

Frequently Given Answers (That Are Wrong)

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Heraldry

1. *Only queens can use roses on their arms.*

What is reserved to queens (and Companions of the Rose) are rose wreaths. Chaplets of roses are reserved to princesses. By extension, orles and bordures of roses are also reserved. Single and multiple roses of any tincture* are not reserved, and are registered all the time, so long as they don't look too much like a wreath.

(* A rose tinctured gules and argent is an English royal badge, the "Tudor rose", and is not registerable in the Society.)

2. *Charges that have been previously registered in the Society are always OK to use.*

The College of Arms' level of understanding of period heraldic practices has increased greatly over the years. A number of charges that have been registered in the past are now seen to be at odds with the heraldry of our period of study and are no longer accepted for registration.

3. *You have to have an Award of Arms before you can register your heraldry. (Alternate version: You have to have an AoA before you can display your heraldry.)*

Anyone may register heraldry. Until they receive an Award of Arms from the Crown, it is called a "heraldic device" instead of a "coat of arms". The two are registered and displayed identically; only the terminology changes when you become armigerous. N.B.: This is not a practice firmly based on historical precedent.

4. *Sable is a fur.*

Yes, sable is a dark-brown luxury fur. No - in heraldry, sable means black; which is classified as a color, not a fur.

5. *Furs are considered neutral with respect to the Rule of Tincture, so they may be placed upon, or be charged with, either metals or colors.*

This is mostly true in heraldry outside the SCA, but we consider each fur individually: in the ermine family we categorize furs by their field tincture, since that has the greater area: ermine = argent, so is considered a metal, while counter-ermine = sable, so is considered a color. On the other hand, furs of the vair family have more or less equal areas of both tinctures, so are indeed considered neutral. A charge of either of the constituent tinctures is still not allowed go over or under a vair fur, though.

6. *A bar sinister on a coat of arms shows that the bearer is a bastard.*

This is wrong in at least two ways. First, there is no such thing as a "bar sinister" in heraldry. A bar is a narrow horizontal stripe, so there is no way for it to be sinister. Second, one of a number of marks of illegitimacy, well-known because it was used by some acknowledged bastards of the French crown, was the "bendlet sinister coupé overall", also called a "baton sinister". This is definitely not the only mark of illegitimacy used in period heraldry.

7. *They stopped checking against mundane armory, so now you can use anything you want.*

"It is true that the SCA College of Arms no longer checks for conflict against any but famous non-SCA arms. But to deliberately search out a real coat of arms and to adopt it is, in short, theft. Your arms should represent you, not someone else. Independent invention or creation of a coat of arms which may be similar to non-SCA arms, however, is permissible." - Da'ud ibn Auda

Names

1. *Citing the use of a name in a book about the Middle Ages or Renaissance is sufficient documentation.*

Sorry, many fiction authors use names that were never used in the setting of the story, or even (gasp!) make them up! Even fiction writers of our period often used names not found outside their works. Unfortunately, many writers of non-fiction about our period translate or modernize name spellings, so you can't even rely on a history text for the correct spelling of a name.

2. *If you can find a name in a "what to name the baby" book, you have documented it sufficiently.*

Baby books are fine for helping you choose a name for your baby. Alas, they almost never give information about when a particular name was used historically, nor do they normally give you anything but the modern form. Frequently the "meaning" listed is also inaccurate, not to mention that the "meaning" of a given name is irrelevant to its acceptability by the CoA.

3. *Spelling was quite variable before the modern era, so you can spell a name any way you like.*

In our period, the spoken version of a word was primary, while the written form was simply a way of recording it. Any spelling that would reproduce the sound was "correct", but the way sounds were represented varied widely from language to language and even from one period of time to another within the same language. It takes at least a little familiarity with a particular language to understand what the rules are. What you can depend on is that they are distinctly different from those for 20th C. American English.

4. *If you find a masculine name that you like, you can make its feminine cognate by adding "-a" to the end.*

This is not even true for modern English. "William" is not the feminine cognate of "William". In many of the Latin-derived languages, it is sometimes true; but, for example, in the Celtic languages such as Irish or Scots Gaelic or Welsh, it is almost never the case.

College of Arms Procedures

1. *If you submit stuff at the Pennsic consultation table, you'll hear about it a lot sooner, because they rule on it right there.*

Unfortunately, no; items submitted at Pennsic go through the same procedure as items submitted through your local pursuivant. Because they were submitted along with a lot of others, they may take a month or so longer than otherwise. They will probably stand a better chance of passing though, because they have probably been looked over by more experienced heralds than your local officer.

2. *I don't need to register my name again with the College of Arms because I have it on my membership card so it's already registered with the office of the Registry.*

What's on your card is whatever you put on your membership application. It has nothing to do with registering your name. If you put "King Richard Lionheart" on the form, that's what they'll type on that card.