



What About My Kids?

Children are welcome and encouraged to participate in the SCA, as we feel we have a lot to offer children and their parents. With a little planning, taking kids along to an SCA event is no more difficult than taking them anywhere else. Here are a few things you should know to help make experience pleasant for everyone.

It's ok to let kids be kids every once and a while. Keep in mind that not all SCAdians have children and non-parents don't always understand the psychology of children. Remember those annoyed looks from the people at the last restaurant? As long as kids are mostly on restaurant behavior, they will be fine.

You can't fully expect kids to sit around quietly all day, during mom and dad's favorite activities. You can bring toys, crayons, and books for your kids, so that they could occupy themselves. You can start a game of blind man's bluff, fox and geese, drop the handkerchief or ring-around-the-rosy...all period games, so that kids can run around, stretch their legs, and participate. If nothing else, go away from the main event and play a short game of tag, to tire them out a bit. This works especially well right before court begins. If they still can't sit still during court, it's best to take them out to play. Better to have one person miss court, than the whole group.

There are lots of modern toys readily available in a modern home, which would fit just as well in a Middle Age setting. Some of those toys are wooden blocks, rag dolls, leather balls, wooden tops, hobby horses, wooden sword and shield. These types of toys are traditions from hundreds of years ago. There are also a number of modern toys, which while being modern, would not be totally out of place. Some examples of these toys are Lego sets of castles or Vikings, crayons and coloring books (especially for fairy tales), plastic armor and swords. Of course, if you child has a hot pink teddy bear she won't leave home without, it's ok to bring it along. Kids don't really understand the difference between 14th century and the 20th century and it's not really fair to make them miserable so we could play our game. Besides, if kids get miserable, so will the parents.

Always bring food and snacks for you kids. SCA meals usually run late, and a lot of times feast contains food that is not really meant for the modern youngster's palate. So, keeping a small cooler packed with bread, cheese, carrots, cookies, and juice, will keep the kids full and happy. You might want to consider having the kids go "off board" at events. This means that you won't pay for the feast or lunch that is served at the event. This is an especially good idea if you have a picky eater. Sausages, cold chicken, fresh or dried fruit, bread and butter, wheat crackers and cheese are all period foods that are easy to transport and easy for kids to eat. The needs of a hungry child are far more important than whether or not the food is considered period. Always bring plenty to drink you and your kids. Drinks (even water) are not always supplied and the cooks can't always let you into the kitchen.

During the Middle Ages, children dressed as their parents did. For practical purposes, though, keep these hints in mind. 1. Make sure that kid's garb is washable. Kids in a

brocade Tudor dress are very cute, unless they really want to wear it, it could be a nightmare for parent and child. 2. If really want them to have fancy garb, try using washable velvets, brushed corduroy or velour for the look without the hassle. 3. Make garb large and loose. Kids grow quickly, and garb does not. Making kids garb every time you turn around can become a costly venture. Just belt the loose garment at first and as the child grows into it, the garment will become shirt like than a long tunic. 4. It doesn't take much fabric to make kids garb and so raiding the remnant bins at the craft store for ½ yard pieces is a wonderful way to save money. 5. Start a hand-me-down garb exchange with other parents. 6. Use cottons or wools for added strength and comfort. 7. Use French seems for added strength. 8. Cotton, rubber-soled shoes are great for kids and they are inexpensive too. Leather sandals can work in the summertime, but they don't offer much support for a running kid.

Some extra hints are: bring extra garb and mundane clothes with you. Bring jackets and cloaks as well; outerwear is a must for the climate in this Barony. Bring a first aid kit.

Bring hats and bug spray and sunscreen for outdoor events.

Many SCA activities are open to kids participating. Some events even have youth activities already planned. Don't be afraid to start games if kids seem bored or start getting into trouble. A lot of paper and crayons could go a long way, by keeping little ones entertained and quiet, to helping kids make little booklet to present to the Royals or the autocrat (event coordinator). Children are welcome to participate in anything you feel they are mature enough to handle. But children 12 and under must within sight and/or hearing range of their parents at all times, even if participating in official children's activities. Some dances and arts and crafts activities are great things for kids to do at events. Archery is open to anyone who could handle the bow. While heavy fighting and fencing are not open to people younger than 18, many groups have places and times for youth combat. Youth combat marshals have children dressed in field hockey armor to fight each other with foam weapons (large play swords made from foam and PVC pipes).

And some groups even have loaner gear so any kid, who wants to, could try it out! Older children can act as pages. In the Middle Ages, boys 7 or 8 years old were sent to households of important men for training. In return, the boys served their household, their Lord at table, and ran errands. Many SCA households take both boys and girls as pages. There is an award in our Barony to recognize children's service, it's called the Barnacle.

Children and their parents have special responsibilities in the SCA. Much of the equipment we use is dangerous, fragile, or expensive. Armor, daggers, swords, goblets, and embroidery all fascinate kids. Teach kids to ask permission before touching anyone's gear, so that accidents can be minimized.

HOLD is a term used by our fighters to alert members of potential dangers. When someone yells HOLD, all fighting stops instantly so that people could stop and see what the problem might be before continuing to fight again.

Keep kids out of the kitchen or any other specially sectioned off part of an event site. A feast is a delicately timed affair, not many cooks can stop and deal with visitors while in feast preparations. And an unsupervised kid in the kitchen is never a good idea.

Teach kids that the call of "oyez" (pronounced oye-yeah) when pronounced by a Herald is a call for attention. When the call is made, everyone quiets down and listens to the announcement.

Most SCA adults will respond if they see a child in danger or trouble, but don't rely on others. Children are the responsibility of parents. Work with other parents to share child-watching duties so that you could have some free time to enjoy the day's activities. The SCA can be a great learning experience and a lot of fun for your children. With a little preparation and some common sense, your kids will be able to enjoy all that we have to offer. And so will you!

Updated on 06/21/07 by Fru Ellisif of the Endless Hills