

Silent Heraldry

SCA-SPECIFIC SIGN LANGUAGE

REVISED FOR PENNSIC XXIII, A.S. XXIX

REVISED FOR CALONTIR HERALD HANDBOOK, A.S. I

This handout is a meager attempt to explain sign language in words. While someone who knows sign language will probably understand some of the handout, it is **unbelievably difficult** to explain sign language in words. Videos for some of the signs have been linked here for that very reason. Therefore this handout is meant as a reminder for those who have taken any class **and is not intended to stand as a teaching document on its own**.

The basic philosophy behind the invention of SCA-specific signs to date is this: if it exists in the language, **don't mess with it!!!**¹ If it does not exist in the language, the first place to look for an idea to invent a sign is the heraldry. If it does not immediately lend itself to either of these techniques, try to brainstorm what the term means and work from there.²

I will NEVER be able to cover every possible sign invention - I'll never be in that many places at once!! But if my students have the techniques to cope with new and unusual sign situations on their own, that's all I can ask for.³

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¹ For example, the heraldry of the Middle Kingdom is wonderfully iconic and would make a great heraldry-based sign. But there is already a sign for the word 'middle' and when someone says "middle", as an interpreter I automatically do the sign that exists.

² There is an ASL sign for 'court' but it means a court of law in the modern sense. When I tried to decide on a sign for Court in the SCA sense, I finally created a "portmanteau sign": a combination of the signs for 'meeting' and 'celebration', which is how I see SCA Courts.

³ Let me be clear about something. When this was originally put together, it was for students of mine at Pennsic. At that time, I was operating in a vacuum. There was no Society Deputy to Laurel for Sign Heraldry. There was no network of signers, no video links to signs that should have been canon. The only people who signed with me outside of Pennsic were my students. At Pennsic, I did meet signers from other Kingdoms and we chatted about many things. We did NOT brainstorm signs. If you look at THL Nesscia's signs and think "That's so much simpler than Cedar's," you will probably be right. Clearly, I grabbed on to the coronets of rank and tried to mimic them in sign, while THL Nesscia carried the concept of *KING through to the other signs for high rank. I also have no idea what they do in the East now, not having been to an East Kingdom event recently where a signer was present.

If you have any questions, thoughts, ideas, concerns about sign language use in the SCA, please feel free to contact me at the address/phone above. You can also check with your Kingdom Herald to determine if your Kingdom has a Silent/Sign Herald, or contact the Society Deputy to Laurel for Sign Heraldry.

NOTE: All ASL signs are preceded by an asterisk (*)

[Ed. note: The phrase "Manual Alphabet Letter" is shortened "MAL" to preserve my wrists and space. I have also removed the sections on Kingdom Awards, as my wrists are griping. :) [If you really want them, you can contact Cedar]

Signs	Word Descriptions of Actions	Video Links
*KING	MAL "K" from non-dominant shoulder to dominant hip. (Be sure that the palm orientation is correct -- if not, this can easily be confused with the sign for "*PRINCE")	KING (Nesscia)
*QUEEN	MAL "Q" moving from non-dominant shoulder to dominant hip.	QUEEN (Nesscia)
*PRINCE	MAL "P" moving from non-dominant shoulder to dominant the hip. (Be sure that the palm orientation is correct – if not, this can easily be confused with the sign for “*KING”)	PRINCE (Nesscia)
*PRINCESS	Sign for *GIRL plus sign for *PRINCE	PRINCESS (Nesscia)
DUKE	MAL “W” at dominant temple (the closest we could come to the STRAWBERRY LEAVES of a ducal coronet of rank)	DUKE (Nesscia's alternate version)
COUNT	MAL “C” moving from center of forehead to dominant temple	COUNT (Nesscia's alternate version)
COUNTESS	MAL “C” at dominant temple + “*GIRL	http://www.spreadthesign.com/us/4103/girl-american-english COUNTESS (Nesscia's alternate version)
VISCOUNT	MAL “V” moving from center of forehead to dominant temple	VISCOUNT (Nesscia's alternate version)
VISCOUNTESS	MAL “V” at dominant temple + “*GIRL”	http://www.spreadthesign.com/us/4103/girl-american-english VISCOUNTESS (Nesscia's alternate version)
LAUREL	MAL “L” on each hand placed on chest where the peerage medallion would rest, showing the shape of the laurel wreath	LAUREL (Nesscia)
PELICAN	Duck-bill (handshape like the sign for “*NO”) then same handshape moving to pierce the chest (the symbol of the order, the pelican vulning itself)	PELICAN (Nesscia)
*PEER	Sign for “*EQUAL”	PEER (Nesscia)
MASTER/ MISTRESS	Sign for equal made into an initialized sign using the MAL “M” on each hand (all masters/mistresses of whatever flavor are peers)	http://www.spreadthesign.com/us/51607/peer-american-english MASTER/MISTRESS (Nesscia's alternate version)
KNIGHT	MAL “K” at the waist moving from center to dominant side, drawing the belt which is the symbol of the order	KNIGHT (Nesscia)
SQUIRE	MAL “S” in the same movement as the sign for “KNIGHT”	SQUIRE (Nesscia)
MASTER/MISTR ESS OF ARMS	MAL “M” at non-dominant shoulder, moving to dominant hip where it becomes MAL “A”, for the baldric that is the symbol of the order	MASTER/MISTRESS OF ARMS (Nesscia)
BARON	Closed “X” handshape moving from center of the forehead to dominant side, denoting three of the pearls in the Baronial coronet	BARON (Nesscia's alternate versions)
BARONESS	Closed “X” handshape moving from center of the forehead to dominant side, denoting three of the pearls in the Baronial coronet + “*GIRL” ⁴	BARONESS (Nesscia's alternate versions)
SENECHAL	“*KEY” + “*PERSON” indicator	http://www.spreadthesign.com/us/89834/key-american-english

⁴Note: If it becomes important to differentiate between a “LANDED” and a “COURT” baron/baroness, you can do so. When I lived in the Midrealm, it was easy to do because all LANDED barons had gold coronets and all COURT barons had silver coronets. But that does not seem to hold true in the Eastrealm (and these are the only two kingdoms of which I have any experience).

Signs	Word Descriptions of Actions	Video Links
		http://www.spreadthesign.com/us/245823/person-american-english SENECHAL (Nesscia's alternate version)
EXCHEQUEUR	“*COUNT” + “*PERSON” indicator	http://www.spreadthesign.com/us/153261/count-american-english http://www.spreadthesign.com/us/245823/person-american-english EXCHEQUER (Nesscia's alternate version)
MARSHALL	Mime pulling a sword then with “one” handshapes, cross fingers in saltire (the heraldry denoting marshals)	"SWORD" at http://www.aslpro.com/cgi-bin/aslpro/aslpro.cgi
AUTOCRAT	“*CONTROL” + “*PERSON” indicator (Closed “X” handshape on both hands, palms facing each other. Move alternately forward and backward – as in pulling strings) I've also seen the ASL sign for “BOSS” made with an “A”, but I find that a very awkward maneuver.	http://www.spreadthesign.com/us/48574/manage-american-english http://www.spreadthesign.com/us/245823/person-american-english EVENT STEWARD (Nesscia's alternate version)
ARCHERY MARSHALL	Left hand in “one” handshape, right hand MAL “M”, miming pulling back a bow from the left handshape	Variation on http://www.spreadthesign.com/us/122539/archery-american-english
HERALD	Sign for “*LECTURE” done with an “H” handshape	http://www.spreadthesign.com/us/154738/lecture-american-english HERALD/VOICE HERALD/SILENT HERALD (Nesscia's alternate version)
CHIRURGEON	Using a “C” handshape, make the sign for “*HOSPITAL”	http://www.lifeprint.com/asl101/pages-signs/h/hospital.htm
MAJESTY	“M” handshape moving up – the sign for “*HIGH”	http://www.spreadthesign.com/us/93132/high-american-english MAJESTY (Nesscia's alternate version)
EXCELLENCY	“E” handshape moving up – the sign for “*HIGH”	http://www.spreadthesign.com/us/93132/high-american-english EXCELLENCY (Nesscia's alternate version)
HIGHNESS	“H” handshape moving up – the sign for “*HIGH”	http://www.spreadthesign.com/us/93132/high-american-english HIGHNESS (Nesscia's alternate version)
ROYAL	MAL “R” moving from non-dominant shoulder to dominant hip	ROYALTY (Nesscia)
COURT	Sign for “*CELEBRATE” + sign for “*MEETING”	COURT (Nesscia)
OYEZ	“*ATTENTION” ⁵	OYEZ (Nesscia) http://www.spreadthesign.com/us/122829/attention-american-english http://www.lifeprint.com/asl101/pages-signs/h/hey.htm
*KINGDOM	“*KING” + “*AREA”	http://www.spreadthesign.com/us/244885/kingdom-american-english
BARONY	Baron + “*AREA”	See above
MINISTER OF ARTS	“*TEACHER” initialized with the MAL “M” + “*ART”	http://www.lifeprint.com/asl101/pages-signs/t/teacher.htm MINISTER OF ARTS & SCIENCE (Nesscia's alternate version)
MINISTER OF SCIENCES	“*TEACHER” initialized with the MAL “M” + “*SCIENCE”	http://www.lifeprint.com/asl101/pages-signs/t/teacher.htm MINISTER OF ARTS & SCIENCE (Nesscia's alternate version)
MINISTER OF ARTS/SCIENCES	“*TEACHER” initialized with the MAL “M” + “*ART” + “*SCIENCE”	http://www.lifeprint.com/asl101/pages-signs/t/teacher.htm

⁵ The first link is the sign I have always used for OYEZ. The second link is the sign THL Nesscia uses. This might be a regional difference – we learned sign language in different parts of the country.

Signs	Word Descriptions of Actions	Video Links
		MINISTER OF ARTS & SCIENCE (Nesscia's alternate version)
AWARD OF ARMS	“*GIFT” + display with “A” handshape	http://www.spreadthesign.com/us/93083/gift-american-english