use, what speech patterns would be appropriate, and so on. In short, think of what you will do to transform yourself into your new identity at a meeting of the society. At first your costume need only be basic. There is a Garber's Guild in the society with garbers who can help to make an outfit for you. Some weapons will be provided by the club, but eventually you will want to make your own and personalize them for your character. The most important thing that you must provide at a meeting is a good understanding of who your persona is and a healthy desire to have fun being that character. I guess above all other pointers I have given in this article, this last one is by far the highest priority. If in creating a persona you use good sense, a dash of effort, and a heaping helping of your own unmatched imagination, there is no reason that you cannot, through your persona, live out that life that everyone wants, on the wide and magical landscapes of Amtgard.







There are probably aspects of Amtgard more important than garb but it has to figure near the top of the list. This statement is prejudiced, of course as I am into garb both by predilection and by edict. Stop and think about garb for just a minute. Would Amtgard be as much fun without garb? Picture a feast without garb!

Why is garb so satisfying? Why is any Amtgard function enhanced by garb? I think one of the biggest reasons is the difficulty in expressing, via what you wear, your true personality/persona in the mundane world. Let us face it, folks, mundanity by the very definition of the word, i.e., mundane (1) of the world, (2) commonplace, everyday, ordinary, etc., is boring! This is not to say you should give in to that impulse and wear a cape to school or carry a broadsword to work but it is good for the psyche to wear a cape and carry a broadsword sometimes- hence Amtgard and garb.

Let us consider the word garb. According to Webster's New World Dictionary of the American Language, Second College Edition: garb (garb) n. (OFr. garbe, gracefulness - It. garbo, elegance, prob. ult. -Gr. kalopsois, making beautiful - kalos, beautiful + poiein, to make [see POET]) 1. clothing; manner or style of dress, esp. as characteristic of an occupation, profession, or rank. 2. external form, covering, or appearance 3. (obs) style; manner - vt. to clothe; dress; attire.

Note the words used in reference to garb, "gracefulness, elegance, beautiful, style". Quite a difference from commonplace, everyday, ordinary, and etc., wouldn't you say? I especially like the reference to the word poet.

I personally think garb and the marvelous words used to describe it are strongly tied to appropriateness. In other words, a bikini can be graceful and elegant at poolside but just the opposite at a symphony. Most of us have already spotted the obvious in that we normally will not wear feast garb to a ditch battle. Not only do satins, brocades, and velvets not take to intimate association with grass, dirt, rocks, and etc. but who can afford to have them dry cleaned once a week! This is however, not to say that fighting garb cannot be elegant and graceful. Combining these two virtues with sturdiness and ease of upkeep is not as difficult as it may appear.

Basically, dress garb and fighting garb are much alike in design. It is in the material used that difference is apparent. Three basic patterns will serve to produce a basic garb wardrobe. We are of course referring to (1) T-tunic, (2) Basic pants, and (3) Basic skirt. With modification of material and length the three basics can be expanded into a closet full of garb and take you from feast to fray in comfort and style.

The most (MOST!!) important thing to keep in mind when considering the start of your engarbment is fit. This cannot be stressed too heavily. Take your time- measure everything- twice! Create your three patterns to fit you exactly and then never worry about the fit again. I would even go so far as to use scrap material for your first attempt at

utilizing your personalized patterns. Cut up an old sheet. Who cares if it has purple and pink gardenias on it?- this is for fit only. Sew up the major seams and try it on. Make sure you have a friend available to check the fit from the sides and back. Also make sure your friend won't laugh themselves silly over the gardenias. Modify the pattern if necessary being sure to mark the changes on the pattern itself and then go looking for suitable material.

Suitable material is anything that fits the following requirements:

FIGHTING GARB:

1. Preferably a material that looks natural. Obvious synthetics just don't look very realistic. Go for cotton/poly blends, linen/poly blends, wool or wool blends.
2. The rougher the treatment the garb is liable to receive the heavier/sturdier the material should be. For pants use the twills, gaberdines, denims or the heavier wool blends. Use unbleached/bleached muslin for a good, cheap choice for shirts. Lighter weight twills, etc. are fine for tunics.

DRESS GARB:

1. Anything goes. Anything! Just keep in mind that the more plush and/or delicate the material the more difficult upkeep is going to be.

THE FOLLOWING IS ONE EXAMPLE OF A BASIC STARTER WARDROBE:

FEMALE:

- *Medium weight cotton skirt in dark gray.
- *T-tunic, long sleeved in off white.
- *T-tunic, wider gathered sleeve in a dark burgundy.
- *Light weight skirt in dark burgundy.
- *T-tunic made to floor length in a very fine cotton, light gray for feasts, etc.
- *T-tunic, short sleeved in dark gray.

MALE:

- *Heavy to medium weight twill pants in dark brown.
- *T-tunic, short sleeved in tan.
- *T-tunic, long narrow sleeve in blue.
- *Medium weight pants in blue for dress events (feasts, etc.).
- *T-tunic, long, wide, gathered sleeve in off white muslin or cotton.
- *An over-tunic, sleeveless or a very short, capped sleeve to wear over the muslin shirt and the blue shirt. Make up in very dark blue.

Now, add some accessories in the way of belts, shawls, jewelry, belt pouches and etc. and you are garbed. Look at the above lists and figure out the number of different combinations you can make out of five or six items. With the basics listed you can expand your garb wardrobe geometrically by selective additions of just one or two more clothing items. For instance, add a short vest to either wardrobe and see how many more combinations you can come up with. A cape, especially a reversible one, will add even more dimension to your options. Keep it basic- add fancier stuff later, when you can afford garb so specialized it can only be worn one way.

SHOES- THE MOST DIFFICULT PART OF GARBING:

Garb shoes. Where on Earth do you get them? Is there really such a thing? Do you have to spend a fortune and have them custom made? The answers to all of these questions are (1) Wherever you can find them. (2) Yes, there really are garb shoes. and (3) No, not necessarily.

Where do you get them? Shop a lot in “cheap” areas such as South El Paso. Some of those strange little shops will occasionally have the perfect soft boot or funky, totally medieval sandal you have been lusting for. I would also recommend keeping an eye on the large department stores at the various malls. I have found several pair of good garb boots at department stores- on sale yet!

Major Renaissance events often have merchants selling garb shoes. Amtgard Garber’s Guild has also published patterns for soft cloth or leather shoes. If your belt pouch is of sufficient depth and weight you can also have boots custom made but.... be prepared to shop all over town for a bootmaker who has anything but a western type boot pattern. You’ll have better luck in Juarez, Mexico or similar areas with lower prices.

Dress shoes for male and female are not nearly as difficult to obtain as the daily wear shoe or boot. Believe it or not the modern version of cloth or leather bedroom slipper is often so close to a traditional garb shoe as to make no difference.

Whichever route you choose to take in your pursuit of garb shoes, be prepared to spend time if not money and keep fingers crossed as you will also need some luck!

CAPES: No comment save, see various Garber’s Guild publications for patterns and make sure you have at least one good all weather cape.

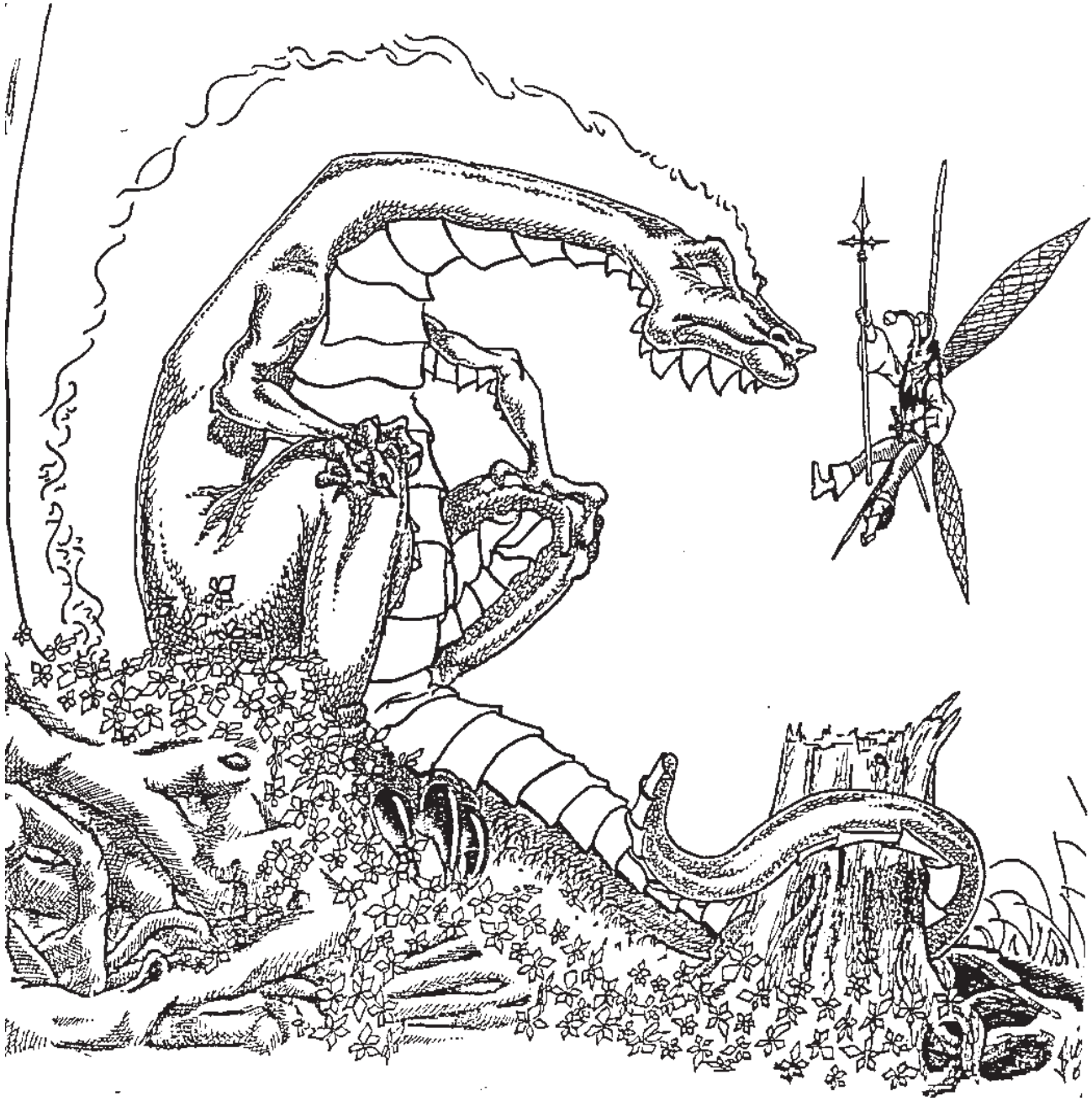
ACCESSORIES:

You will need and want the various items so necessary to add flair and panache to your garb. “Items” can range from jewelry, belts, pins, belt pouches, favors and headgear, to you name it. Best of all, accessory items seem to be the easiest to find or make. Again, areas like South El Paso are happy hunting grounds for the strange and/or funky. Flea markets are also a good source for weird and wonderful “items”.

ONE LAST COMMENT:

When you have taken care of appropriateness and fit for your basic garb keep in mind a very important condition not heretofore mentioned. That condition is quality of workmanship. What a waste to have a good pattern, really suitable material and then nullify the entire effort by casual or downright shoddy workmanship, unless your persona is a serf, slave, or beggar, of course. These three personas positively require gross, raveled, and scruffy garb. Another point, beside the aesthetic, is why would you take the considerable amount of time and trouble to assure pattern fit and expend your dollars on material to make up garb in such a manner as to assure it will not last beyond a few wearings? Not me. I’m too lazy to sew up anything that will not stand the tests of time, wear, and multiple washings. If you are not sure of your sewing technique find someone who is then pick their brain or, if you have enough charm or a large enough club, convince some master seamstress/tailor to make up the garb for you. GO FORTH AND GARB!

(editor’s note- The Garb Book, a comprehensive guide to Amtgard garbing, is forthcoming from Gwynne).





One of the best ways of attracting people to Amtgard is through the use of demos. Amtgard demos are demonstrations for mundania to see just what Amtgard is, to get a feel for the game, and to perhaps draw interest. Through the years I have seen many demos. Some were very well organized while others seemed to fall flat. Often those that fell short of their mark did so because there was no one present with the proper knowledge of how to be a Master of Ceremonies. As a result someone would be elected and be left ad-libbing and improvising the entire demo. This has caused the need for this article. Below is the simplest way to run a demo, and to, in the end, draw interest to Amtgard.

To begin, someone must become the Master of Ceremonies for the demo. I have done the job of M.C. on many occasions, and I had to take notes from some old pros just so I could keep my head above the water. Here is a very basic guideline to the sequence of events of a demo. These are:

1. An introduction by the M.C.,
2. a brief history of Amtgard,
3. a description of what we do,
4. a description of the rules of combat, with accompanying demonstrations,
5. a full demonstration of combat,
6. a description and demonstration of Amtgard magic,
7. a combat demonstration with the use of magic,
8. an outline of the arts and sciences of Amtgard,
9. finally, an invitation for participation in combat and for viewing of arts and science material.

Following this outline will get even the greenest of M.C.'s through the demo.

The introduction to Amtgard should be short. In fact, all it should say is "hello, we are Amtgard (with group name optional)" and a sentence or so describing Amtgard. I have found the best for this is a variance on the one in the 5th edition rule book. It goes "Amtgard is a non-profit, non-sectarian organization dedicated to the reenactment of the medieval/fantasy genres. Club interests are in a variety of areas, but most emphasis is placed on Amtgard's unique system of combat. We do not have a pay for play policy; anyone may join." That is a decent introduction to get things started.

Some may find the next unnecessary, but I feel that a brief history of the club draws more attention. For people unfamiliar with the grand history of Amtgard, here is a short narrative that I use, Amtgard began about 15 years ago (1983) in El Paso, Texas. At first it was a handful of young people responding to an advertisement for "Attila the Hun's Birthday Bash." These people met with a person named Peter LeGrue, who wanted to start a new medieval combat game. Soon after starting LeGrue left. This did not deter

Amtgard. That handful of people decided that they liked the ideas that had been planted while starting the game, and Amtgard stayed. Now, ten kingdoms and six rulebook revisions later, Amtgard is flourishing. There are chapters across the nation, and even one in Finland. The largest of the Amtgard groups are the kingdoms. These are in such areas as El Paso; Dallas; San Antonio/Austin; Houston; and Amarillo, Texas; in Las Cruces, New Mexico; Denver, Colorado; Portland, Oregon; and Nashua, New Hampshire.

Next is a description of Amtgard. This, too, can be very short. It should tell the audience about the different things to do in Amtgard. On the combat level it should include a description of battlegames, of the different classes to play, the types of weapons employed, and touch upon the general safety of the game. Regarding non-combat activities, telling about weapon making, garb making, heraldry, etc. seems to go over well. Remember, though, that demonstrations of combat and of non-combat will be coming up, so leave all descriptions brief. The filling in comes later.

Appropriately, combat is the next area to emphasize. This can become a problem area when doing demos. It is good to start out with a description of how hits are counted while somebody stands up and shows what happens when an arm is hit, or when a leg is hit, and even when a killing blow is placed. Then next thing to try would be a one on one, tournament style, fight. This allows the audience to more clearly see how the rules are applied. One note, though, it is often good to start with a single weapon so that most shots can be seen and nobody has to guess what hit where (especially if the M.C. decides to narrate the fight). Other styles of combat can develop from here and can include sword and shield fights, florentine fights, and even team fights. The problem I have found with demo combat is that the Amtgard participants take the combat too seriously. This should not be the case. Demos are meant to put on a show. Because of this combatants should be willing to roleplay, they should be looking to put on a show, and most importantly they should have really good death scenes. I have been to many demos where the fighters will square off, throw a couple of shots (while somebody manages to get hit), and then walk off the field. This doesn't let the audience know what just happened, and often it is an anti-climactic end to the fight. Anyone participating in a demo should be willing to throw themselves to the ground and die like a man (or woman). Screaming, painful deaths go over very well. Roleplaying limb shots in similar ways also works. I seem to enjoy demos where the combatants start quoting "Monty Python and the Quest for the Holy Grail" because it adds more to the spirit of Amtgard.

After several rounds of combat it is time to introduce another area of Amtgard. Magic. Please note that demonstrating Amtgard magic is not always appropriate and this part can be skipped. Cases where it is inappropriate are like grade school fairs that are teaching about the Middle Ages. In places like that magic demonstrations should not be done. Anyway, The M.C. should make it known that Amtgard magic is in no way linked to the occult. Magic spells are simply words or phrases repeated to get a "pretend" effect. A good example is to use a *Fireball* spell. Explain that it is used by wizards (and maybe explain the garb requirements) and that it turns its victim to ashes if the padded red ball hits them. Hold the red ball up in your left hand and dramatically shout "Fireball, fireball, fireball, fireball, fireball" and throw it at a target person. That person should have a fiery death. If you choose to do so, have a combat demonstration that employs magic. Perhaps have a wizard on one side and a fighter and healer on the other side. Ideally the fighter would charge the wizard, the wizard would kill the fighter (and spell usage is not important, *Curse* and *Lightning Bolt* both kill), the fighter would throw himself to the ground in death (even if he/she has to let a *Sphere of Annihilation* get past their defenses), the healer would step up and *Resurrect* the fighter, and the fighter would slay the wizard.

Next on the list of things to show is the arts and sciences. There are many people on and off the battlefield with extraordinary skills in the arts and sciences such as garbing, and so on. The arts consist of

heraldry, oratory, singing, and things of that nature. It is best to have samples of these things to display to the audience. Often, having banners, armor, weapons, artwork, histories, garb, and various accessories on display help create a much fuller image of Amtgard. The M.C. might want to describe the process (briefly) of making weapons or garb. Also, among the display items should be a copy of the Amtgard rulebook. People will find that Amtgard is much more colorful if the arts and sciences are included, that is, more colorful than the fighting alone. We are not barbarians (except some by class), why let mundania think we are? Sometimes short dancing lessons are neat to have. I have experienced a few demos where a couple of the young ladies of Amtgard proved their prowess this way, and everyone- mundane and Amtgard alike- had fun.

Finally, the M.C. should invite the audience to participate in simple combat (meaning melee only, and perhaps even single weapon) and to freely enjoy the displays. Usually children will be the first to snatch up the chance to fight and parents will both watch and check out the banners, weapons, and other items brought. Amtgarders participating in the demo should be ready to answer questions if needed and should be willing to lose to the people trying the weapons out. The reason for this is that interested people can get a feel for the weapons that way, and gain a sense of accomplishment and pride. Amtgarders don't always have to lose, but deliberately killing themselves from time to time helps draw newbies.

Another note on the roleplaying part of demos, it is always important to treat demos more like a stage (as in theater) rather than another day to prove yourself. An anecdote of this is one of the many demos I helped with at H.E. Charles Middle School in El Paso. The demo was at a fair for some sixth graders. Their teacher was hosting this fair (and feasts) to teach her students more about medieval times. They even had a boy and girl elected to be royalty. We needed to get our demo rolling, and nobody was taking charge yet, so I conspired with two others to get something started. What happened was I went over to the Queen, whispered to her that we were playing and that I was going to kidnap her. When I did that, my two co-conspirators went to the King and announced what happened. They handed the King a sword and the three came after me. Facing them all of, I snarled some insults, and the two guard-elects of the King came after me while the boy playing the King stood in the background sort of laughing and not knowing what to do. I killed off my co-conspirators and then challenged the King. Awkwardly he swung a few times, and then I impaled myself upon his sword. The King had won and saved the Queen. That went over very well and our M.C. finally got up and started the demo.

In many words I have tried to sum up a workable way to run a demo. This is far from complete but it gives everyone the needed guidelines to hosting a demo that is both positive and fun. Demos are the best ways to gaining new members of Amtgard. Without newbies Amtgard will surely die of old age.







In my many years of Amtgard I've seen several editions of the rulebook come and go, a constant evolution of fighting styles, and the rise and fall of several weapon systems (along with their associated construction elements). Publications and articles showcasing Amtgard knowhow have proliferated in the last ten years. Despite this "renaissance", few serious pieces have been undertaken to examine a critical "linchpin" of Amtgard battlegames, this being weapons, and more specifically, sword construction techniques. This is especially so considering the advent of the new class of flat foam (generally referred to as "flatblade") weapons. I've built over 300 weapons, accumulating some "small" store of knowledge and expertise in the process. However, owing to a divergence of fighting styles and requirements, along with the wide variance in materials available, no two individuals will turn out identical weapons. Rather than attempt to impart my (or any others') weaponsmithing style upon the Amtgard populace, this article is structured as an overview of the more interesting and useful sword building methods that I've encountered.

It is somewhat of a truism that a weapon is only as good as its materials. More important is to know what you want, and procure your materials with an eye towards battlefield application, cost, and the degree of maintenance you're willing to undertake after construction. Before you can choose materials, it's wise to understand the separate elements of an Amtgard sword. These are: the base (core), cylinder (blade), cap (point), cover, and hilt (with pommel). Two sub-categories that are not actual weapon parts but still require mention here are fixatives and accessories. I will examine each category with the emphasis on materials, with comments on the pros and cons of each material, and advice on construction where appropriate.

THE BASE

Popular vernacular refers to this as the core, a term that is slightly misleading. Two-foam weapons with a soft foam shell enclosing a tube of ensolite have an ensolite "core" and a pvc pipe (or accepted substitute) "base". It is a misnomer in the rulebook that refers to the pvc or fiberglass as a core. This has led to an alarming trend of hard packed foam weapons, these engineered by weaponmakers fearful that their weapons will not pass because a reeve can feel the "core". Safety is the important factor, not a technicality in the rules. I will discuss this later under "cylinders". Most swords do (and should) utilize pvc. I've seen other materials used as a base, ranging from an iron bar (alarming); to bamboo, aluminum pipes, and foam tubing (all fragile and useless); to rattan (marginal). In other words, it is strongly suggested that you stick with pvc pipe. The one exception here would be fiberglass, which though used in some of the round swords, is more applicable to the newer "flatblade" technologies. More on this later.

A. Pvc comes in all forms and sizes. What will suit your needs depends on how you will apply your weapon. The harder you hit, and/or the larger the weapon, the heavier your pvc will have to be. All pvc has a psi (pounds per square inch) rating, which is the pressure load it can safely handle. I've used psi ratings between 120 and 480 in my swords. Obviously there is a tradeoff, lighter pvc (lower ratings) makes for lighter, faster

CONSTRUCTION TECHNIQUES FOR AMTGARD SWORDS AND WEAPONS

by Grand Duke Aramithris of Meadowlake

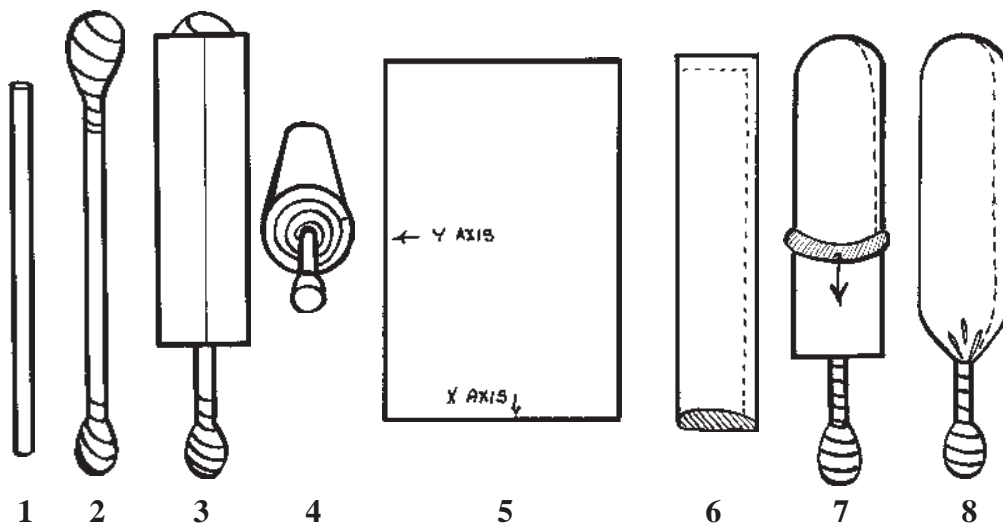


Figure 1 Sword Construction

1. PVC or fiberglass base.
2. Foam caps attached to tip and pomel.
3. Foam blade folded over base.
4. or foam blade rolled around base.
5. Neutral colored fabric for cover.
6. Sew fabric into tube shape.
7. Roll fabric over blade.
8. Secure cover to hilt.

swords- they also break more often. I've had the most luck (best tradeoff) utilizing pvc with psi ratings around 300. For most practical usage I don't suggest ratings below 240. The other important quality of pvc is diameter. For Amtgard swords this rating will usually range between 1/4 inch to one inch, with most swords either 3/8, 1/2, or 3/4 of an inch. I don't recommend 1/4 to 3/8 inch pvc, especially with the lower psi ratings- this tends to form a whip-like sword that is both immoral (it curves around parries upon impact), and illegal (the additional torque created by the "whip" imparts more force to the target). Longer swords tend to require a larger diameter. When looking at pvc, choose diameter ratings with comfortability of grip in mind. Pvc should have the psi and diameter stamped on the side, and commonly sells for \$1.00 to \$2.00 a foot (shop carefully). You can find it at hardware stores and warehouses or at any place that carries plumbing supplies. If you're willing to trade money for time, then the frequenting of construction sites and dumps can yield sizeable caches of Amtgard useable pvc.

B. Fiberglass is harder to come by, and I'm not talking about the kind used in tent poles or fishing rods. These materials are inferior for combat, and will shatter when any serious pressure load is exerted upon them. What you want is one of the fiberglasses of industrial or aeronautical quality. Good sources for such are hard to find, and unless you're willing to put in some major legwork, it is best to get your fiberglass from a fellow Amtgard weaponsmith (who probably got it from an outside supplier). Fiberglass is much less apt to break than pvc (although contrary to popular opinion, it has been known to happen). It is also lighter than pvc, so quicker, faster swords (such as the flatblades) are possible. The disadvantages: other than the difficulty in finding it there are three: 1) no glue or tape ever sticks to fiberglass as well as it does to pvc, 2) it's usually more expensive (even without the middlemen suppliers), often two to four times the price, and 3) it's so thin you have to build up the hilt (with leather, etc.) to grip it properly. Unless you are truly a student of either fighting or swordsmithing, then I would stay away from fiberglass- the constant maintenance resulting from higher impact

loads per square inch, decreased and reduced gripping surfaces, and warping blades can drive a sword owner to distraction. I myself own flat and round blade designs with examples of each utilizing both pvc and fiberglass, and I am of mixed emotions about my preference.

THE CYLINDER

Most differences in swords begin with the type and amount of foam used. The foam is usually wrapped around the base to form a cylinder and is then affixed to the base. I've seen other methods: stiff ensolite with no base, thick foam slabs pierced with a knife and forced over the pvc or fiberglass base, sectional pieces of foam fitted together like a sandwich and stuffed with small pieces of foam, etc. Two methods predominate for the more conventional "round" swords, wrapping and piercing. Foam itself comes in a bewildering array of sizes, colors, and shapes. I will describe the various "standard" foam types and how they are employed in construction, although flatblades will be dealt with separately:

A. White 1/2" to 2" foam- the "normal" foam portrayed in the rulebook. It has fallen into disfavor recently, unfortunate as this foam is soft, cheap, and plentiful. It is wrapped around the base and taped (or glued) there. Best results are usually achieved when it is wrapped to a 1" to 1 1/2" depth thickness around ensolite tubing affixed to the base. The 1/2" variety is more flexible in construction, but more apt to "slip" (the funnel effect) in combat. Prices vary widely, and it can be found in any foam and fabric store.

B. Ensolite tubing (also called pipe insulation)- not for sword construction on its own, it provides an excellent core for white foam (as mentioned above). It is also standard fare for padding the edges of shields, and javelin and axe construction. Color is usually a variation of grey. Look for it where you find pvc. Prices are comparable to those for pvc.

C. Blue (and white) ensolite- first made popular by Duke Ahira Bandylegs. For a while it was the current "in" foam with many swordmakers. Found in most hardware stores, it offers the advantages of being firm and easy with which to work. Maintenance is simple since it doesn't give much (thus it doesn't tear). On the other hand, its very firmness tends to create a dense and hard weapon on the edge of legality. Also, it is not suited for long weapons, tending to display top-heavy tendencies not found in other foams. It comes in 1/32" to 1/8" thick sheets. Again, the thicker sheets are recommended, loosely wrapped to a constant 1 1/2" to 2" of thickness around the base. Many swords with this foam do not pass weapon safety checks because their makers either wrap the foam too tightly, don't use enough foam, or put on too tight a cover. Each successive layer of foam should be taped together at the top of the sword to prevent the "funnel effect", this caused by the separate layers starting to separate and move upward on the sword. Letting this go will elongate your blade and eventually tear the foam off at the top. A quick (and almost absolute) rule for any foam: simplicity is best- use as few layers as possible, all firmly attached to the base. One warning, only tape this foam where you absolutely need to, ensolite and tape have a special affinity for each other (they won't let go).

D. Gray packing foam- my own first line round swords are made with this. Unfortunately it is often difficult to buy. It's usually found as packing for computers and television sets. Another problem is quality control. Firmness ranges from very soft (light gray- too much give causes it to tear easily) to very firm (dark gray- also tears easily because it has no give). You want to find something in the middle that's firm enough to protect your targets from the pvc base. Standard construction procedure is to punch a hole throughout its length, slide it over the base, and firmly affix it at its bottom end to the base. Care must be taken to punch a clean hole; any tears or fissures will expand during use in combat and rip the cylinder. By the same token, the hole must extend throughout the entire cylinder lest the pvc base slide and tear through the top of the cylinder (especially a problem when stabbing). Packing foam is most useful for slashing only swords.

E. Other foams- dimpled packing foam (usually yellow or blue) can be utilized much like white 1" foam- pack it lightly. It looks like egg cartoons. The thick foam used in furniture can be pierced as in the case of gray packing foam, though it will yield a heavier weapon. Not recommended are the clear bubble foams (they're light and soft- until all the air pockets burst), and foam rubber (too hard, too heavy).

F. Flat foams- almost all flatblades use the gray (or occasional green) packing type foams. Military style sleeping mats are often made out of these "flat foams". Stiffness varies, but the foam utilized has to be pretty tough to withstand the wear and tear (and in fact, the base and the fixatives, both tape and glue, often break before the foam tears). Unlike the round blades, flat swords require the packing foam to be cut in thin strips (double the blade length for the striking edge, equal to the length for the non-striking ends). The striking edge strips (anywhere from 1/8" to 3/8" deep) are glued with spray adhesive or hot glue (often folded over the top of the base to form a de facto "cap") to the base, with successive strips layered onto one another. Total depth for the blade on either side will range from 1/2" on the back side (very marginal) to 1 1/2" on both sides (top heavy). The flat of the blade, one of two pieces of foam cut into the shape of the blade, are then fitted in and affixed to both sides, usually having to be cut slightly smaller to thusly fit inside and support the outer framework of the striking edges. Note that the total width of the striking edge will range between 1 1/2" and 3", so the flat blade inserts each will have to have a depth equal to that minus the depth of the base (and halved for either side). Sound complex? Well, it is- and worse, complex things tend to break more often (there's more that can go wrong). Not wanting to discourage initiative, it's usually preferable to watch someone else make a flatblade before trying it yourself. The actual origins of flat foam weapons are old (in Amtgard terms), but in recent years, especially in the Burning Lands, weaponsmiths such as Duke Naes Weissdrake, Lord Nikos Weissdrake and Duke Talinor Darkwolf have advanced the techniques applied to new heights. Advantages to flat foam weapons include a smaller striking edge (good for slot shots, although for parries this works as a deficit), and they are usually harder. Aside from the already mentioned maintenance situation, their chief disadvantage is the flat of the blade, which due to safety considerations is never counted as a valid shot when it hits. Thus, these blades require more control in combat.

CAPS

All swords require a cap. Even weapons that are not stabbing legal require a separate foam cover over the pvc or fiberglass tip. As per the rulebook, a cap should start with taping over the pvc edge with a section of stiff foam. I recommend 1/8" white or blue ensolite. Tape it down well. Great care should be taken to ensure that this cap will not slip or tear. Further modifications to the cap generally take one of six forms:

A. Bulb- much like the rulebook example, strips of soft white foam are taped over the ensolite to provide a safe stabbing point. The end result looks much like an Amtgard arrow. The cylinder rises flush with the bulb.

B. Foldover- first developed by Lord Hellspawn Soulcrusher and utilized with 1" white foam weapons. The white foam is extended a couple of inches over the cap, folded over, then taped in a radial pattern (much like an iris). This makes a light, safe stabbing point, although the large amount of tape used tends to induce tearing.

C. Stuffed- primarily for use with packing foam. A piece of soft foam is placed in the 2" or so of free space between the end of the pvc/fiberglass base and the top of the packing foam, and is then taped over. Such points are marginal at best for stabbing purposes.

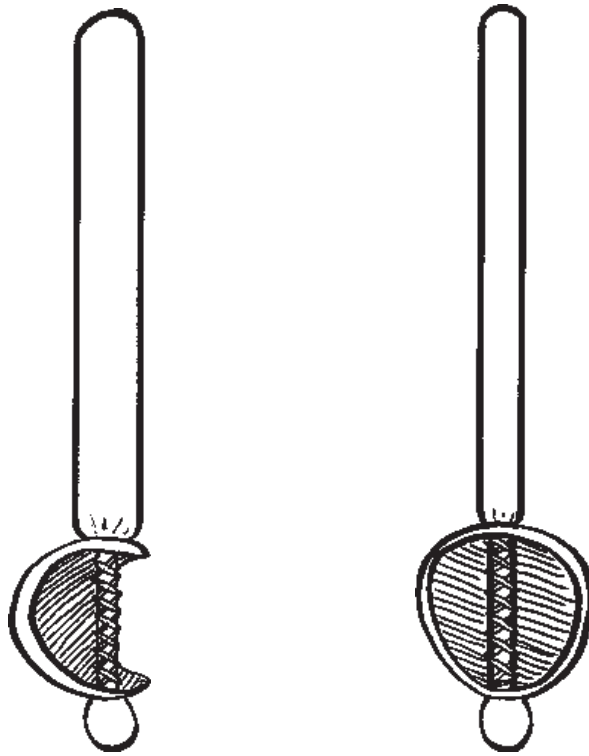


Figure 2 Flat Blade with Basket Hilt Guard

D. Stiff top- for use with blue ensolite swords. The blue ensolite is extended over the base, with an extended cap taped to the edge of the base. The ensolite cylinder supports it and holds it in place. Again, this yields a marginal stabbing point.

E. Hollow point- stiffer foams can actually extend 1" to 2" above the cap, providing a cushion of air between the cap and the target. In this case care should be taken to reinforce the cap with more foam. The end result is a light tip, although a danger exists for ripping the top off in combat, especially if you tend to hit with the top 1/4 of your sword.

F. Flatblade caps- generally use a foldover method with the striking edges, although I have also seen white foam stuffed and glued under a stiff top (found in the older designs).

COVER

At one time this entailed surrounding the entire cylinder with duct tape. Clearly, times have changed. It is not desirable to have weapons that are heavy and hard. Also, tape doesn't allow the foam to give, thusly inducing tearing wherever it is affixed. Modern swords need light, yet durable covers. Colored socks are not a bad bet. They instantly conform to the desired shape, don't tear easily, and are easy to mend. Image conscious weapon builders prefer cloth covers. Dark materials are popular, preferably something stretchy that can give a little in the strain of combat. Most cloth covers are made of non-stretchable materials such as broadcloth that either tear or gradually fray away, leaving little or no hope for repair. I would recommend one of the synthetic/cotton blends that has a little give. Another common mistake with cloth covers is "the sew a tube and pull it over the cylinder approach". This leaves the end of your sword looking like Micky Mouse on a stick, with those cute little ears poking out. A little more effort to sew in a round, flat "bottom or top" yields a more professional appearance and a longer lifespan. A drawstring on the bottom of the cover can serve to

draw the cover tight over the base. A more common alternative is to tape the cover down over the length of the hilt. I don't suggest this if you intend on removing your cover for any reason whatsoever (maintenance, repair, etc.). I tend to tightly tie my covers down at the juncture of the hilt and end cylinder, bringing up the trailing edge to be hand sewn flush with the rest of the cover.

HILT (WITH POMMEL)

Pommels (at the back end of a sword) follow the same general rules as for caps. They have to be big enough around to render them incapable of entering an eye socket (a good rule, by the way, for any potential striking portion of anything brought onto the field). Many individuals make their weapons' pommels too small. Sword cover techniques apply to pommels, though the use of tape still predominates. The hilt is obviously that part of the sword between the cylinder and the pommel. Grip is dependent on base diameter and weapon function. A two-hander might utilize a 12" hilt to facilitate power parries and control. A short infighting sword could have a hilt with a pommel as short as 4" so as not to interfere with the elbow and wrist action applied in the various derivations of the scorpion and rap-style attacks. An old trick used by Duke Nashomi the Lonely Wolf in the early 1980's was to build swords with very slender and long hilts that could be released to slide out and then be caught at the pommel, thusly surprising an opponent with a sword suddenly 12" to 18" longer. Luckily this tactic died out, eliminating a class of weapons with an unsafe ratio of hilt to cylinder (blade) length. There are no hard and fast rules for this. Needless to say no weapon should be built or utilized in such a way that there is danger of exposed pvc or fiberglass forcefully striking a target. Shorter hilts will minimize those painful shots to your knuckles by encouraging you to parry more with the blade length. An interesting innovation in recent times has been to set basket (or bell) hilts immovable and flush with the blade end, thusly eliminating the pommel altogether.

FIXATIVES

Affixing foam to foam and to pvc/fiberglass generally involves the use of two broad categories, glues and tapes. Glues include contact cements and spray adhesives. Such products produce semi-permanent effects not conducive to maintenance (pvc breaks, foam tears), and are not highly recommended unless of course you are building: 1) flatblades, which require spray adhesive, 2) anything utilizing fiberglass, in which case spray adhesive is slightly preferable to tape. Rather than examine particular types of tape, I will briefly list what I consider to be the best options for each area of sword construction:

A. Affixing the cylinder to the base- to avoid the "funnel effect" when using multiple layers of foam, duct tape should be run vertically down the length of the base, half taped to the pvc or fiberglass, half to the foam. This adds more weight, but you can't afford to let that foam slip. Ensolite cores, when utilized, and 1" or great diameter foam, should be taped to the base only at the juncture of the cylinder and hilt. Several layers of tape cross-strapped at 45 degree angles to the hilt will prevent your cylinder from becoming a projectile in midswing. Such a taping approach (only at the bottom) allows more give to the sword at its upper striking edges, and thus reduces the chances of tearing or ripping. Use strips of duct tape or strapping tape. Never use electrical tape for this purpose. It stretches, allowing the cylinder to creep up and ultimately off the base.

B. Affixing foam to foam and/or holding a rolled cylinder of foam together- as stated before, the less tape adhering to foam, the less chance of tearing. Electrical tape is good for this- it stretches with little chance of tearing, and can be carefully removed from the foam at need. An interesting variation is to use plastic tape, which will not stick to foam at all (it only adheres to itself). The problem here is that aging plastic tape will just fall off- you take your chances. I've had good luck with it. If you are careful, you can split electrical tape down the middle with a razor blade to provide strips with less surface area in contact with the foam. If you must use duct tape, use the vinyl or cloth varieties, and split it into thinner strips before application.

C. Flat foam adhesion- this was covered in detail in the flat foam category under “the cylinder”. Affixing here requires spray adhesive, though I’ve seen examples using a hot glue gun. Many flat foam weapons are still taped down at the bottom of the blade where it meets the base. Several designs also use strapping tape (or even clear plastic tape) to help reinforce the edges of the fitted foam pieces of the blade itself. When working on flat blades it is generally wise to let the spray adhesive dry for between 30 seconds to 5 minutes, then carefully fitting the foam pieces together when the glue is “tacky”. Though it is not common practice, I have found that then wrapping rubberbands around the glued blade, and leaving them there overnight helps the glue dry with all the pieces of the sword firmly stuck to each other. A word of warning- spray adhesives are much more susceptible to cold than most tapes, and will lose their adhesive qualities in cooler temperatures.

D. Other affixing methods- some individuals elect to cover a “floating” cylinder and then affix the cylinder to the base hilt by taping the cover to the pvc base. It saves wear by negating tape tearing of the foam. However, inevitably the cylinder and cover will begin creeping up the base. This method is useless with layered foams. Nashomi applied a similar technique, using oversized bulb caps to keep his free-floating cylinders from sliding off his sword covers, these lightly taped to the hilt. A useful addition to any soft foam or pierced construction sword is to run a nylon over the cylinder, then tape it to the hilt. This reinforces the cylinder, providing extra support.

ACCESSORIES

In general, these are additions to the hilt. Strips of leather glued or taped to the hilt look nice, provide a slip-free grip, and can be used to build up small diameter pvc or fiberglass to a more easily wielded size. Lanyards are best made by looping cord against the pommel. When not around a wrist, this cord can be used to tie a sword to a belt or baldric. Bells are an interesting variation. Take a circular or elliptical piece of stiff foam or thick leather and cut holes the diameter of your pvc near either end. Fit both ends over your hilt before adding the pommel, and bingo, you have a bell. For a small price in wrist flexibility, you have added protection for your aching knuckles, and less chance of drawing your fingernails across your opponents’ aching faces. More sophisticated treatments include the previously mentioned bell merged with pommel design and multi-layered leather, foam and carpet bells that rotate with the hand. Bell guards (often referred to as “basket hilts”) have grown more popular in recent years with the advance of 1) harder weapons with smaller striking edges (flatblades being the notable, but not the only examples), and 2) a style of fighting, increasingly popular with the up and coming fighters, which mixes a right lead with frequent parries using the sword arm. Crossguards have gone out of vogue, and good riddance. They’re hard to make, harder to make safe, and interfere with your sword play, all the while offering little in defensive benefits and often actually weakening the sword integrity at where they are affixed.

UNUSUAL TECHNIQUES

Apart from the more successful standard construction methods, there have been a myriad of techniques employed, almost as many as there have been swordsmiths. While not standard practice, some of the more interesting of these methods are listed below:

A. Mace edge- a marginal cylinder is placed over the base. Four strips of 1/8" to 1/4" depth foam, each about 1" wide, are taped to the length of the cylinder, providing 4 built up striking edges. A loose cover is then fitted over the cylinder. This technique provides 4 safer striking edges while cutting down on weight.

B. Axe blade- seen in many former designs pioneered by Grand Duke M’Deth of Benden. The foam, usually a stiff ensolite, is stacked in layers on one (or two) side(s) of the pvc base. Unlike a mace, it is extended down the entire blade length in a uniform thickness. A specially sewn cover is required. Such weapons are

especially thin, ideally suited to slot shots, which makes them similar to the flatblades. They are also inappropriate to most wrist torque blows, as they tend to rotate and strike flat with the unpadded portion. This is the predecessor to the flatblade style of sword construction, and is still effective with halberds, naginatas, and similar slashing polearms.

C. Scimitar- I've seen smiths heat the pvc then bend it to produce a curve. This weakens the pvc's structural integrity and produces an unwieldy weapon. More successful is the building of a curved edge by taping successive layers of packing foam or ensolite tubing. Such weapons look nice, but are hard to the degree of being illegal. An interesting variation I've just seen was a sword that Talinor built where he used spray adhesive, small pieces of foam and a specially sewn cover to attach serrated blade edges to the back edge of a sword.

D. Convex folding- this works best with the stiffer packing foams. Two equal sized pieces of foam, each 2" to 3" thick, are placed over the base and pushed together until their edges touch. They are then tightly taped together and affixed at the hilt to the base. An ensolite tubing core may be required. Both a nylon stocking and a tight cover are utilized to help hold the 2 taped halves together.

E. Rolled flat blade- a sort of cross with the round weapon design. A thin sheet of gray foam is wrapped around a thin base and glued in place, yielding a sword that is both more durable, and unfortunately, harder than a standard flatblade design.

F. Slitted flat form- is almost the opposite of the rolled flatblade, with the same advantages and none of the disadvantages. It is more apt to tear as 2 large pieces of foam of at least 2" depth must be utilized. A thin slice is cut down the inside of both pieces and spray adhesive is sprayed over both surfaces (especially in the slits). A small diameter base (preferably fiberglass) is inserted in the slits and the 2 pieces of foam are fitted together, tape being run around the circumference to help hold them together. While they are soft and durable, such swords are ugly as sin.

FUNNOODLES (THE "NEW" TECHNOLOGY)

This technology was developed initially by Arch Duke Wolfram Bloodletter of the Kingdom of the Iron Mountains. Start with a fiberglass base and a funnoodle (a children's foam swimming pool toy. You can find them in department stores and wherever toys are sold). Cut the funnoodle into six to ten inch lengths, then pierce them through their lengths (a standard twelve inch screwdriver works well). Slide the separate pieces onto the fiberglass to form your blade. Leave a cap with about three inches of nonpierced funnoddle at the top of the blade. Tape all the funnoddle sections together around their circumference with either duct or packing tape, and firmly tape the bottom section to the fiberglass base (warning- do not use electrical tape, it slips off of fiberglass. And definitely do not use tent poles in place of fiberglass- they tend to both whip and shatter in combat.). Add guards, cover, and pommels as desired- and you have a very light, easy to repair sword that uses no glue and very little tape. A variation I use is to create funnoodle flatblades by shaving a quarter inch off each non-striking edge (or you can use some of the new square or hexagonal funnoodles). Be careful not to shave off too much lest you expose the base and thus ruin the weapon. One big disadvantage to these weapons is their fragile caps. Pushing fiberglass through a funnoodle tends to tear and rip the inside, thusly weakening the structural integrity. My advice is to heavily tape the cap both horizontally and vertically and to have a spare set of caps in stock for quick replacements.

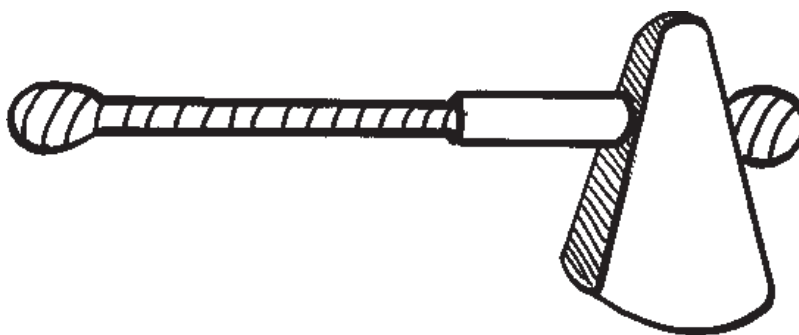


Figure 3 Battle Axe

TYPES

Constructing any weapon requires tradeoffs. Such factors as weight and durability, safety, maintenance requirements, and flexibility and application in combat will enter into the formula. Below are what I perceive to be the typical Amtgard subtypes. Most swords will not solely fall into any one category.

A. Two hander- typically with a blade length of 3 to 4 feet or more. They border the definition of “red” weapons, being both heavy and durable. Many have stabbing points. Most successful versions are built with the thicker white foams. Historical examples would include claymores and bastard swords. Flatblades, with their complex construction, tend to become both top heavy and increasingly fragile with this type of weapon.

B. Long slashing- shorter, thinner, and lighter than the two hander. Both types are seen in single sword tournaments. These are often made of blue ensolite, and for this reason seldom have legal stabbing points. Medieval broadswords and Celtic leafswords fall into this category. Flatblade katanas have tended to recently dominate this category.

C. Short slashing- total weapon length is usually less than 3 feet. The weapon can be single edged, with most blows thrown at an opponent’s extremities. An out-of-line, looping style of attack is preferred. These are among the lightest of Amtgard weapons, and include scimitars and short fencing blades.

D. Short hacking- Infighting weapons, usually wider than their slashing counterparts to provide a more viable parrying surface. Blows include an assortment of in-line (between the opponent’s shoulders) chops and stabbing motions. The Roman gladius and the Aztec obsidian-edged warclubs were short hacking weapons. Both classes of short weapons are the ideal place for the application of flatblade technology.

MAINTENANCE

Building your own mystical “sword of omens” is a fruitless endeavor if you don’t take care of the equipment (even vorpal blades will rust). Most maintenance for Amtgard weapons is preventive and largely a matter of common sense. You don’t expose your weapons to heat, thusly causing the tape to peel off (I’m appalled at how many Amtgardians store their equipment in the trunks of their cars). The other weather extreme to avoid is water. Wet foam will sag and tear. If you must fight in the rain, either scotchguard your swords or cover them in plastic wrap. And of course, I’ve already mentioned the effect of cold on spray adhesive. Unless you plan on being responsible for the depredations of others, I don’t advise loaning out your weapons. Sell them, or make them on commission, then explain the weapon’s idiosyncrasies and construction techniques to the new owner. Better yet, teach them how to make their own. If you insist on using a flatblade,

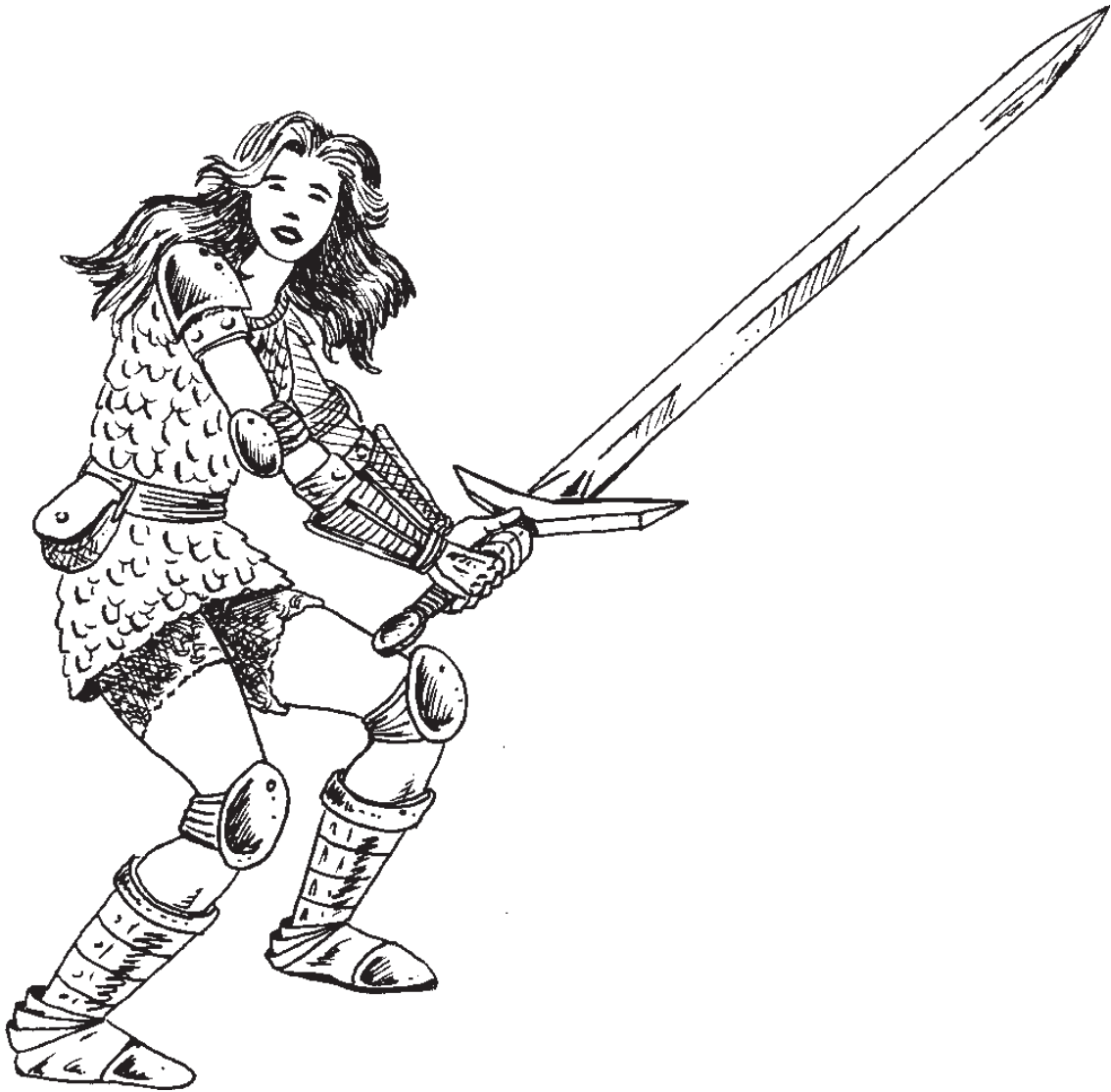
be sure to check the upper third of the sword for wobbling or rotation, both of which mean the spray adhesive has come loose. Anyone purchasing weapons from others should also spend a few bucks extra for a service warranty (especially if the weapon in question is a flatblade- these weapons, when broken, have the potential to be dangerous on the field). Also note that foam tends to break down as it ages. Taped foam has a significantly shortened lifespan. When using your round swords, feel the cylinder through the cover, especially at the cap. Fissures indicate tearing. By grasping the cylinder at the hilt and lightly twisting, you can tell if the sword is working loose. Continuing to use a sword showing any signs of wear, be it tearing, looseness, or whatever, is an open invitation to disaster. You may or may not injure someone, but you will surely speed your weapon to its demise. Prepared fighters always have a second sword on hand. Every couple of months I subject my weapons to a “yard period”, totally stripping them down, and replacing or repairing any aging or damaged parts.



Figure 4 Round Blade Two-Handed Sword

CONCLUSIONS

There has always been some resistance and resentment engendered in some quarters toward those individuals, reeves and otherwise, who strive to keep the Amtgard environment a safe place. Some folks think that you are “less of a man” if you don’t stifle your complaints at the harsh treatment they deal out with their marginal weapons. I would add that these “he-men” seldom provide their own equipment, and will take what they can from Amtgard while contributing little or nothing. Equally as bad is the politics sometimes seen when determining the status of a weapon’s safety. Friends and enemies really do have nothing to do with safety and legality. Amtgard is, among other things, a game. We owe it to ourselves to keep things as fair and fun as possible. I question the motives of an individual who won’t spend a few bucks and a few hours of his time to construct a safe and viable weapon. I take a sense of pride in my work- I see it as an extension of my persona on the battlefield. What we make of ourselves in Amtgard, our feelings of personal worth, can readily be seen in the arms, armor, and garb that we bear onto the field. Our status as citizens in our self-made society, whether first, second, or third class, is a matter of personal choice. The weapons we wield, as much as the way we wield them, is one of the fundamental Amtgard expressions of self identity.







(Editor's Note: This is excerpted from Gwynne's upcoming Amtgard Cookbook & Etc.)

Feasts, whether held in a hall or at an outdoor event, are difficult, nerve wracking, and an incredible amount of hard work. If well done however, they can provide the movers and doers with an incredible sense of accomplishment. What follows is not so much a set of iron clad rules but rather guidelines which can be adapted and adopted to the particular parameters of your feast.

FOR ANY FEAST

Customarily, the outgoing Crown is responsible for the feast- specifically the outgoing Consort. It is the Consort's duty, if not autocrating the feast personally, to select (read: impress, as in chain gang) the feast autocrat and to work closely with him or her.

The feast autocrat should have, if not prior experience, a whole lot of enthusiasm and good sense as well as a strong support group. Don't be shy in recruiting a crew to help with the feast. Choose dependable people and ask them (blackmailing, bludgeoning and browbeating are acceptable approaches as are cajoling, cunning and kidnapping)-volunteers are welcome but unfortunately seldom.

Other important considerations:

1. Advertise the feast both by distributing fliers and by word of mouth. All of the feast crew should be knowledgeable regarding the when, where, what time and etc. of the event. The autocrat should be sure his or her phone number is made known to both the hosting kingdom's populace as well as to the monarchy and prime minister of other kingdoms*. Be sure and include exact date, times, location and any site restrictions (an example would be not being able to bring in alcoholic beverages).

*This is an appropriate job for the outgoing Consort and Monarch.

2. Collect as much ticket money in advance as possible. Starting a month prior to the feast is not too soon and two months is even better- this will also give you a pretty good idea of the probable attendance and some 'seed money'. The kingdom's prime minister is a good choice for this function as is a reliable member* of the autocrat's crew. Always use a receipt book for those who pay ahead of time! But only have one receipt book- more than one will produce more confusion than anyone wants to deal with (an alphabetical list of those who have paid is also a handy thing to have at the door the night of the event). Advertise a reduced feast price for those who pay in advance, i.e., if the advance price ticket is \$5.00 then the price at the door should be \$7.00.

*The word 'reliable' can be defined as someone who regularly attends Amtgard and who can be trusted to collect and safeguard the money and issue receipts.

3. Have two people designated to take ticket money at the door and provide them with the receipt book (and the alphabetical list mentioned above), just to keep everyone honorable, as well as a table and a couple of chairs. Be sure you have adequate funds on

hand to make change for those who pay in cash. Do some research on how many people can be expected to attend and set a reasonable limit on the number of attendees. When the limit has been reached, close the door to the feast hall. It is unfair to those who pre-pay for you to not have enough food to go around. Tell people of any attendance limit well before of the feast- it will encourage people to pay in advance.

4. The autocrat can ask the monarch and the prime minister for advance money if necessary and then repay the treasury out of the feast proceeds. **All receipts for feast expenditures must be kept and then submitted to the monarchy/prime minister after the feast regardless of receiving any advance money from the club's treasury or not.**

5. After you have determined your feast budget, get the most for your money when choosing the feast hall. Size of the hall, kitchen and seating facilities, the possibility of advance feast set-up times and post feast clean-up times, the possibility of a sound system, lighting, heating, can you hang banners and etc., hours of occupancy permitted, required security arrangements if any, if liquor can be brought to and consumed on the premises, and etc., etc. Balance what you are getting, and not getting, for your money. Insufficient or inadequate facilities can be compensated for in some degree if the price is right, i.e. not enough refrigerator space-bring some coolers.

Possible sources of feast halls are fraternal and service organizations, commercial feast halls, churches, grange and union halls, schools, apartment complex party rooms or park shelters. Feasts have been successfully held in private homes and/or back yards but there is always the consideration of property damage for the host to consider.

INDOOR FEASTS

First of all, get an estimate of the probable attendance. If an indoor feast, reserve a hall of adequate size well in advance of the event.

Secondly, select a experienced autocrat who can recruit a team of dependable people and assign to them their specific duties, i.e., cooks, helpers, servers, and maitre de*.

Thirdly, plan a menu that is tasty and, above all, easy to prepare and serve and that is well within your predetermined budget. If you are charging for the feast, remember that the feast tickets should at least reimburse the costs of the food and hiring the hall. If you're really organized and shop wisely for both the hall and food, you'll make a little over and be able to enrich your group's bank account.

The following is one example of successfully hosting a 50 person feast:

Determine your menu and your per-serving cost in order to establish a budget. Purchase all foods as cheaply as possible. Recruit at least 1 cook and 1 helper for every 25 people. Have 1 server per table (if it's a sit-down feast) and 1 maitre de to oversee the entire operation- the maitre de is in charge of the tactical part of the feast just as the cook(s) is in charge of the kitchen. The autocrat is the strategist and should also utilize him/herself as a 'floater' ready to solve problems and/or fill in as necessary.

Servers should devote their attention solely to 'their' table. They need to get the food to the table quickly, replace empty serving dishes with full as required, ensure that fresh breads, fruits and etc. are replenished, and remove any disposable detritus both as it appears and after the feast is completed.

Cooks and their helpers need to coordinate the heating/cooking of dishes, get the hot foods to the servers immediately, clean up continuously as they go and not hesitate to yell for help to the autocrat if required. (Trust me, help is inevitably needed, i.e., the oven doesn't work, the main dish isn't here, we don't have any serving spoons/dishes, killer goats have eaten all the salad, the cook is having labor pains and etc.)

***The maitre de** coordinates the servers, spots and solves problems before they reach the critical stage, (we need more bread and butter at that table, the monarch's table doesn't have enough of the main dish- kindly get another platter from the cook, the rowdies at the middle table are finished eating already and getting restless- shove some dessert in front of them, court will be starting in 30 minutes; let's get the tables cleaned and etc.) and coordinates between the cook(s) and the servers and well as helping out if she/he can without taking attention from the main job which is feast hall coordination.

The autocrat is responsible for the entire feast and all feast procedure! All problems before, during and at the feast should be solved by autocrat if the loyal staff can't solve them on their own (an excellent reason for recruiting talented people, incidently). The autocrat's motto is be prepared for almost anything and you won't be disappointed.

HELPFUL HINTS:

Put 2 platters/bowls on each table of the main dish and 3 to four containers of the side dishes. Be sure to provide adequate serving utensils. Serving dishes, cookware, platters and utensils can be borrowed if they are marked with the owner's name. **NOTE:** You can improvise somewhat for serving dishes and platters. Those medium to large styrofoam trays from the meat department of your local grocery store, if washed and covered with foil, make decent and disposable platters- ask people ahead of time to save them for you. You may have to nest two or more for serving heavy meat dishes. Large, recycled butter tubs can also be covered with foil or, better yet, concealed in a basket of appropriate size and used to serve side dishes of vegetables, etc.

Serve breads and cheeses uncut and provide a knife so people can serve themselves. There is nothing more disgusting or unappetizing than dry bread or stale and/or slimy cheese. Uncut, these foods will tend to keep their freshness and appeal. Besides big rounds of cheese and hot loaves of bread or rolls (served cloth covered and in a basket by the way) look very 'period' and add to the over all ambiance of the feast. Breads can be served in baskets and cheese and bread can be served on cutting boards.

If the main dish is a protein, and it probably will be, figure about 1/2 pound of light meats such as turkey, seafood, fish, pork or chicken per serving- a little less than that for red meats.

Have many small bowls/plates of appetizers, butters, jams, jellies, accent dishes, etc. on the tables to go along with the breads and cheeses and later with the main dish (keeps the 'rabble' busy while you're busting your butt to get the major stuff cooked and served).

Plan the menu to take advantage of dishes that can be precooked then warmed up at the feast and/or pre-assembled meals that merely need to be uncovered and served.

Servers, in addition to serving, should alternate serving functions with detritus removal patrols of each table. The motto for both cooks, helpers and servers should be "clean up as you go"- don't save it all for one exhausting (and very inefficient) procedure at the end of the feast. **NOTE:** With the possible exception of a buffet-type feast, do not allow the feast crowd to dispose of their own paper plates and etc. All this does is create a lot of traffic jams around the tables which interferes with the servers. Do have discreetly placed but readily available garbage containers.

Decorate the hall- get some ambiance working for the feast. Be careful on the use of open flames. Encourage individuals, companies and households to bring banners for the walls and to 'dress' their tables.

Appropriate mood music is also a good idea. Live entertainment is excellent if it's excellent. Remember the whole idea of a feast is to celebrate and enjoy, not to have one's ears and/or vision assaulted and offended.

All feast personnel, including the autocrat and the maitre de, should pitch in and make sure the feast hall is pretty well cleaned up within 30 minutes or less from when the monarch's table is finished with the last course- the kitchen clean up can wait a bit. The obvious reasons for this are, to wit: You don't want to be wiping off tables or removing used food while court is going on and the feast personnel will need a couple of minutes to spruce up a bit, slip into a clean tabard, etc. because the outgoing court's first item of business should be to call everyone who has worked on the feast forward for recognition and sincere thanks for the excellent meal and service. If the monarch and consort do not do this, vote the insensitive, unappreciative, ill-bred, ignorant slobs out of office (if you haven't done so already)!

THINGS YOU DO AND DON'T DO AT A FEAST

- 1.** **Do** give out awards by the outgoing monarchy. **Don't** allow visiting monarchs to give out awards to peoples in their kingdoms. Hey, this is your kingdom's court- if the visitors want to present awards let them do it at their own courts. The only possible exception I can think of is when a visiting monarch wants to make a very short comment on an exceptional achievement by someone. A good example of this is when His Majesty Wolfram Bloodletter gave a brief announcement at the Clan 14 court of Sir Kane's contributions and victory at the Interkingdom Olympiad.
- 2.** **Do** introduce all visiting dignitaries. **Don't** personally introduce every single out-kingdom visitor- a general introduction is fine, i.e., "and we welcome the visitors from pick-a-kingdom, barony, etc." (Herald, it is part of your duties to ferret out this information and provide it to your monarch prior to court.)
- 3.** **Do** have a competent herald to assist with scheduling the court. The herald should interview all dignitaries and write down and announce the particular 'business before the court' at the appropriate time. **Don't** permit every person who wants to thank their pet dog for whatever to take up the court's time and bore the populace to death. You wouldn't believe some of the things people want to drone on and on about in front of a captive audience- or maybe you would. The herald must be prepared to be an absolute, gold plated, revolving s.o.b. on this subject. Get specifics, set time limits, enforce time limits, O' herald. Find out exactly what the 'business' is and if it's inappropriate disallow it - nicely if at all possible. I recently heard of an Althing held at a crown feast- honest! I still have trouble believing that one. **When in doubt, consult with the monarchy.**
- 4.** Related to item 3 above: **Don't** allow public protests, bitch sessions, impassioned pleas for truth, justice and the Amtgardian way to be presented at court- not only inappropriate but borrrring! Refer these people to the proper venue for their grievance.
- 5.** **Don't**, when presenting awards, end up calling one person up 15 times for 15 awards. **Do** group the awards per person.
- 6.** **Do** make sure to poll club officers, guild masters and reeves prior to the event for suggestions as to who has achieved award potential. **Don't** give out awards wholesale for minor or insignificant achievement- you cheapen not only the award but, more importantly, anyone who has ever received the award in the past. Awards are for exemplary service. (I'm sorry, folks, being in charge of carrot chopping at a feast just does not rate a rose.) And for the god's sake, except for deliberate humor, **don't** create mini-awards- the so-called 'petal' is laughable. This route leads to all sorts of silly things, i.e., how about a 'scale' so you can work your way up to a real dragon? I can't imagine how many 'petals' to a rose, much less the number of 'scales' in a dragon!

7. **Do** keep both outgoing and incoming courts as short as possible. Considering the awards-given situation for the outgoing people, that portion of the court is always going to be longer than the incoming court. A reasonable time limit would be 1 hour for the outgoing and 1/2 hour for the incoming. **Don't** allow more than 1 and 1/2 to 2 hours for the entire court procedure. (I have recently attended some 3 and 4 hour courts. I'd rather party and, except for the bombastic few who love to listen to the sound of their own voices, so would everyone else!) It is the outgoing Monarch's job to control time limits.

OUTDOOR FEASTS AND BUFFET-STYLE FEASTS

Buffet feasts are handled much the same as the sit-down variety except the servers get to either stand behind a table and serve or simply keep an eye on the food and replenish from the kitchen as necessary. Servers will still be required to do 'garbage patrol' periodically at the tables but large garbage containers should be provided so that most of the detritus will be disposed of by the feasters themselves.

Outdoor feasts are usually buffet style and handled much the same as the indoor version but beware, the exigencies of outdoor cooking are added to the already heavy responsibilities of the cooks- make sure you have adequate facilities for the cooks, i.e., stoves and fuel therefore, tables on which to prepare the food, utensils, adequate cooler space, plenty of water, dish washing facilities, provisions for the disposal of garbage and etc., etc., etc. In other words everything you would take for granted in a 'civilized' indoor setting will need to be provided. It is also strongly suggested that the nearest source of civilized amenities, i.e., the closest grocery or convenience store, be identified as to location and hours of operation. One trusty soul should be designated to buy and fetch if needed. The food logistics alone of an outdoor or event feast can be formidable. One-dish recipes are to be strongly recommended, especially those that can be prepared from dried ingredients or can be made up ahead of time, frozen and transported to the feast site to be reheated. And if the one-dish approach strikes you as somewhat less than elegant, be advised that even the most simple of foods, if well cooked and served hot, taste like food for the gods in an outdoor setting. **NOTE:** Hosting the outdoor feast always requires more personnel so plan accordingly.

POT LUCK FEAST - THE EASIEST FEAST OF ALL

For this type of feast the outgoing court usually provides the main meat dish. All side dishes, desserts are as a pot luck. This feast is best served as a buffet. It is essential that the autocrat control the types of side dishes by signing up people, or companies, or households for a specific dish otherwise you can, and probably will, end up with 15 desserts, 3 identical salads and no hot dishes at all. The sign up sheet for a 50 person feast should be something like the following:

Mid-Reign at the VFW hall, 142 W. Elm - Nov. 19th at 8:00 p.m.

The Crown is providing two 25 pound baked hams for the main course. The following dishes are needed:

HOT SIDE DISHES TO SERVE 10 TO 20 PEOPLE:

- | | | |
|----|----------------------|----------|
| 1. | Green beans | 1. _____ |
| 2. | Corn | 2. _____ |
| 3. | A potato dish | 3. _____ |
| 4. | A pasta or rice dish | 4. _____ |
| 5. | Green peas | 5. _____ |

Do the same for 1) Cold side dishes, 2) Breads, rolls, butter, 3) Aperitifs, 4) Desserts making sure that all the foods on the list go pretty well with baked ham.

Now obviously, you can substitute and adjust to a great degree. If Lady Bunweed wants to bring a 50 person serving of her delicious Cherries Flambe by all means let her do so. But if, after graciously accepting Lady Bunweed's generous offer, you let another volunteer bring 500 chocolate brownies, your feast is going to be seriously overstocked with desserts. The autocrat must maintain the balance of the menu. If you find you are running short on hot side dishes, drop your pride and ask someone to bring a hot side dish. If nothing else ask people to bring canned or frozen foods that the cook can heat up, spice up and 'pretty up' at the feast. (And, yes, you do need at least one head cook at a buffet.)

As an incentive for people to bring dishes to a pot luck feast, you might try running a contest for best hot dish, best dessert and etc. It's easiest if you let the Crown table judge this rather than a total vote of all feasters. Prizes are up to the Crown but could be good bottles of wine or some nice feast gear.

THE BANE OF ALL FEASTS- THE RICE AND THE VEGETABLES

How many feasts have you been to where the rice was inedible and the veggies disgusting? I'm not sure there is a cure for the 'rotten rice' syndrome, with the exception of a rice dressing, but even canned vegetables can be transformed into something other than 'eat them; they're good for you.' You are, after all, not at the blasted feast to eat something that is 'good for you', you're there to pig out! Try some of the following suggestions:

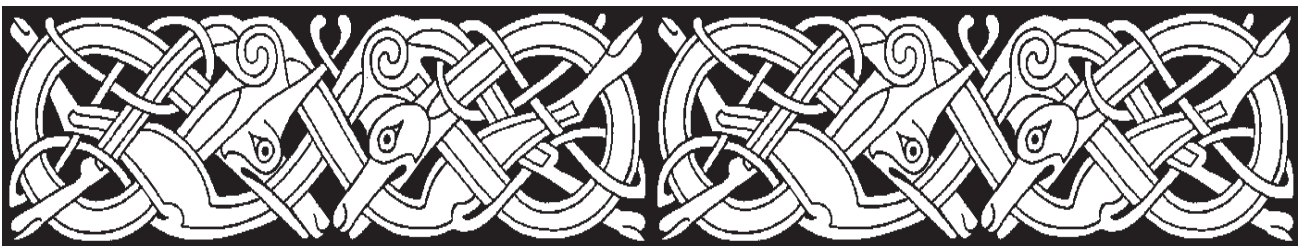
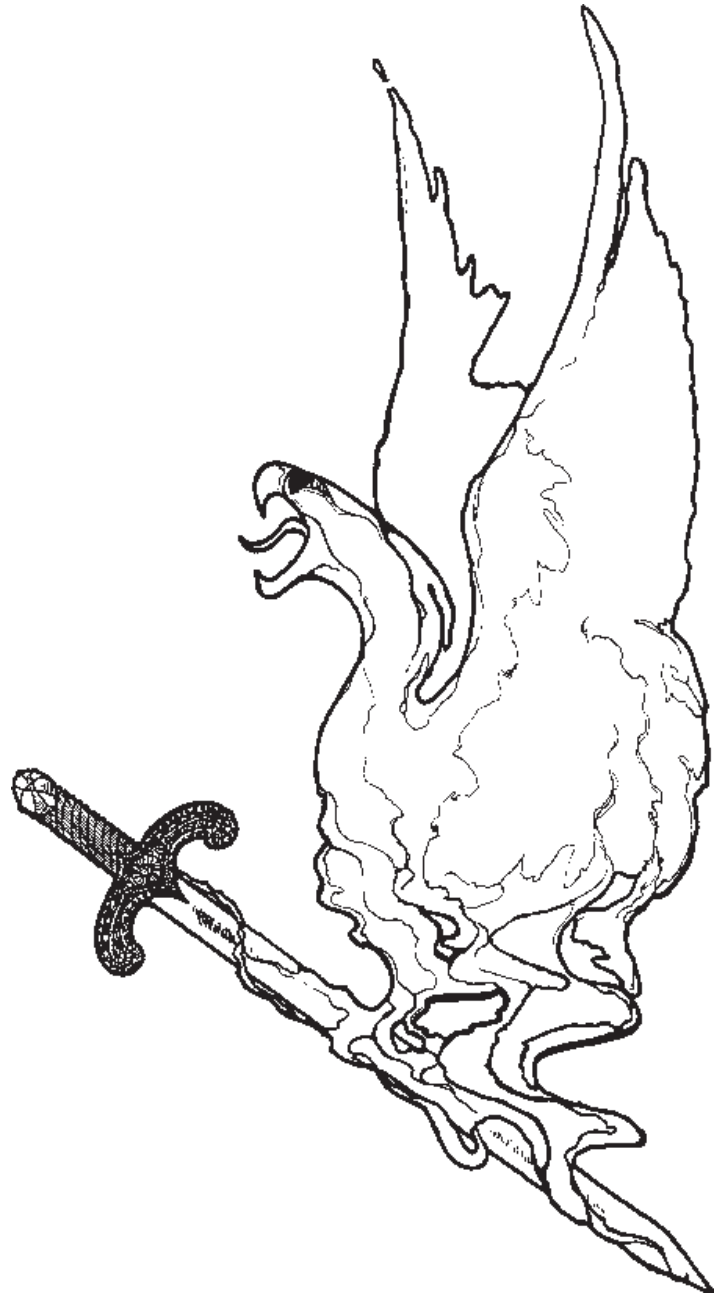
Sauce for green beans: While the beans are cooking or warming up, fry up some bacon pieces (about 6 to 8 slices per can or package of green beans) with about 1 tblsp. of grated onion. You may want to start cooking the bacon first. Pour off all the fat except for about 3 tblsp. Add to the pan 3/4 cup of either the green bean liquid or some chicken aspic (bouillon + water can be used in a pinch), 2 tblsp. vinegar and 1 tblsp. sugar. Bring to just a boil then remove from heat and pour over the cooked, drained green beans. **NOTE:** This sauce can be made ahead of time to save you some hysteria during the feast.

Generic vegie sauce: For every 3 or so cups of cooked veggies, heat on low 1 can of cream of celery, cream of asparagus or cream of mushroom soup. Add 3 tblsp. of real butter, 3 tblsp. of chicken aspic or bouillon and some chopped up chives or parsley (fresh is preferred but dried can be used). Pour over hot vegetables and serve immediately.

Quick 'n Dirty: Pour some hot, melted butter or margarine over the hot vegies, toss lightly and sprinkle with seasoned salt. Serve immediately.

THE LARGE, COMPLETELY INTIMIDATING FEAST

Provisions for large feasts can be figured by simple addition of the parameters already given for the 50 person feast. However I strongly recommend prior feast experience before taking on 100 (plus) people meal. For that matter hosting dinners at your home for 10, 15 then 20 (plus) people is invaluable experience before handling even a 50 person feast. Start out with a hot dog party after Amtgard (or even at Amtgard- hot dogs at the park around noon could be a lot of fun). Follow up a couple of months later with a combined birthday party, a gaming party, an open house if you've just moved. Open yard parties, open garage parties and open refrigerator parties are not unheard of. Any excuse will do to get people together for some fun and will enlarge your hosting, cooking and serving talents.







GUIDELINES FOR FEAST ETIQUETTE AND ROLE-PLAYING

by Lord Jetara Starlamaine

The feasts of Amtgard are the ideal places for roleplaying. However, there are no official written rules for role-playing personas at a feast. This is most likely because nobody really wants to Reeve, and if everybody is having fun and nobody is getting hurt, then whatever you want to do is probably fine. On the other hand, some people just can't seem to enjoy themselves unless there are some rules to play by, so this is a proposed Guideline for role-playing during a feast. Notice that it says **GUIDELINE**. These are not rules.

The only real Rules of Feasting are:

- 1) Have Fun, that's what you're there for.
- 2) Don't spoil someone else's fun. They also paid good money to attend the feast. It may be fun for you to scream obnoxious comments at the Monarchy as they hand out awards, but it's not fun for those attempting to hear or for those being recognized for their accomplishments.
- 3) Don't do anything that would hurt someone, make someone sick, publicly humiliate someone, or damage someone's costume/garb. Putting Vaseline on the toilet seat is a great way to poison lots of people, but its really inappropriate and makes people really angry. Large amounts of pepper in the food is a popular way to poison someone, but it ruins the food and can make them really sick. Throwing daggers at the Monarchy while they eat has been done, but glassware and table decorations tend to be fragile and glass shards from broken items can end up in food, drink or someone's eyes.

KEEPING THE ABOVE RULES IN MIND, REMEMBER THAT EVERYTHING ELSE IS A GUIDELINE.

Feasts in different lands have different traditions. These Guidelines are based on the most universal of them. Your lands may do things slightly different, but the idea is always to have fun.

PLAYING YOUR PERSONA (BEING ALL YOU CAN BE): At a feast, each person is expected to play their persona to the hilt. This means that you may play every class, including Monster, that you have credits for. However, you only get **ONE** life at a feast so cover your back and make sure your local Healer or Wizard is well paid.

- 1) Players get to use the abilities and natural immunities of all their classes.
- 2) Magic using classes have an unlimited number of magic points, but can only cast the maximum number of a single magic that the class is allowed to purchase during a normal battlegame.
- 3) Magic users can use all magics on all lists up to the level they are currently at.
- 4) Magic using classes do not need to pay weapon points (unlimited magic points).
- 5) Classes cannot conflict, i.e.- You may not wear armor and cast spells. You cannot be a berserk Barbarian and throw daggers as a Monk. You cannot have natural armor (as a monster) and wear additional armor on top of it (unless it specifies you can- like a Lizard Man).

- 6) Per Life Abilities have no limits during the course of a feast. They are abilities.
- 7) Per Game Abilities are limited to the number of times they can be used per game, i.e.- an Assassin can only use 1 teleport during a feast.

Example: Samej is a 4th level Healer, 3rd level Wizard, 2nd level Barbarian, and 1st level Monster. Samej's persona is a half-troll, half human who is seeking a magical way to free himself from his human side. Samej may use all magics up to 3rd level Wizard and 4th level Healer magics, and he gets to use the weapons from any of the 4 classes without having to pay weapon costs. There are no magic points during a feast, so his magics are only limited by the maximum number of magics per life/game that he can normally purchase, i.e.- he can buy up to 8 Resurrects during a game, so he gets 8 Resurrects for the length of the feast. In addition, he is allowed to use all the abilities and immunities of the classes he is playing. As a barbarian, he is immune to subdual and may use throwing axes. As a troll, he may be cut down, but he regenerates in a 50 count and will only die by fire. However, he may not wear his 2 points of studded fur armor and still cast magics. If he so chooses during the play of the feast, he may put on a red headband and declare himself berserk. This gives him 2 points of body armor for being berserk, but this doesn't stop him from casting magics.

Please note, it is advisable to get any personas that have monster aspects approved by the Guildmasters of Monsters and Reeves. This may prevent having 12 black dragons in human form running around at a feast. It's not necessary, but it helps. Certain monster abilities that are only inherent in the monster form are not allowed unless the monster form can be identified., i.e.- a Werewolf gets 2 point weapons as claws when in "Were" form. Unless the Werewolf has something to identify they're in "Were" form and the swords are actually claws, the ability cannot be used. Same with Dragon breath. However, armor is inherent in the body, so a Werewolf would get 2 points of armor and a Dragon would get their armor without having to be "in form".

People are still stuck with the limitations of a class, but good things from another class can be played as long as special abilities from the class don't conflict. A barbarian cannot carry enchantments, but if he also plays another class, he can at a feast. However, if he is carrying an enchantment, he may not go berserk, a barbarian ability.

For purposes of the feast, the Monk ability Transfer Life works as follows. A Monk is considered to have a tremendous amount of life force within him. Should somebody die, he has the ability (once) to give this extra life force to the dead person to bring them back. The person returns to life after 5 minutes as his body repairs itself and the spirit returns.

Well, what about the Anti-Paladin ability of Steal Life? The Anti-Paladin can come upon a dead person and has the ability (once) to steal the remaining life force from the corpse. This does NOT destroy the spirit which means the person can be Resurrected or Reanimated. Having done this, the Anti-Paladin has sufficient additional life force to return to life should he be killed during the feast. The Anti-Paladin returns to life after 5 minutes as the body repairs itself and the spirit returns.

A unique aspect of these two abilities is that the body is semi-vulnerable during the transition to life. The person is technically dead until the 5 minutes is up, so additional damage to the body isn't going to stop the process (i.e. a fireball just does more damage that has to be repaired, but doesn't stop the healing process and it still only takes five minutes no matter how much additional damage is done). However, a Sphere of Annihilation will destroy the corpse so there is nothing to repair, or a Sever Spirit will keep the spirit from returning to that particular body.

AN UNDEAD STATE OF MIND: Even the Undead must be careful at a feast. They are both Dead and Alive, which makes for some interesting role-playing situations. Undead all have some life force within them. (Zombies must feed upon the brains of the living to keep the life force within the dead body, etc.) They have one life, but they are already dead. Which means that magics and abilities that work on the Dead, work on them too. An Anti-Paladin with an attitude could walk up to a Vampire, do the “Steal a Life” and the Vampire would collapse as a dead corpse because they have just had their supporting life force drained. The Vampire has not really lost a life, but they can’t move, talk, or use any abilities because they have no life energy to support the effort. A Summon Dead would infuse the body with life energy and return the Vampire to life. A Monk Transfer Life would also work.

I’M DEAD, NOW WHAT?: One must be cautious at a feast. Intrigue is everywhere and there are many ways to die. You only get one life (unless you know somebody with the right magics). You could be poisoned (a red dot on the bottom of your glass or a smear of tiger balm on the bottom of a dish indicating poisoned. Someone could “poison” the salt you sprinkle on after you do a cure poison on your food. A lady’s lipstick could be poisoned and your kiss lasts longer than the 100 count). An Assassin or Anti-Paladin with Touch of Death or a Monk with Vibrating Palm could shake your hand, pat your shoulder, or goose you into oblivion. You could offend the Monarch who then has you beheaded in court. You could be challenged to an Honor Duel and lose. The guard could be ordered to hunt you down. And the most common method of all, someone walks up, takes out a sword, and cleaves you. Well, welcome to the world of the Dead. You are officially a ghost and cannot talk to the living. While many may find this difficult, many others have found this a pleasant way to spend eternity.

The most dangerous way to die at a feast, in terms of role-playing, is by Sphere of Annihilation (SOA). There is nothing left, including Armor, if a person is done in by a SOA. You’re fried, gone, history. But wait, all is not lost. A good healer can summon a new corpse for you, resplendent in similar garb and having very similar features to your old SOA’ed body. However, this does NOT guarantee that the new body will have the same “quirks”. You may not be a Werewolf or a half-Troll anymore- It is very dependent upon the Healer who performs the Summon Dead. If they are very friendly, its safe to assume that the summoned corpse will be identical to your old one. If they are not, it isn’t safe to assume anything. For the sake of an interesting feast, they may call upon a corpse with very specific “quirks”. (This corpse is part Smurf, so you will have a tendency to want to dance, sing, and call the Monarch “Dada Smurf”.) The Healer should inform you as they are summoning the corpse. If the healer does not specify any changes, the player can do it two ways. They can assume the corpse is basically the same as the old body, or they can be inventive and role-play any changes that they may wish to make to their character. You can change races or suddenly have a new family who are surprised by the return of their dead and buried child/sibling. You could mix the memories of the old body and new spirit, the perfect reason to start playing a new class. This is fantasy, use the excuse to have fun with it. There is one important point to remember through all this, the spirit is the same, so the titles and honors remain with the spirit.

What if somebody decided to perform a Sever Spirit on your body? Your spirit has been denied its return to its original body. What do you do then? The player has the options of having a Healer Summon Dead (same as if you were SOA’d), spending the rest of the feast as a ghost, or you can play the dead body as an Undead. This allows room for some interesting role-play and should really be played up. If you decide to play the body and become a Zombie, you should shamle around, keep a glazed look on your face, and only say “brains” as you wander around the feast hall.

OK, you weren’t watching your back and somebody fragged you. So now what do you do? The feast is only half over and you’ve been killed and left to wander the feast as a ghost. Fear not, the fun is not

over. You don't have to leave or hide in a corner. You are able to participate in eating your food and enjoying the company of your friends, however, you may not talk to the living (not like it stops a lot of people, but we are supposed to be role-playing). You are dead so you may only talk to other dead people, or Undead people as the case may be. This is a good time for charades or to start following around an Undead creature and have him translate for you. Find someone who can resurrect, reanimate, or reincarnate you and have them follow your ghost to where the corpse is. Then they can bring you back to join the living. Or you can wander around and talk to the other ghosts. Feel free to ignore the living, they can't harm you anyway. If someone who is living tries to talk to you and needs a response, give them a look and indicate that you are dead. This may irritate them enough to send them in search of someone who can bring you back. If you are inclined, you may reward your savior. One important aspect of being dead is that you must still approach the court if called (Monarchs have this amazing ability to carry formal requests even into the land of the incorporeal). This is the one time that the dead may speak to the living. You may be a Ghost, Zombie, or Ghoul, but your Persona is probably getting rewarded for performing some wondrous feat for Amtgard, so get up there and humbly accept it.

SOCIAL SKILLS AND COURTLY GRACES: Another great aspect about the role-playing at Feast time is the chance to practice your social and "flirting" skills. Now is the time to ply your courtly graces on those unsuspecting people who think you have none. Figure out the courtly graces of your persona's culture and role-play them. Please remember the Rule about being obnoxious or spoiling someone else's fun. Your culture may think it's expected behavior to smear food on the faces of your friends, but your friends may not know this and wouldn't appreciate the well intentioned gesture.

Example- Samej is noble born (for a Half-Troll on his father's side). He approaches a lady and bows. He compliments her on her beautiful gown and takes her hand. However, instead of kissing the back of the hand, he softly licks the inside of her wrist (gotta taste if it's worth having for a snack later). Some ladies would allow this, some will quickly withdraw their hand, still others may feel inclined to leave a lasting hand impression upon your face. In any case, it's role-playing, don't take offense if it doesn't turn out the way you intended.

FLIRTING AND OTHER STRANGE "MATING" RITUALS: A very popular and extremely common flirting tool at a feast or event is the "Cloved Orange" (CO). It does not need to be an orange, it could be any type of fruit or vegetable (There have been cases of Cloved Watermelons, Cloved Cauliflower, Cloved Grapes, and Cloved Cucumbers) The CO is a non-verbal request for a Kiss. The way it works is thus: A person will approach another person with the CO and offer it to them. The person on the receiving end has many options.

- 1) Refuse the orange. This means go away. It's a nice way of saying this.
- 2) Accept the orange and either drop it on the ground or roll it back to the person and walk away. This also means go away, Big Time! It has connotations of "drop dead", "I would rather kiss a Wookie", "in your dreams, in my nightmares". This is an insult. Make no mistake in its meaning.
- 3) Accept the orange and take a clove out with your hand and return it to the giver. This means, I find you interesting and would like to talk to you. It is a polite way of accepting the compliment of the orange without having to return a kiss.
- 4) Accept the orange and take a clove out with your hand and Kiss the hand or cheek of the giver. This is a sign of interest, but it is an interest that cannot be returned. You may be married, engaged, have a jealous lover, find the giver fascinating but have no desire to kiss their lips, or just like them a lot but not "that way". This is usually done amongst close friends.
- 5) Accept the orange, take the clove out with your hand and rub the clove on the part of the body you wish kissed. A rub across the cheek or back of hand shows a sign of interest, but not great interest.

6) Accept the orange, take the clove out with your mouth, and return the clove to the giver with a kiss. This is the usual way that a clove is returned. The length of time it takes for you to decide to transfer the clove from your mouth to that of your companion is a good indication of the desire that is present. Of course, the giver does have the option of cutting the kiss short.

Once the transfer of the clove is completed (methods 3 through 6), the Cloved Orange is now the receiver's to give away. Thus, the flirting is perpetuated.

Some things the uninitiated should be aware of. An orange that has been passed frequently and has only one clove left, when offered to you, is a request for sex. Think carefully about accepting this orange. Also REMEMBER, a kiss is just a kiss, it is part of the role-play of the feast. Don't take it for anything else unless the other person indicates CLEARLY that it is more. A strong sign of affection is that once the orange is accepted, the kiss completed, the person gives the orange right back for a second kiss. But no promises, maybe they just liked the way you kiss and want seconds.

Amtgard is about role-playing and having fun. The feast is about playing persona. Lovers might be carefree at a feast and kiss lots of other people. But it's not the real world, don't get them confused. It is also impolite to point out to people kissing that they are NOT kissing their significant other. They already know this and it just makes you look like an idiot.

CONCLUSION (YEAH, HE'S ALMOST DONE): The whole point behind a feast is to have fun. One should not go to a feast with the intention of destroying someone's persona. Court should not threaten the continuation of a persona nor should someone fear to attend a feast because their persona might get "destroyed". Because, as hard as they try, the only person who can destroy your persona is you. There might be a temporary change or two, but this is fantasy and role-playing it is part of the fun. If something happens to you at the feast, play it up and have fun with it. If court somehow changes your persona, there is always a way to change it back. If you were a Vampire, get bitten again. If your persona has a strange or unique body that got zapped, talk to the Healers and have them summon the proper corpse and transfer your spirit to it. Take a couple of weeks at the park to make the arrangements or set it up for the next feast. The simplest way of all is to add to your persona history. That's right, you don't have to role-play it, you can just think it up and write it down. Voila, instant persona repair. Use your imagination, this is fantasy and there is always a way of keeping your persona alive and whole.

These Guidelines should help those who require rules for feasting and make others aware of some of the unique attractions that are a part of Amtgard feasts. Each lands has its own customs and methods of role-play. If it's your first feast or you're visiting a foreign lands, have fun, but watch the reactions of those around you. If you mess up, the look of disapproval will be evident. If you come across something that I haven't covered, think about it in terms of common sense, good role-play, fairness, and the Rules of Feasting. Once you get it clear in your head, go talk to the Monarch and/or the Guildmaster of Reeves for their approval. After all, if somebody complains, that's who they're going to complain to.





Amtgard, as you may know, is more than just its battlegames. It is historical research, roleplaying, literature, music, acting and much more, but the fun which unites all of Amtgard each week is the battlegame. Because Amtgard is a dynamic organization, always changing and moving, the battlegames which we play have carried on their own evolution.

FLAG BATTLES

The first battlegame to appear at Amtgard was the *Flag Battle*. This game is the meat and potatoes which all Amtgarders live on. Two team captains are chosen, they are then responsible for dividing up the fighting populace onto two teams by picking alternately. There is a real strategy that goes on during the picking process because it is not only important to pick the best fighters from the group but also those members with special skills or who play special classes. One example of choosing wisely is to make sure you have at least some healing as well as magic on your team.

After the teams are chosen they both go to their home bases and plant their flags. The flags cannot be removed except by the opposing team. Quite obviously the idea of the game is to capture the opposing team's flag while retaining possession of the home flag. The game can be ended by various means. The current method is to fight until one side gives up.

The tactics and situations during a flag battle are very diverse. The locations of the flags may vary, the people on each team will definitely vary and the casualties of battle always change the game. The flag battle is a simple game with simple goals, this makes setting it up and playing it easy.

An interesting variation on the flag battle is the *Mobile Flag Battle*. In this game one of the flags is mobile. Usually in this scenario there is only one flag held by a smaller team which is pursued by a larger team. The mobile flag battle is easily adapted for special scenarios.

QUICK GAMES

It might not be obvious yet, but after you have fought in a couple of flag battles you will understand that they are by no means short games. If games which do not take as long to play are required, you may wish to try a *Ditch Battle* or a *Fox Across the River* game. A ditch battle is a game where there are two equal sides to begin with. The teams engage in battle and the losing team gains the first dead of the winning team. This continues until there is either one person left on one team or both teams decide to go home and eat.

Fox Across the River is a game which you might have played when you were younger. The basic premise of the game is that one person starts in the middle of the "river" and tries to catch at least one of the foxes crossing the river. In Amtgard the person in the middle is armed as usual and tries to kill as many of the foxes as he can before they reach

safety on the other bank. The foxes that were killed join the player in the middle and the others reform to cross again. The game ends when one player is left. When this player is killed he is the new person in the middle. One quick note, if a fox is wounded he retains his wound until killed, the players in the middle are healed of wounds after each crossing.

Another quick game to play is a *Chasm Battle*. In the chasm battle two opposing teams are massed on a chasm represented by two lines drawn on the ground or two ropes laid on the ground. At the beginning of each chasm there is a starting line. The teams are “laid on” and the fighting begins. During combat any person who steps off or falls over the line plummets to his death at the bottom of the chasm. The game ends when all the players of one team have crossed the other’s starting line.

ALTERNATIVE GAMES

For a change of pace, or on a rainy night with plenty of lightning overhead, the *Zombie Game* is lots of fun. One player is picked as a “zombie.” This person has the special ability of regeneration. After counting to fifty any wound is healed. The *Zombie* starts the game in an unknown location and hunts down the humans. Humans are not allowed to group together. If the zombie kills a human, that human becomes a zombie. *Zombies* have unlimited lives. The game is over when only one human remains or everybody calls it quits.

If you just happen to have a bridge in your park then you simply must try the *Bridge Siege* scenario. Two teams are chosen, one team defends the bridge, the other attacks. When the attacking team finally breaches the bridge team’s defenses and takes over the bridge, with no defenders surviving, the game is over. Since the bridge is supposed to represent a castle wall or a wall like China’s Great Wall, the ends of the bridge are considered to continue on, thus no attacking team member is allowed to simply enter the bridge by the sides. The bridge is taken by scaling the walls.

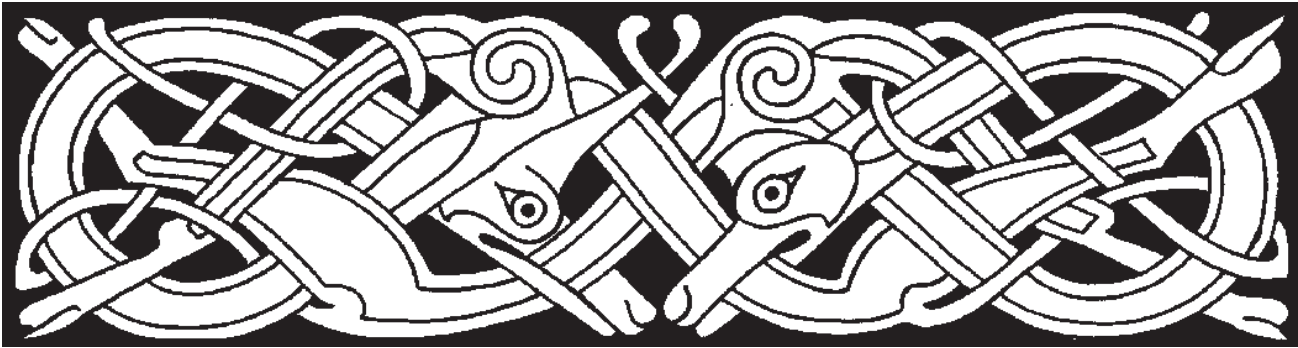
DUELING and TOURNAMENTS

Throughout history gentlemen have settled disputes amongst themselves in an honorable way, *mona mona*, in other words by dueling. *Amtgard* continues this tradition, but does not limit it to simply resolving disputes. In *Amtgard* the duel has been expanded into tournament fighting, similar to jousting or fencing. When running such a tournament, a tournament list must be drawn up pitting fighter against fighter. There are alternate methods of narrowing the field to just one winner. There is the *single elimination* tourney where only the winners advance to fight the other winners, there is *double elimination* where each fighter is allowed one defeat before he is eliminated by his next defeat, and there is the *round robin* tourney where all combatants fight each other and the winner is determined by the fighter with the best record. Tournaments can be run with varying weapon styles, for example single sword and/or sword and shield, etc. *Weapon Master* is a biannual tournament in which many weapon styles are used, and the overall winner of the tourney is the individual with the best record in all the events.

One variant of the tournament fight is called *Holding the Field*. In this duel Two fighters square off and the winner holds the field until defeated, at which point the new winner holds the field.

These are just a few ideas that have worked well in *Amtgard* and provided us with a lot of fun. Try them out and adapt them to fit your club’s style and needs. We would also like to encourage you to experiment with your own ideas, you will be surprised with what you can come up with. Have fun and long live *Amtgard*!







Any discussion of Amtgard fighting tactics is enhanced by certain areas of knowledge possessed by the reader. To glean most profit from this one should be familiar with the Amtgard rulebook and the various intricacies appropriate to the battlegames. Chief among these are magic, in particular offensive killing spells, and the Amtgard armor system, which can allow a properly armored person to negate multiple hits upon his person. Much has been written on various fighting techniques and styles, and any attempt to rehash the slash and parry routine of a shortsword would be redundant. Those looking for a lesson in weapon handling are referred to either the nearest fencing club or to a well stocked library. The opposite end of the spectrum, that being the strategic application of large numbers of troops, also has little bearing here. Amtgard usually deals with small unit tactics, between ten and thirty individuals per side per engagement. Several minutes of maneuvering inevitably leads to short and sharp clashes, especially when one side demonstrates weakness. Casualties are usually high, but never permanent. Any predetermined or organized tactics stand little chance of success considering the fluidity of most situations. Also, if your opponents are perceptive, they will tend to correct their errors on the second go round. The above stipulations in mind, this article will concentrate on those critical few seconds where a balanced standoff becomes a breakthrough and then a rout.

The temptation is to discuss the various weapon systems and their applications. However, it has been shown that the higher quality fighters are generally pretty good with whatever they can get their hands on. Nevertheless, a brief look at the standard weapon classes is in order. Offensive or defensive values would be a silly notion here considering it is the comparative skill of the fighters themselves that will settle the issue. Disregarding obvious tactical modifiers such as surprise and five to one advantages in numbers, I have compiled a working table of the various weapon systems' factors that will speed a fighter to his success or demise (figure 1). Length (L) is the effective attack range, higher values indicating a greater capacity to strike at an opponent before he can close. Speed (S) is the relative ability to strike a single blow. Cover (C) is the protection afforded to the person employing the weapon system. Counter (X) is the potential to employ multiple attacks and/or parries. Encumberance (E) is actually the lack thereof. Maintenance (M) is the relative ease to build and provide upkeep on a weapon. Systems are scored from five (ideal) down to one (as bad as it gets). Remember, the situation and the fighter can heavily influence these values:

FIGURE 1

<u>SYSTEM</u>	(L)	(S)	(C)
Polearm	5	4	1
Two hander (sword, axe)	4	2	2
Single sword	2	3	1
Sword and small shield	2	3	3
Sword and large shield	2	2	4
Double swords/florentine	2	3	2

<u>SYSTEM</u>	(L)	(S)	(C)
Sword and madu*	3	3	3
Flail and small shield	3	4	2
Flail and large shield	3	3	3
Flail and madu*	4	4	2
Two handed flail	5	2	2

<u>SYSTEM</u>	(X)	(E)	(M)
Polearm	2	3	5
Two hander (sword, axe)	2	1	3
Single sword	3	5	4
Sword and small shield	5	3	3
Sword and large shield	3	2	2
Double swords/florentine	4	4	3
Sword and madu*	4	3	2
Flail and small shield	3	3	4
Flail and large shield	2	2	3
Flail and madu*	3	3	3
Two handed flail	1	3	2

*includes second sword with shield

I don't intend to go into this subtopic any further, but a lot can be extrapolated from the chart provided. For instance, if you like to stand away and pick people off, and then rely on your agility to escape, then you might want to employ a polearm, a weapon excellent in length and speed and fairly good in encumbrance. A person who prefers to mix it up in the middle of a large melee might prefer to use a sword and small shield, which ranks high in combined speed and counter. There are other variables not included on the chart, as these are not universal considerations for all weapon classes listed. Examples would include ability to penetrate armor and shields (something at which two handers are very effective), and class applicability (ever see an assassin with a flail and shield?). A prospective combatant can improve his chances immeasurably with some careful thought (what are you going to do, and how do you aim to achieve this?), and thorough preparation (i.e.- provide your own equipment).

It has been historical practice to delineate troops via standardized classifications. Even considering the great versatility present and the highly individualistic nature of Amtgard combat, the precedent does have some use here. I have divided Amtgard fighters into six basic troop types as summarized below in figure 2 (again with ratings approximating 1 to 5):

FIGURE 2

<u>Type</u>	<u>Mobility</u>	<u>Armor</u>	<u>Typical Classes</u>
Light Infantry	2 to 5	0-2 pts.	serf/barbarian
Medium Inf.	3 to 5	1-2 pts.	scout/knights
Heavy Infantry	1 to 3	3-6 pts.	warrior/monster
Light Missile	4 to 5	0-2 pts.	assassin/monk
Medium Missile	1 to 3	0-2 pts.	archer/healer
Heavy Missile	1 to 4	0 points.	wizard/druid

Infantry are rated primarily by ability to absorb punishment: armor value and occasionally- shield size; mobility; and to a lesser extent, weapons systems employed. Missile troops are rated almost exclusively on their ability to deal out punishment. The defensive qualities of missile troops are nearly always on a par with those of light infantry. Light infantry is by far the most common type of fighter found at Amtgard. Quality ranges from good to poor, the former being unarmored club members whom have equipped themselves with sword and shield, and the latter being new people stuck with whatever second or third hand weapons people are willing to loan out. Medium infantry are a step above lights. They are often armored while still mobile and generally include the best fighters. Unless the resistance is organized, a medium can be more than a match for a small force of light infantry. Heavy infantry are always armored with three or more points of armor and are often armed with several weapons, They tend to charge into the fray, counting on their heavy protection to protect them while they dispatch the enemy. Mobility is somewhat hampered due to the heavy load portaged about and for this reason many of the finer warriors will not choose to go this route. However, don't let anyone tell you that a heavy is not a match for most anything else on the battlefield.

Light missile troops include assassins, upper level monks, and perhaps even some healers. Armor is almost nil and their missile weapons are more of an annoyance than a hindrance, especially against armored opponents. One advantage is their high rate of fire, which can double or even triple that of medium and heavy missile troops. Their effective range is anywhere from twenty to fifty feet, which is a constant for most missile attacks. The medium missile category belongs to the bow armed archers and scouts. They tend to be slower moving but better armored than the monks and assassins. Their arrows do multiple hits to armor and destroy opponents' weapons on contact, so they inflict more damage than the light missile class. Heavy missile personnel are the spell ball casting magic users. They are lightly armed and never armored. Many who play this type are neither agile nor athletic. This is balanced by a host of powerful magics that tend to be lethal when they connect. Heavy missile troops are the heavy artillery of the battlefield, and one can make or break an otherwise balanced engagement. There are certain antimagical counters to magic users, but even against immune opponents the magic users can wreak havoc. Shields and weapons may fall prey to magic where a potential target person can't.

One further area to be covered before plunging into an analysis of the tactics themselves is a consideration of other battlefield influences that can affect the outcome. One such example is the advantageous matching up of weapon systems. This is already crudely applied at Amtgard when shieldmen are sent to face off enemy archers. In static situations polearms can be positioned behind shields and then pick off opponents at leisure. Madus, halberds, and other long weapons should be placed to face enemy flails. A similar but more subtle area is the matching of class abilities. A typical situation is the sending of the magically resistant paladins and antipaladins against enemy wizards, but the possibilities are endless. Tired of those annoying healer and bardic spells of charming? Then send in the barbarians. A master monk will just laugh at the various death magic abilities of antipaladins and high level assassins. The armor of heavy infantry is no proof against a healer's "sleep" spell. The interrelationship of the various classes is Amtgard's great point of divergence from other fighting societies. I also believe that it is Amtgard's great strength, for it allows anyone to participate. The best fighters are known and receive their just dues, but where else can those same excellent warriors be faced off by a fifteen year old girl simply by her pointing a finger at them? It is the class system and the use of magic that invigorates and diversifies Amtgard, keeping it interesting where other fighting societies may tend to fall into the trap of only rewarding the most ruthless and aggressive of combatants.

While on the subject of magic, it is worthwhile to discuss another unique Amtgard institution, the use of healing on the battlefield. Healers are not so rare as they once were. This means that if a team can protect their healers, then most wounded people can be back to normal within a few minutes at most. No one has to spend

half an hour on his knees. Effective deployment, protection of, and utilization of healers can greatly lengthen a unit's staying power. Of course, the advantages conferred by healers also make them prime targets for the enemy. Roving bands of seeker-killer teams are always a danger to the healers biding their time in the rear areas. Healing also tends to stabilize the lines. What good to wound and then bypass a person if he's going to be back on his feet and behind you a minute later? The prospect of healing encourages an approach that leaves no loose ends on the field. Pity the poor soul who loses a leg behind enemy lines. His chances of seeing home again are slight. Of course, he probably has one or more lives coming since the majority of Amtgard battles are resurrection type scenarios. As most combatants don't desire to die anyway, the element of extra lives is hardly a crucial one. Then again, that person you just slew may very well come back to even the score. Such emotional factors, along with personality, bearing and attitude, personal feuds and alliances, and reputation, all have an impact on the Amtgard battlegames.

Success on the battlefield, whatever the victory conditions of the scenario, is ultimately achieved by the elimination of the forces that can or will oppose you. It is an old maxim of warfare that victory goes to he who can put the most where his opponent has the least. It's always best to maximize your odds of success. Disregarding the uncommon but not unheard of situation where one side has such a skill advantage that it can overwhelm its opposition in a series of individual engagements, the question becomes how can one side use its strengths (its most) to exploit the other's weaknesses (its least) while denying them a similar opportunity. Assuming a fairly balanced head-on engagement, (slaying someone from behind, while preferable in the context of maximizing your odds, requires little training, or thinking and thus, is outside the major thrust of this article) the goal is then to increase your chances of eliminating the opponents before they can respond in an effective manner. This is achieved by either overloading or bypassing their defenses, allowing a quick and easy kill. Three methods are applicable: 1) concentrating the efforts of two or more individuals on a single opponent, reducing his chances of successfully defending himself, 2) distracting an opponent so that he can't defend properly against the killing blow, 3) driving or threatening a person out of position, thusly making one of his teammates vulnerable to situations 1 and 2. Note that all three methods must be employed with haste and dispatch, or your "victims" will do to you what you would do to them. Seizing and holding the initiative is very important. Having superior numbers and reserves to compensate for tactical maneuvering is nice, but a luxury a team will not have at least fifty percent of the time. How then do you penetrate and isolate the elements of a force roughly matched in capabilities to your own?

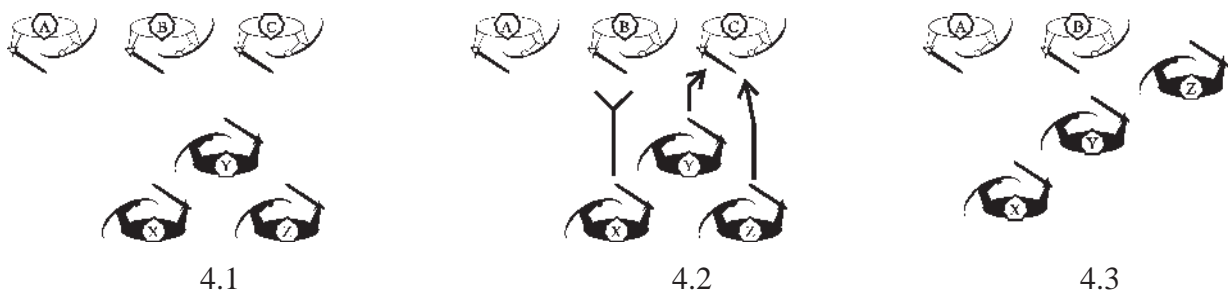
First a few definitions are in order. At Amtgard, and in any area of warfare, there are two basic deployments of forces (in this case, people). These are the column and the line. To these I have added the two variations most seen at Amtgard, and I will refer to these as the wedge and the reversed wedge (figure 3). The line is the most common formation; People stand roughly shoulder to shoulder as they face their foes. A column is much more rare. The only times I have seen it work is in attacks upon the rear of an opponent's line. The first person in column would attack and pass through the enemy line to safety. As those opponents still alive turned to face the departing attacker, then the second person in line would strike, and so on. This was the original tactic that led to the formation of the first ever Amtgard royal guard. Other than that, the use of the column in combat is limited, and I will not mention it any further. The two variations, really combinations of the column and line, are the wedge formations. The wedge is attack oriented, used to push through weak spots. The reversed wedge can be defensive, an elastic position that can isolate and destroy incursions into friendly lines. I will also demonstrate that any flanking maneuver is basically a variation of the reversed wedge.

FIGURE 3



The line is basically a static formation, only good for holding actions and preferably, wearing down the opponent. Given time and many casualties, a line versus line engagement will eventually attrition one side down to easily defeatable numbers. Such tactics usually yield victory to the side with the higher number of skilled fighters. A force with no advantage in fighting skill, or in any case, a force that would win more quickly and with less casualties, must apply some ingenuity to its tactics. This is where the wedge formations come in. Note the progression in figure 4 as a standard line is assailed by a wedge formation.

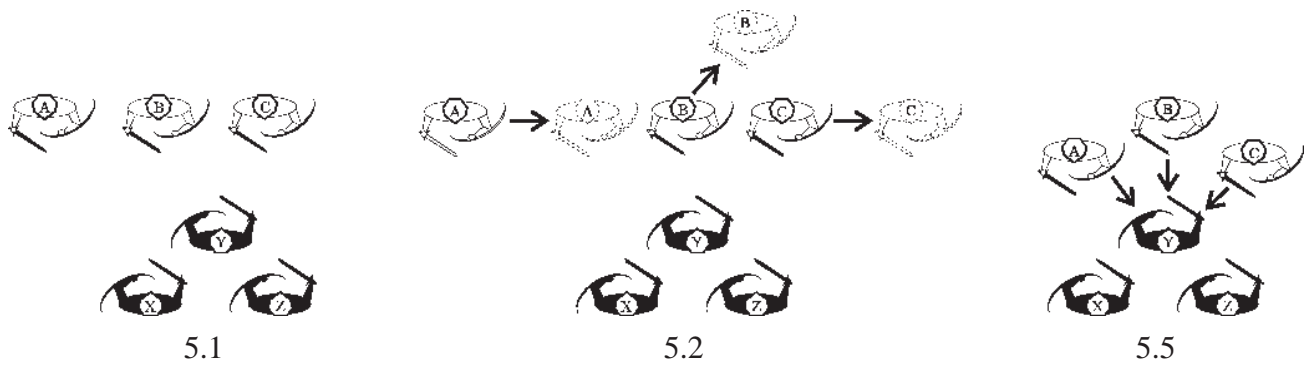
FIGURE 4



4.1- The wedge approaches. 4.2- Y splits the seam between B and C, threatening C while Z attacks C from the other side. X moves up to cover Y's left flank and to keep A from getting any ideas. 4.3- With C out of the picture, X-Y-Z have formed another line relative to the enemy and have gained numerical superiority. B must withdraw or fight at a disadvantage. Note that this attack must be carried out quickly and without hesitation lest A can move up, once again equalizing the situation. This attack often will not work if B is a wizard, or if C is heavy infantry. On the other hand, having a good polearm or magic using type in position X can often cement that flank while Y and Z do their dirty work. Most people are right handed, meaning that their parry will be in the left hand. An ideal system for Y is sword and shield. That puts his parry between him and B and an infighting weapon posed as a threat to C's exposed right side. B is hampered from assailing Y because of his vulnerable right flank. A good weapon for Z is a flail, this swung wide on C to further remove his parry from the vicinity of Y. A little thought will show that a wedge is not nearly so effective when matched against the right flank or center of a line.

I should not need to stress that the various weapon systems and classes employed can alter or even discount everything written here. Remember, there are no perfect plans. The best defense against a well organized and planned wedge is quick action by A. If A, B, and C work well together, then it is possible to turn the positioning of the wedge against itself. This requires the employment of a reversed wedge (figure 5).

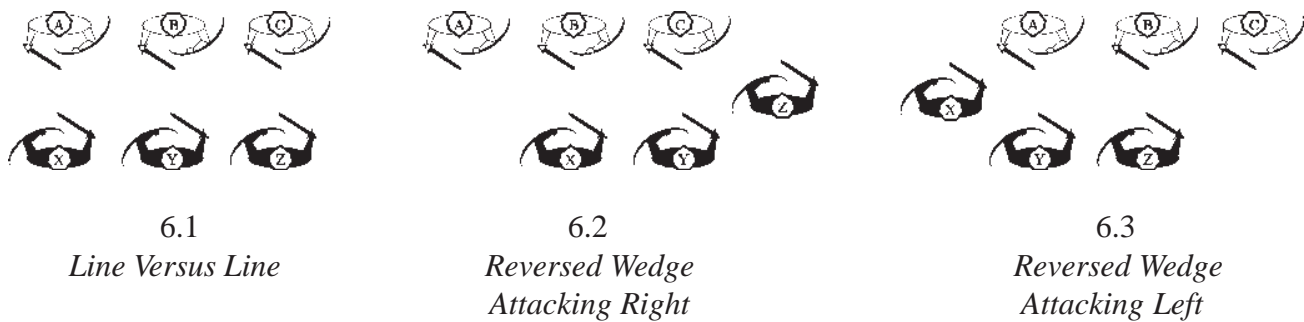
FIGURE 5



In 5.1- the wedge in preparing to attack. In 5.2- A, B and C all shift left so that each one faces a corresponding number of the X-Y-Z trio. In 5.3- the wedge presses the attack. Y and Z come forward, but note that Y is walking into a trap. He is now exposed to attacks from A, B and C. Z is presented with C's parry side and X is out of position. Y will be lucky to survive. Again note the critical factor is timing. A-B-C must isolate Y before Y and Z can combine to finish off C.

The reversed wedge, as mentioned before, can also be used in an offensive mode. Indeed, most flanking movements, are by definition, a form of the reversed wedge. Notice, how in figure 6, the attacking line becomes a reversed wedge when either flank is forced.

FIGURE 6



6.1
Line Versus Line

6.2
*Reversed Wedge
Attacking Right*

6.3
*Reversed Wedge
Attacking Left*

On the attack the reversed wedge is more subtle than a wedge. There is less immediate concentration of force, and the attack can take longer to develop. Whereas you need a good defender holding the side with a wedge, the crux of success for an assaulting reversed wedge lies on the shoulders of the most forward flanking member. Highly skilled medium infantry are almost essential for this role, as mobility and fighting skills are paramount. A drawback of the reversed wedge is its total unsuitability for a direct frontal assault. The composition of the attacking force, perhaps even more than the tactical situation, can determine which offensive mode is most appropriate. As can be seen in 6.3, an assault with the left flank can be accomplished by use of the reversed wedge. In such a situation, a breakthrough is most easily achieved by X refusing to engage A and instead penetrating to the rear, forcing A-B-C to withdraw, hopefully in a disorganized manner. One very effective variation is to have a left handed fighter in the X slot. This puts A in a very precarious spot, with his right side threatened and his parry arm on the wrong side.

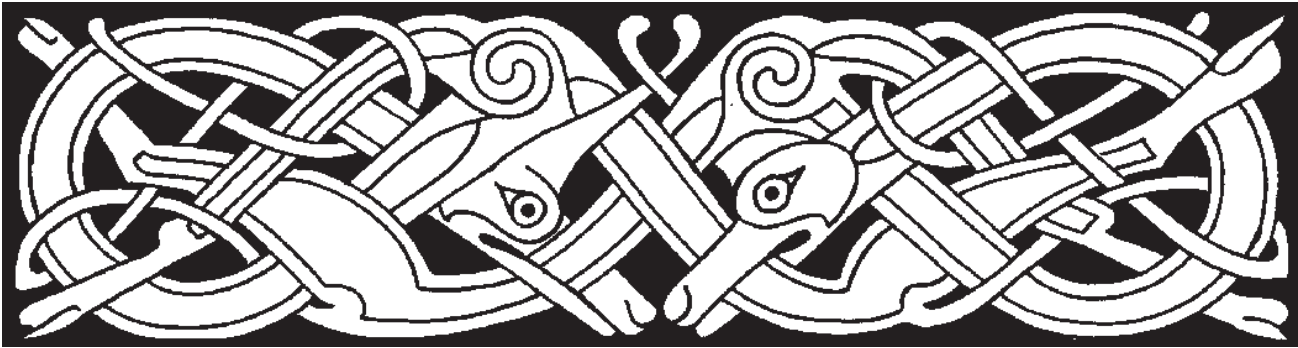
The one major situation I have not yet covered is the clash between two reversed wedges. This usually develops when two opposing lines are attempting to turn each other inwards (figure 7). Victory usually goes to the side that can get around the flank first. This does not mean that concentrating on flanking guarantees a win; It only enhances the chances of such. Rather than withdrawing, a drastic measure that will sometimes work for a flanked unit in to charge ahead and attempt to overwhelm the weakened holding forces that the attackers have in the center.

FIGURE 7



Sometimes neither side will win a quick victory as opposite flanks collapse in a reversed wedge engagement. This can lead to a confused melee or even a total switch of the original battlelines. An outstanding historical example of this case, albeit on a grander scale, is the complete reversal of the Yorkist and Lancastrian forces at the critical battle of Barnet in 1471. For those Amtgardians not historically oriented, a thorough recounting of this battle, with the names and faces changed, can be found in the classic fantasy epic, Lord Kalvan of Otherwhen by H. Beam Piper. For an example of initiative determining the victor when both sides broke through the flanks (but only one side followed up on it) I would point to Alexander the Great's victory over the Persian host (an army five times his number) at the battle of Arbela (Gaugamela) in 333 B.C. Hannibal of Carthage was a master of the reversed wedge, as his crushing rout of the Romans at Cannae in 216 B.C. demonstrates. History is rife with such examples.

A truly detailed article could easily have tripled or quadrupled the length of this effort. I have tried to strike a balance between being comprehensive and succinct. In summation, I would again state that there are no tactics guaranteed to always work. People who try to codify success hasten their own demise by failing to recognize genius lies in intellectual flexibility, not unthinking dogma (one more historical example if I may- Robert the Bruce led the Scots to their greatest victory over the English at Bannockburn in 1314, but two hundred years of Scottish defeats followed as Robert's successors slavishly imitated his tactics, and the result was that England came to conquer Scotland). In active, ever-changing conditions such as combat, the edge is with those whom can adapt the quickest, seize the moment, and exploit it. As more new fighters become veterans, there is a balancing of combat skills. The match ups in recent tournies of highly regarded fighters in the second and even first rounds attests to the increasing degree of competitiveness. It is no longer enough to be good. Where the relative skill levels are roughly equivalent, the arena of conflict reaches another plateau. Motivation, assertiveness, and intelligence become the critical areas. In the medieval era of knighthood it was said that "victory went to he who was pure and clear in his heart." I would amend that to read "victory goes to he who is pure and clear in his mind." This treatise, abbreviated though it may be, is intended to provoke thought among those interested in applying the fruits of their thinking to their labors on the battlefield.





In my many years of Amtgard membership, I have achieved sixth level as a Wizard and as a Healer. After having invested this much time in my magic-using career, I have learned quite a lot about how to stay alive. At fifty feet, a magic-user is the most dangerous player on the battlefield. At five feet, you are nearly defenseless. Remember, you can't parry with a spell. You can carry a sword, but it costs a lot of your magic points, and unless you're good at it I'd recommend against carrying anything other than your free dagger. Its best advantage is that it allows you to parry, to honorably dispatch certain opponents, and to suicide before subdual.

Why play a magic-using class? After all, it's a real effort to make sense of the complex system, memorize a dozen or more magics, and prepare all the materials. Getting people to take your damage is a constant hassle. But it does have certain benefits. Wizards are usually first or second pick, if you're into ego trips. If you're interested in kill ratio per life, this is the class for you. And no other class will give you the power trip of breaking a charge, holding out against a dozen opponents, or killing the entire enemy team in one fell swoop. You just have to look mean at grizzled veterans and they run away. And you may never have to buy a roll of duct tape.

Magic-users can generally be broken into two tactical categories; "Fighters" and "Supporters". "Fighters" choose mostly direct assault type spells such as "Fireball" and "Entangle". They prefer their verbal magics to be short, easy, and usable on the move. "Fighters" sometimes view themselves as a warrior who has some magic, and spend most of their points on weapons, buying only one or two of the most useful magics. "Supporters" choose to spend most of their points on magics such as "Mend" or "Ressurrect". They prefer their verbal magics to have a fifty foot range, and often buy numerous enchantments. This type of magic-user frequently carries no weapons at all.

Both types of play are valid. While the "Fighter" deals death directly and can cause major shifts in the tide of battle, they are also often killed out quickly. "Supporter", on the other hand, can send waves of unbreakable shields and enchanted weapons while remaining safe and alive behind their own lines.

It is a natural inclination to view a Wizard as a "Fighter" and a Healer as a "Supporter", but this need not be the case. Either class may be played from either tactical position, despite their predisposition. However, if you choose as a Healer to spend your points on weapons and attack magics, you should not expect to be well loved. To use healing magic to maim or kill is not only antithetical, many find it personally offensive.

Honor and magic are a funny thing. There are people who will try to convince you that there can be no honor in magic. These are usually people who feel that they can beat you sword to sword, and are insulted that you would deny this natural order of things. They are incorrect. It is no less honorable to kill an armored, well armed and shielded warrior than it is for this same warrior to kill a novice player, or a poorly armed Wizard

who is forbidden the use of shield and armor. Magic is altogether honorable when used to neutralize fighters like this, archers, assassins, and other magic-users. Use magic to break a charge or a shield wall. Do not use magic against a lone, crippled opponent, or intrude in an evenly matched combat unless the flag is involved. While it is legal for a Healer to cast a "Sleep" spell then cut the victim's throat, it's not very nice.

When playing a magic-user, you are a primary target for the enemy team. It is important that you have access to fighter support, preferably someone with a shield. Unfortunately, people often become so caught up in combat that they won't notice you're in trouble until you're dead. One solution for this is to "sell" a high level enchantment to a teammate in exchange for their acting as your bodyguard for that life. "Selling" magics is also a good answer for the enemy who has a lust for your blood or one who refuses to take your magics. Buy yourself an Assassin. Many shieldmen do not need to be bribed to help you. But it is both courteous and in your own best interests to use everything in your power to protect them. Pick a large, slow moving one who'll cooperate, and stay behind them as long as they live. Then run to your second choice. This may seem a little calloused, but magic-users are important to a team, and shieldmen are a dime a dozen. It's fun to pick a new player with a big shield and teach them how to keep you both alive. Teaching new players to respect the magic-user on their own team as much as they respect the enemy magic-user is a benefit to your guild.

Don't cheat on the magic. You aren't as unlikely to get caught as you might think. The odds are good that the one who catches you will be a higher level magic-user, who will fry you in your tracks. Try to use the magics you get "per life" first. Then, if you die, all you've lost is a life, and can still use all the "per battlegame" magics you bought. Your most powerful magic is the "pointing finger". To use this spell, you point at an opponent and start one of your magics. You don't really intend to finish it, you are just scaring them away. This is also known as "the magic duck spell". While it is not specifically illegal to threaten with a magic you do not have, it is unwise. Another magic-user might think you were cheating and fry you. If you did not buy a magic appropriate for this use, try pointing, yelling their name, and "Your shoes are untied" twice. They will almost always hesitate, and usually start to run away. Cadence is scary. Bear in mind that this is a rotten trick, and may not always be received with a sense of humor.

There are some people who are not afraid of your magics. Some are stupid, some are brave, and some are Paladins or Anti-paladins. These knights aren't intimidated by your spells because they are immune to most of them. They carry several weapons, a shield, and many wear armor. They often carry relics or "Protection from Flame", which makes them almost completely invulnerable to your magic. They usually consider Wizards cowards because they kill people who can't defend themselves. If you are attacked by one, my best suggestion is run for a teammate, preferably a competent one. Don't charge screaming off into the distance, expecting your team to sprout wings and come save you.

More than any other type of player, as a magic-user you should be a team player. Not only because you are dependent on them for support, but because you have the greatest number of options. You may both create and destroy, move both the enemy team and your teammates from one place to another, alternate attacks between groups of the enemy as much as two hundred feet apart. You should always bear the victory conditions in mind, for you have the most resources to ensure their achievement. A magic-user can be the most effective player on the field or the least. Which of these you are is determined by the cooperation of your team and your own ability to utilize your considerable power.

APPENDIX







Q: What is Amtgard?

A: Amtgard is a non-profit educational corporation dedicated to the study and recreation of the medieval and fantasy eras and genres. Amtgard is also a live action role playing (LARP) game that endeavors to recreate individual and group combat from the periods mentioned above.

Q: How and where did it start?

A: Amtgard first formed in El Paso, Texas in February of 1983. Since then it has grown to ten kingdoms stretching from Oregon to New Hampshire with smaller groups in such diverse areas as England, Korea, Finland, Sweden, and even Russia.

Q: What does "AMTGARD" mean?

A: Contrary to popular myth, Amtgard is not an acronym. The word is essentially Norse/Icelandic in origin, and refers to a land between Midgard and Valhalla, a plain of existence for heroes who are more than human but still less than the 'gods'.

Q: Who owns the rights to Amtgard?

A: Amtgard, Incorporated is owned and copyrighted by Amtgard, Kingdom of the Burning Lands in El Paso, Texas (copyright 1983, 1987, 1993, 1996, 1997). Kingdoms across the world are semiautonomous groups bound together by the Amtgard contract and a shared set of rules and bylaws.

Q: Does Amtgard publish more information about itself?

A: Amtgard publishes a variety of publications including the Rules of Play, Corpora of Bylaws, the Amtgard Contract, Dor Un Avathar (the monster handbook), Talons of the Phoenix (the interkingdom newsletter), and various newsletters published locally by the many kingdoms, duchies, baronies, and shires of Amtgard.

Q: Who is allowed to participate?

A: Amtgard is available to all. It is a non-sectarian organization that welcomes all participants. However, combat activities are restricted to those 14 and older and certain government offices are restricted to those 18 and older. All Amtgard members must sign a waiver.

Q: What kind of people participate in Amtgard?

A: Amtgard members (Amtgarders or Amtgardians) come from all walks of life. Members have included secretaries, housewives, college professors, professional writers, anthropologists, students, officers in the military, police officers, computer technicians, etc.

Q: How is Amtgard unique from otherLARPs?

A: Amtgard is unique on two levels, firstly in the use of its class ability system and magic points rules that allow diverse recreations of personas from history and fantasy, secondly in the fast action combat that is both realistic and safe.



Q: Is Amtgard combat really safe?

A: Amtgard weapons are safe, foam padded replicas of the real things. Weapons are checked regularly by a guild of referees (Reeves) and there are strict rules on safety (such as shots to the head are not allowed). However, Amtgard combat is a sport (which is why waivers are required) and injuries, though rare, can happen. Generally Amtgard combat is safe, fun recreation and entertainment.

Q: What are Amtgard battlegames like?

A: Amtgard battlegames range from tournies and duels (one on one combat) to quests versus monsters and other fell folk to grand melees and wars between kingdoms that involve hundreds of individuals. All battlegames and scenarios are covered by a comprehensive set of rules.

Q: Do I need to make a costume?

A: Costumes in Amtgard are correctly referred to as 'garb'. In combat situations garb can range from a simple T-tunic to a full set of armor. Garb for the feasts and quests is more intricate and involved. New members are allowed a grace period, but are eventually, with the aid of the Amtgard Garbers Guild, are expected to garb themselves with 'period' clothing.

Q: What about the weapons?

A: Amtgard weapons are made from a base of either fiberglass or PVC tubing covered with layers of high impact foam such as ensolite. Cloth covers along with padded pommels and hiltguards produce functional and safe weapons. Weapons that could leave bruises or break bones are disqualified by the Reeves Guild.

Q: How do I get weapons and armor?

A: Most Amtgarders eventually build their own weapons and armor. Loaner equipment is often provided for new members (i.e. 'newbies'). Most new members, after participating in Amtgard for a few weeks, quickly learn to make equipment tailored for their own specific styles and needs.

Q: What about roleplaying?

A: Roleplaying is important to Amtgard. Members choose a persona (Knight or Elf or Barbarian, for example). Players roleplay their class, especially in the quests and feasts, and it is this roleplaying that adds color and depth to the overall Amtgard experience. Persona histories and personal symbols are encouraged and may be registered with the Guildmaster of Heraldry.

Q: What persona classes can I play?

A: Fourteen specific battlefield classes are provided at Amtgard (ranging from Archer and Assassin to Monk and Wizard). Individuals can change their class between battlegames and try out as many of the classes as they want. Those who wish to participate in non-battlefield activities can play such classes as waterbearers, Artisans, Pages, etc.





Q: How do I get started?:

A: Getting started is easy. Show up at the group nearest you, watch, and see if Amtgard is for you. If you like it then go up to any Amtgard officer or member and ask to get involved. (Amtgard is people friendly). She or he will introduce you to the Prime Minister or Monarch, and from there you may have embarked on a lifetime of comradery and fun.

Q: Is there an Amtgard chapter in my area?

A: Amtgard chapters are springing up everywhere. Kingdoms (the largest groups that coordinate the smaller duchies, baronies and shires) exist in Portland (OR), Denver, Las Cruces, El Paso, Amarillo, Dallas, San Antonio/Austin, Nashua (NH), and Houston. More information is located in the contact flier and starter kit.

Q: If there is no local group, can I start my own chapter?

A: Contact fliers, starter kits, rulebooks and corpora, and contracts are available from the Amtgard Board of Directors (snailmail address at 900-A Stockwell, El Paso, TX 79902), or you can email queries to either:

Grand Duke Ivar at ivar@amtgard.com

OR

Duke Trinity at trinity@cibola.net

Amtgard materials for starting new groups are provided at cost, and as stated before, groups are springing up everywhere.

Q: Can non-fighters participate?

A: Noncombat classes have already been mentioned. But, Amtgard is much more than the battlegames. In addition to the feasts and quests, Amtgard holds campouts, arts and sciences competitions, live performances such as bardic singing and belly dancing, gaming tournies, workshops (how to build armor, etc.) and so on. Amtgard is a very diverse group with many interests among its members.

Q: Does Amtgard cost anything?

A: Amtgard participation is free. Local groups, though, may ask for a six dollar donation every six months. This confers voting rights in Amtgard government (the Althing), a subscription to the local kingdom newsletter, and a copy of the rulebook and corpora. Nominal fees may be asked for special events (such as to pay for the food at feasts). However, there are no pay-for-play rules.

Q: How does Amtgard fit in with the 'real' world?

A: All Amtgarders are expected to obey the laws of their country, state and local government jurisdictions. Illegal activities are not condoned within Amtgard. The Amtgard word for the 'real' world is 'mundania'. Amtgard endeavors to maintain good relations with government and its agencies. Many Amtgard groups participate in such activities as telethons, non-profit fundraising, canned food drives, demonstrations for local schools and groups such as the Boy Scouts of America, Christmas caroling for children in hospitals, etc.





Q: How does Amtgard fit in with other medieval and/or LARP groups (Such as Dagorhir, IFGS, Nero, and SCA to name a few.)?

A: Because of differences in play and rules, Amtgard weapons, experience and titles are not valid or legal in these groups and vice-versa with these groups as they relate to Amtgard.

Q: What about special events?

A: Most Amtgard groups run battlegames every weekend. However, some special Amtgard events are held annually. Attendance can range in the hundreds or even over a thousand. Chief and most important of these events is the Gathering of the Clans (usually called 'Clan') sponsored every July by the Kingdom of the Burning Lands. It is a camping event that has been held every year since 1983 at the Sleepy Grass Campground in the Lincoln National Forest in Cloudcroft, New Mexico. Other major annual events include Arakis (sponsored by the Kingdom of the Iron Mountains in Denver), Spring War (sponsored by the Celestial Kingdom in Austin), and the Interkingdom Arts and Sciences Olympiad (rotated every year between the Amtgard kingdoms). For more information on 1997 events, email the following individuals:

- *Arakis (June): Duchess Leviatar at wolfrum@aol.com
- *Clan (July): Countess Savaen at clan-15@amtgard.com
- *Olympiad (October): Duke Phocion at jerejohn@nmsu.edu

Q: Is Amtgard on the internet?

A: Amtgard is very 'wired'. It's many internet resources include:

- *Mailing list: amtgard-1@amtgard.com
to subscribe send email to majordomo@amtgard.com with "subscribe amtgard-1" in the body.
- *Official web page: <http://www.amtgard.com/~amtgard>
- *AMTMUX: telnet amtgard.com 1995 (I.P. 129.108.63.11)
Amtmux is a place where amtgarders can chat online in real time for free.
telnet://www.amtgard.com:1995 via the web.
- *AMTMUD: telnet amtgard.com 5555
Amtmud is a multi-user dungeon (MUD) where players roleplay and kill monsters together.
telnet://www.amtgard.com:5555 via the web.
- *If you have questions or need help with any of internet resources, contact: ivar@amtgard.com
- *Remember all internet resources are 100 percent free.

Q: How do I learn more about Amtgard?

A: Try us on the internet or via snailmail. The award winning official Amtgard website contains a wealth of information, or you can email:

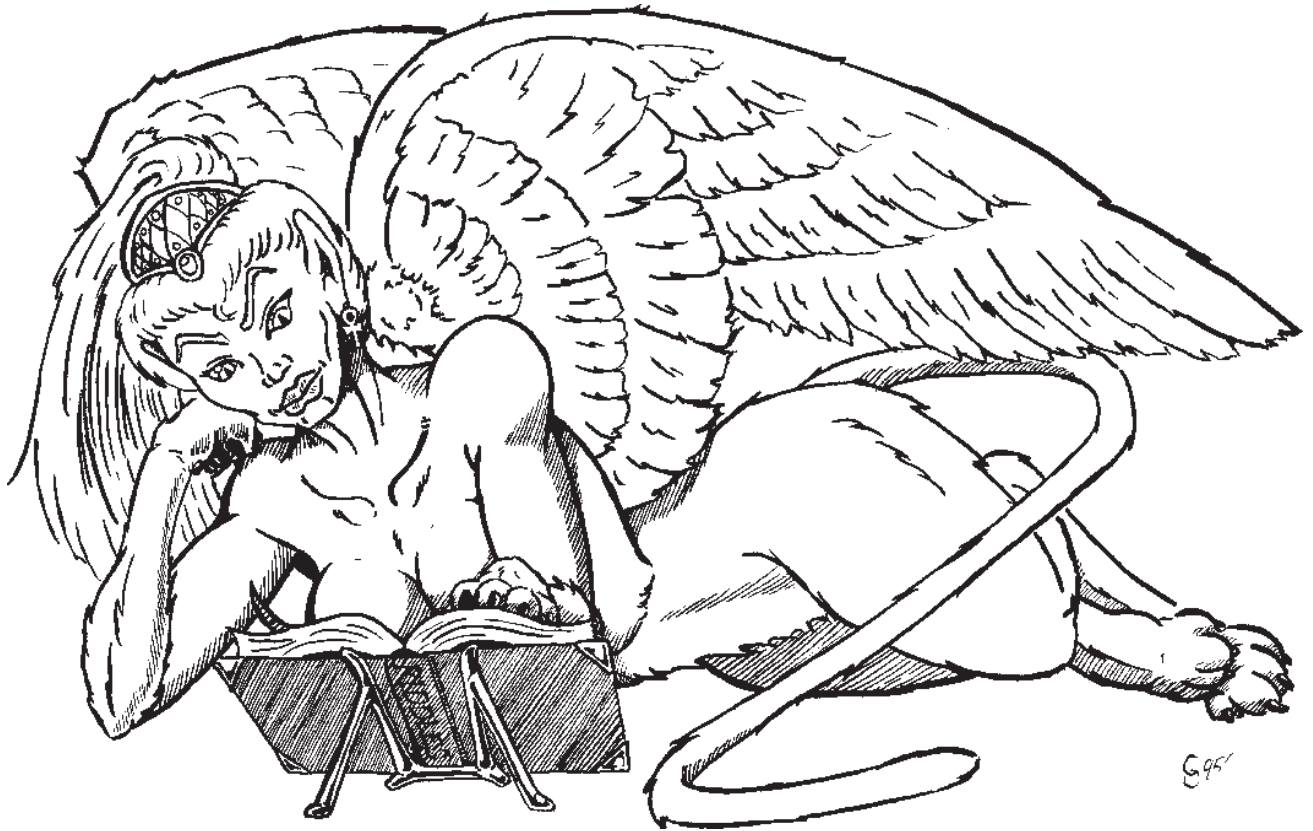
- *Grand Duke Aramithris (who maintains this FAQ) at
ja02@utep.bitnet@utepvm.utep.edu or aramith@thoth.utep.edu

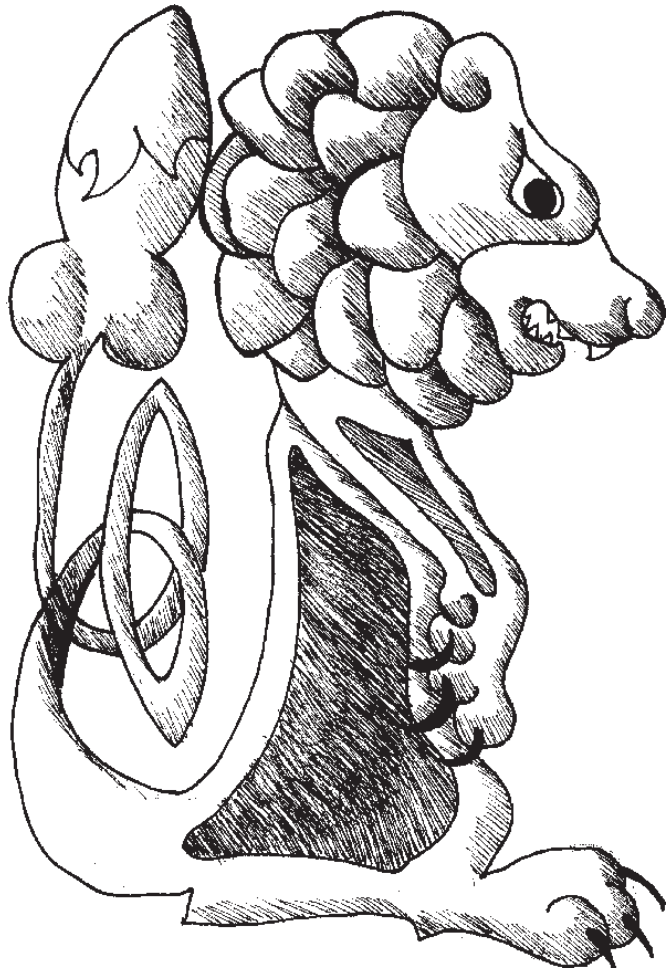
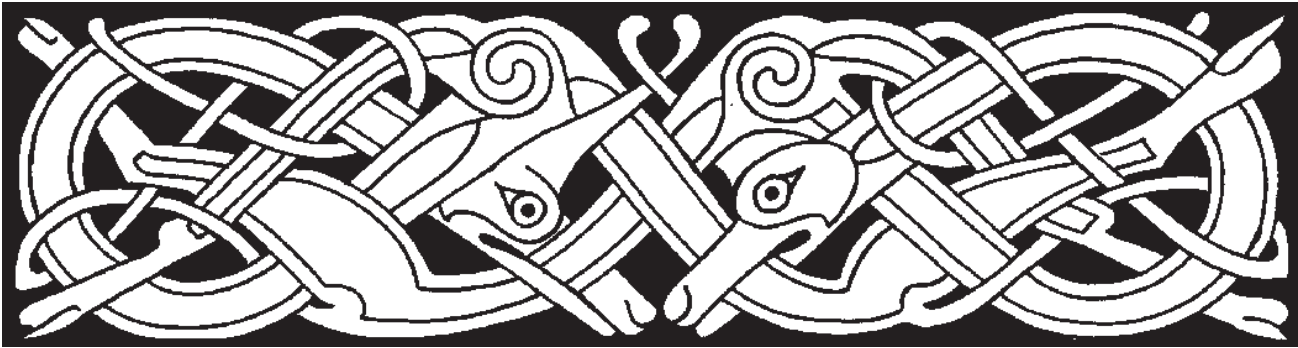
Or, you can ask a friend... We hope to hear from you!

"Amtgard, where your imagination is 'period'!"



GLOSSARY







1. ability- non-magical rules used by a class in the games.
2. Althing- Amtgard government where the populace votes.
3. Amtgard- translates to “the land between Midgard and Valhalla”.
4. antipaladin- the class of evil and chaotic knights.
5. Arakis- yearly camping event held in the Iron Mountains.
6. Arch Duke- former Monarch of both a Kingdom and a Duchy.
7. archer- a fighting class that utilizes longbows and crossbows.
8. arm- in the rules, the area from wrist to the shoulder joint.
9. armor- leather or metal garb that stops some nonmagic hits.
10. a&s- arts and sciences, such as singing, making garb, etc.
11. assassin- a fighting class using poison and throwing weapons
12. autocrat- the person in charge of running an event.
13. axe- a slashing weapon with one or two cutting edges.
14. baldric- a piece of cloth worn diagonally over the chest.
15. barbarian- a fighting class of fur clad berserkers.
16. bard- a magic using class that sings and performs.
17. bardic- singing, dancing and acting for the populace.
18. Baron/Baroness-
 - A. the former Prime Minister of a Kingdom.
 - B. the elected Monarch of a Barony.
19. Barony- the next biggest group after a Shire.
20. base- a team’s home area during a battlegame.
21. battlegame- a scenario of 2 or more teams using all the rules.
22. belt- a strip (usually leather) worn about the waist.
23. black- color code for throwing weapons.
24. blow/shot- an attempt to strike something in combat.
25. blue- color code for smashing, slashing, and bashing weapons.
26. B.O.D.- Board of Directors.
27. bounce- spell ball or projectile that strikes two objects.
28. brasshat/rules lawyer- someone who tries to tell everyone what to do.
29. Burning Lands- the first kingdom, based in El Paso, Texas.
30. bye- advancement in a tourney without fighting an opponent.
31. campout- all weekend events held at parks and forests.
32. Captain- the leader of a fighting company.
33. Celestial Kingdom- kingdom based in Austin, Texas.
34. chain-
 - A. one symbol worn by Knights is an unadorned chain.
 - B. the hinged, non-striking part of a flail.
 - C. a position in Juggling.
35. Champion- by rite of combat, the person who defends the Crown.
36. chapter- an Amtgard group: Shire, Barony, Duchy, or Kingdom.
37. charm- a magic that controls or influences the target.
38. cheese- a questionable or immoral act committed in battle.
39. Clan- THE annual camping event sponsored by the Burning Lands.
40. class- the role people play in a game such as monk or scout.



41. cloved orange- used at feasts to invite a kiss.
42. Claw Legion- one of the two oldest companies in existence.
43. color-
 - A. the coding that indicates how a weapon is used.
 - B. a nonbattlefield class such as artisan or minstrel.
 - C. battlefield classes require garb of specific colors.
44. company- a organized group of friends who fight together.
45. component- an item such as a wand required to cast some magic.
46. Consort/Regent- elected officer in charge of a&s, feasts, etc.
47. contract- document signed between the B.O.D. and all chapters.
48. coronation- ceremony or event when a new Monarch takes office.
49. coronet- metal or leather headband worn by nobles.
50. Corpora- the bylaws of Amtgard.
51. Corsairs- the other oldest existing company in Amtgard.
52. Count/Countess- former Royal Consort of a Kingdom.
53. count(s)-
 - A. seconds to cast magic, return from death, etc.
 - B. a rule, ability or attack that affects something.
54. court-
 - A. the Monarch, Consort, and their group officers.
 - B. a ceremony where the Monarch gives awards or honors.
55. crown- a metal circlet worn by the Monarch and Consort.
56. Crown, the- the Royalty, the Monarch and Royal Consort.
57. Crown, knight of the- a peer who is former Royalty.
58. dagger- a stabbing weapon 18 inches or less in length.
59. damage- the number of hits done to armor, forts, etc.
60. death- time a killed person sits out before rejoining a game.
61. Defender-
 - A. protector of a Royal Consort.
 - B. a former Kingdom level Champion.
62. deflection- a shot that strikes and bounces away at an angle.
63. demo- a demonstration of Amtgard for the general public.
64. destroy- to render equipment or an object unuseable.
65. ditch battles- games with no magic, armor, or class abilities.
66. donations- contributions to a chapter's financial treasury.
67. Dragon- an order awarded for excellence in the arts.
68. Dragonspine- a kingdom based in Las Cruces, New Mexico.
69. Dream, the- the ideals and lofty goals of Amtgard.
70. druid- magic using class that uses wood lore and earth magic.
71. Duchy- the largest group under the sponsorship of a Kingdom.
72. duel- a one on one fight, usually in a tournament.
73. dues- donations that confer voting rights in a chapter.
74. Duke/Duchess-
 - A. a former kingdom level Monarch.
 - B. the elected Monarch of a Duchy.





75. Emerald Hills- a kingdom based in Dallas, Texas.
76. enchantment- magic that continues its effect after it is cast.
77. equipment- one's personal items, such as armor and weapons.
78. event- scheduled Amtgard meeting, feast, battle, campout, etc.
79. experience- the number of weeks a person has played a class.
80. fantasy- the swords and sorcery aspect of Amtgard.
81. favor- something worn on a belt to indicate honors or status.
82. feast- an organized event with food & drink for the populace.
83. feet- in the rules, the foot from the ankle on down.
84. fighter- anyone who participates in a battlegame.
85. fighter practice- nonevent where people learn to fight.
86. fighting- nonmagic classes such as warriors, monks, etc.
87. fixed- an enchantment that cannot be moved.
88. flail- a hinged weapon such as a morningstar or nunchuku.
89. flame- game effects such a lightning, fire arrows, etc.
90. Flame- an order awarded to an outstanding group.
91. Flame, Knight of the- a peer recognized for superior service.
92. flank- to rush around and surround the enemy's forces.
93. flat- an illegal shot by a lightly padded side of a flatblade
94. flat blade- weapon with only a front and a back striking edge.
95. foam- firm materials such as ensolite to make weapons.
96. game item- an object essential to winning a scenario.
97. garb-
 - A. clothing or costumes such as tunics, capes, and armor.
 - B. an order awarded for making quality garb.
98. garber- someone who specializes in the making of garb.
99. glance- a shot that nicks a target and thus does not count.
100. Golden Plains- a kingdom based in the Texas panhandle.
101. Goldenvale- a kingdom based in New Hampshire.
102. Grand Duke- former two time Monarch of a Kingdom.
103. grapple/shield bash- illegal physical contact during a battle.
104. graze- a shot from a spellball that barely touches but counts.
105. green- color code for a stabbing weapon.
106. Griffon- an order awarded for honor and chivalry.
107. guard-
 - A. a person sworn to protect the Monarch and Consort.
 - B. the padded hand protector on a weapon.
108. guild- group of people who practice the same craft or service.
109. halberd/naginata- polearms that are both slash and stab legal.
110. hall- a building where a feast and or court is held.
111. Handbook- the rules of play.
112. Harvest War- a yearly event held in Albuquerque, New Mexico.





- 113. head- in the rules, the neck, clavicle and head.
- 114. head shot- an illegal shot that is forbidden & does not count.
- 115. head table- where Monarch & Consort sit at feasts or court.
- 116. heal- magic or class ability that removes the effect of a hit.
- 117. healer- a magic using class that heals, mends, and protects.
- 118. herald- a person who makes announcements for the Monarch.
- 119. heraldry- the science of personal symbols and devices.
- 120. hit-
 - A. a blow or shot that touches a target and counts.
 - B. many hits (damage) are needed to destroy some items.
 - C. to strike someone in combat (informal usage).
- 121. hold- means to “stop fighting right now!”
- 122. honor-
 - A. courtesy and respect shown to others.
 - B. awards such as noble titles, knighthood, orders.
- 123. household- an organized nonfighting group of friends.
- 124. huzzah- exclamation meaning “Well done!”
- 125. Hydra- an order awarded for excelling at Qualifications.
- 126. immunity- resistance to a game effect such as poison or flame.
- 127. invulnerability- a form of armor that stops magic.
- 128. Iron Mountains- a kingdom based in Colorado.
- 129. javelin- a short stabbing spear that can also be thrown.
- 130. jester- the court fool who performs at events.
- 131. Jovious- an order awarded for outstanding attitude.
- 132. judge- someone who scores the entries at a&s competitions.
- 133. juggling- Amtgard five man team “football”.
- 134. King/Queen- the Monarch of a Kingdom.
- 135. Kingdom- the largest, most important type of Amtgard chapter.
- 136. Knight/peer- the highest honor, only awarded by a King/Queen.
- 137. lay on- literally mean, “let the game begin!”
- 138. leg- in the rules, everything below the hip except the butt.
- 139. legal-
 - A. a shot or game effect done correctly by the rules.
 - B. a weapon that is safe and doesn’t hurt people.
 - C. a person old enough to fight (14 or older).
- 140. level- each class has 6 levels, one per 12 weeks experience.
- 141. lieutenant/sergeant- second in command of a company.
- 142. life/lives- the number of times you can die in a battlegame.
- 143. limb- an arm or leg.
- 144. Lion- an order awarded for loyalty and honor.
- 145. list- the people who are entered in a tournament.
- 146. live steel- real weapons, never allowed in the battlegames.





147. long- a weapon that is between 3 and 4 feet long.
148. Lord/Lady-
- A. noble title awarded for service.
 - B. the head of a household.
 - C. the elected Monarch of a Shire.
149. madu- a short stabbing spear affixed to a shield.
150. magic- rules for the casting of spells in the battlegames.
151. magic user- either the bard, druid, healer, or wizard class.
152. man at arms/page- servant to a knight, but under his squire.
153. Masque- an order awarded for outstanding roleplaying.
154. Marquis/Marquise- former Kingdom P.M., Consort, and Monarch.
155. Master- a person who is superior in his guild or class.
156. medieval- the Middle Ages, roughly 800 to 1600 A.D.
157. missile- a weapon or magic that is propelled through the air.
158. Monarch- the elected chief officer of a chapter.
159. monk- a fighting class specializing in martial arts.
160. monster- a class of creatures for special scenarios.
161. monster book- a listing of monsters and their abilities.
162. mosh- serious, intensive and fun Amtgard combat.
163. mundane- the “real world”, that which is outside of Amtgard.
164. MUX/MUD- Amtgard adventuring and chatting on the internet.
165. neutral-
- A. a magic that cannot be dispelled.
 - B. a person in a battlegame who is not on any side.
 - C. a reeve who makes fair and informed decisions.
166. newbie- someone who has just joined Amtgard.
167. newsletter- a publication by, for and about a chapter.
168. noble- titled personages such as Duchess, Count, etc.
169. Olympiad- annual a&s competition between the kingdoms.
170. orange- color coding for a weapon with only 1 striking edge.
171. order- an award given by the Monarch or Consort.
172. Owl- an order awarded for excellence in the sciences.
173. padded- foam covered weapons and shields.
174. paladin- the class of good and lawful knights.
175. parry/block- to stop or knock aside a blow.
176. patent- noble titles granted by discretion of the King/Queen.
177. peasant- someone who is not in garb.
178. persona- roleplaying your character, such as an elf or Viking.
179. Phoenix, the-
- A. the symbol of Amtgard, Incorporated.
 - B. the device worn by paladins & antipaladins.





- 180. points- A. the number of hits a piece of armor can negate.
 B. the damage or total hits a weapon can do.
 C. the system for magic users to buy their magics.
- 181. poison- a game effect that makes wounds count as deaths.
- 182. polearm- a 5 ft.+ long weapon with a longer haft than blade.
- 183. populace/members- the people who belong to a chapter.
- 184. Prime Minister/P.M.- officer in charge of records.
- 185. projectile- any throwing weapon, rock, arrow, or javelin.
- 186. protection- a magic or ability that stops another effect.
- 187. Qualifications- a&s contests held every six months in a group.
- 188. quest- a scenario involving the search for some item.
- 189. rap- an attack where the sword comes around in a wide arc.
- 190. recipient- the target of a magic or attack.
- 191. records/sign in- proof of attendance and experience.
- 192. red- color code for a two handed weapon.
- 193. reeve- a referee who coordinates the battlegames.
- 194. relic- an artifact with magical attributes.
- 195. rhinohide- someone who does not acknowledge being hit.
- 196. Rose- an order awarded for service.
- 197. round blade- a weapon with a legal striking edge on all sides.
- 198. Royalty- The Monarch and Consort of a Kingdom.
- 199. sash- a piece of cloth worn around the waist.
- 200. scorpion- a rap that is thrown vertically, not horizontally.
- 201. scout- a fighting class of rangers and trackers.
- 202. scribe- group officer responsible for publications.
- 203. seige- A. battlegame where one side attacks another in a fort.
 B. equipment such as catapults, seige engines, etc.
- 204. Serpent, Knight of the- a peer superior in the a&s.
- 205. shield- a round or oblong nonweapon used to parry shots.
- 206. Shire- a new group that just formed.
- 207. short- any weapon under 3 feet long.
- 208. simo/simultaneous- shots that land at the same time.
- 209. Sir/Dame- proper form of address to a Knight.
- 210. slash- to strike with the edge of a weapon.
- 211. smith- one who makes weapons and armor.
- 212. spell- a magic that takes place immediately when it is cast.
- 213. spell ball- magic that is thrown, such as a fireball.
- 214. spell book- a magic user's listing of all the magics he has.
- 215. Spring War- an annual camping event held in the Austin area.
- 216. squire- a servant to a knight.





- 217. strike- a clean shot to a target.
- 218. subdue- to take someone prisoner in a battlegame.
- 219. sword- a slashing and/or stabbing weapon less than 5 ft. long.
- 220. Sword, Knight of the- a peer who excels in fighting prowess.
- 221. tenure- noble titles granted by criteria in the Corpora.
- 222. throwing- darts, shuriken, throwing daggers and axes.
- 223. torso- in the rules, the shoulders, back, chest, and buttocks.
- 224. tourney- a series of elimination bouts until there's a winner.
- 225. tunic/tabard- basic garb over the torso.
- 226. two handed- weapons that do double damage to armor & shields.
- 227. unbalanced- a game or scenario that is uneven or unfair.
- 228. unsafe- weapons or equipment that could hurt someone.
- 229. Valley of the Silver Rains- a kingdom based in Oregon.
- 230. verbal- spoken aloud, usually as relates to magic.
- 231. Viscount- former kingdom Champion and Weaponmaster.
- 232. vivat- literally means, "long live!"
- 233. waiver- a signed form that is required to play Amtgard.
- 234. Walker of the Middle- an order for outstanding reeving.
- 235. war board- a small shield attached to the forearm.
- 236. Warlord- a person who is excellent in tournies and duels.
- 237. warning- issued to troublemakers before they are removed.
- 238. warrior- fighting class that uses all melee weapons & armor.
- 239. weapon- foam padded replicas of real life weapons.
- 240. weapon check- to test a weapon to see if it is safe.
- 241. Weaponmaster-
 - A. a fighting tourney held every 6 months.
 - B. the person who wins this tourney.
- 242. weeks- the number of events a person has attended.
- 243. Wetlands- a kingdom based in the southeast, Texas area.
- 244. white- color code for an instant kill weapon.
- 245. white belt- reserved for only knights to wear.
- 246. wizard- a magic using class that uses elemental magic.
- 247. wound- a shot that hits an arm or leg, making it useless.
- 248. yellow- color code for weapons that are magical.
- 249. yield- to surrender or give up.
- 250. Zodiac- an order awarded for service in any one month period.



AMTGARD

Don't spend another weekend sitting around rolling dice and playing cards...

The Kingdom needs Heroes,
but not on paper!

Amtgard is a non-profit educational corporation dedicated to the study and recreation of the medieval and fantasy eras and genres. Amtgard is also a live action role playing (LARP) game that endeavors to recreate individual and group combat from the periods mentioned above.

Amtgard weapons are safe, foam padded replicas of the real things. Amtgard battlegames range from tournaments and duels (one on one combat) to quests versus monsters and other fell folk to grand melees and wars between kingdoms that involve hundreds of individuals. All battlegames and scenarios are covered by a comprehensive set of rules.

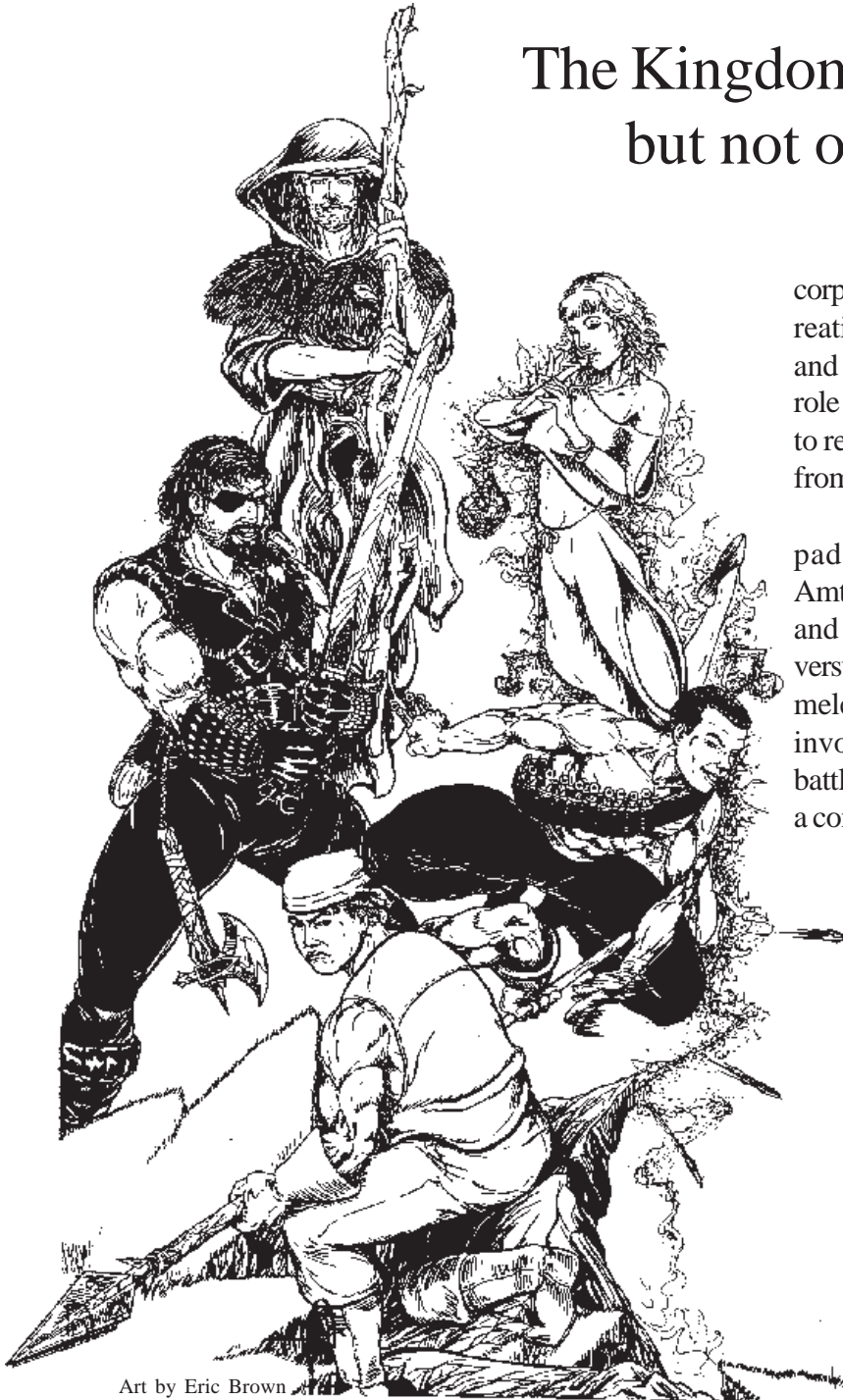
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Art by Eric Brown