

How to write an Award Recommendation
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With an addendum by Master Rhys Terafan Greydragon

In my years in the SCA, I have become convinced that one of the most important duties of each and every one of us is to write letters of recommendation for awards. I believe it is up to *you*—each and every one of you—to assure that deserving people are recognized in court.

But actually sitting down and writing a recommendation is daunting to some. So I've come up with some guidelines to help. Follow these guidelines and you, too, can have the awesome thrill of seeing a deserving person recognized for their skills or hard work based on your words, read in court for all to hear.

Don't forget to send recommendations for Principality awards to the Prince and Princess and recommendations for Baronial awards to the Baron and Baroness. Even though they are more local than the King and Queen, they can't see what everyone is doing. Sending in recommendations makes their jobs much easier!

There are three myths to dispel:

- 1) You do not need to be a member of the SCA to recommend someone for an award.
- 2) You do not have to have an award to recommend someone else for it.
- 3) You may recommend someone close to you for an award. After all, who knows more about what that person is doing?

When writing recommendations, here are a few steps you should keep in mind:

1. Do a little homework. Make sure the person does not already have the award you are recommending them for. In most kingdoms, the Order of Precedence (OP) is on the World Wide Web. Check the links at the bottom of the article for specific kingdoms. Or you can ask the herald in your local group to help you check the OP. Or get into a conversation with the person and find out what awards they already have.
2. Be specific. State what a person did and at which event and how long they've been doing it. List prizes they have won, events they've helped at, exactly what they did. No one is going to give an award based on "Lady Jane helps a lot at many events." Far better to state "Lady Jane chopped all the vegetables at the Ice Axe event for three years in a row. She redacted the soup recipe and documented it, then cooked 8 gallons of delicious soup. She has also been our Mistress of the Lists for 3 years and has never lost a fighter card." That gives the Crown an idea of EXACTLY what the candidate has done.
3. Include the SCA and modern name (if you know both) of the person, the group the person belongs to, and an idea of which events he or she will be attending. This helps the Crown schedule awards at an event the candidate is likely to be at.
4. Don't be shy about stating *which* award you are recommending someone for. A few Monarchs don't like that, as They reserve Their undisputed right to determine which award is most appropriate. But most appreciate the information.
5. Don't forget the Order Principals, if your kingdom has them. This is a *vital* part of the polling process. Send a copy of your recommendation to the Principal of the Order. In some cases, he or she will place your comments on the Watch List, if your kingdom uses them, which is regularly updated and read by members of the Order. This gives Companions of the order time to think about a candidate and to watch him or her. Which is what a Watch List is for, after all. *You do not have to be a companion of a polling order to send a recommendation to that order, whether that order is for a kingdom award or a peerage order.* You can even ask an Order to Watch a person you don't think is ready for an award. For example, an Atlantian who notices a promising fighting teacher, might try sending a request to the Principal of the Sea Stag (the Atlantian order for teaching fighting) and asking politely if he or she would consider placing the comments on their Watch List.

6. Don't forget the Royal Heirs. Send a copy of your recommendation to Their Highnesses. When they become King and Queen, they will have some idea already of who they would like to recognize in court. You can also send courtesy copies to your Baron/ess or seneschal, who can add words of their own if they feel it necessary.
7. Be regular. Keep a copy of your letter on line, or in a notebook, and update it regularly. I try to send my letter in once a reign—usually just after Crown Tourney. That way the Prince and Princess get it early, and will get an updated version soon after they become King and Queen. Make sure you are keeping track of your recommendees so you can take their names off your letter if they receive the award.

Here is a sample recommendation (this bears no relation to any actual Mudthaw autocrat or heraldic deputy.):

Johan Smithsson (James Brown) of the Barony of Settemour Swamp for the Order of the Silver Crescent.
AoA – 25 September, 1998

Order of the Ivory Tower – 30 March, 1999

Lord Johan has been an active and productive member of our Barony for five years. He shows up early to most of our events and tirelessly helps the autocrat set up. He also often stays late to help clean the site. He autocratted Mudthaw in 1997 and ran the event smoothly and for a small profit. He has supported our Herald for one year as her deputy and has helped her process paperwork and consult with members about names and arms. He is conscientious about handling money. He has helped build and maintain archery targets and equipment. He has supplied prizes for archery competitions. He has also made prizes for Arts and Sciences competitions. He has helped with baronial projects such as making the baronial thrones, chair covers for the chairs from the rental company, and marshals tabards. He is thoroughly reliable and many turn to him for help with projects, moving equipment, event support and odd jobs. He usually attends all Settmour Swamp events.

The list of awards for your kingdom will be on your kingdom's web site (which are listed at the end of this article). There are three peerage Orders and two other Awards that are SCA-wide and open for recommendations:

- Order of Chivalry
- Order of the Laurel
- Order of the Pelican
- Grant of Arms
- Award of Arms

Addendum: (by Master Rhys Terafan Greydragon)

When recommending someone for an order of which you are not a part (be it a kingdom order or a peerage order), the one thing to remember is to not assume the knowledge of the order. In other words, don't make it sound like you know exactly what the order should think about person X, and what the order should do. If you are not a knight, you shouldn't write "...this guy fights like a knight, can beat all of you, and you must knight him..." or if not a laurel you shouldn't write "... this person is a master of xxx craft and must be laurelled". Comments like those imply that you know better than the order what it should think, and that you have the knowledge of the order. It also translates as you presuming to be able to judge candidates for the peerage -- in effect claiming the peerage for yourself.

It is far better to offer your opinion, and only on those things which you feel fit to judge. That is, don't say person X is a peer, or that he should be a peer. Instead tell them that you the person in high esteem, and why. It is far better to make comments like "of all the people I have fought, person X displays the most consistent skill, weapons control, and courtesy..." or "... Lady Y has taught 15 classes on her craft, won 12 competitions, and always seems to have incredible research, detail, and skilled execution...".

This is a list of Kingdom Web sites:

Æthelmearc: www.aethelmearc.org
An Tir: www.antir.sca.org
Ansteorra: www.ansteorra.org

Artemisia: www.artemisia.sca.org
Atenveldt: www.atenveldt.org
Atlantia: www.atlantia.sca.org

Caid:	www.sca-caid.org	Outlands:	www.outlands.org
Calontir:	calontir.sca.org	Trimaris:	www.trimaris.org
Drachenwald:	www.drachenwald.sca.org	West:	www.westkingdom.org
Ealdormere:	www.ealdormere.sca.org		
East:	www.eastkingdom.org	(Coming Soon to a Continent near you)	
Meridies:	www.meridies.org	Lochac:	www.sca.org.au/lochac
Middle:	www.midrealm.org		

This is a list of each kingdom's Order of Precedence sites:

Æthelmearc:	www.contrib.andrew.cmu.edu/~grm/aethelmearc-op.html
An Tir:	www.antir.com/precedence
Ansteorra:	www.ansteorra.org/regnum/herald/OP
Artemisia:	www.artemisia.sca.org/op.html
Atenveldt:	www.swim-tech.com/opindex.html
Atlantia:	op.atlantia.sca.org
Caid:	www.sca-caid.org/herald/op.html
Calontir:	huscarl.com/opweb/index.htm
Drachenwald:	www.drachenwald.sca.org/files/opintro.htm
Ealdormere:	www.ealdormere.sca.org/op.shtml
East:	jducoeur.org/Prec
Meridies:	www.meridies.org/herald/ooop.asp
Middle:	www.midrealm.org/op
Outlands:	www.unm.edu/%7Ekballar/heraldry/wimble.html
Trimaris:	www.trimaris.org/triskele/sextant/OPINDEX.HTM
West:	heralds.westkingdom.org/Awards/index.htm#skip
Lochac:	www.sca.org.au/herald/awards/index.html

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