

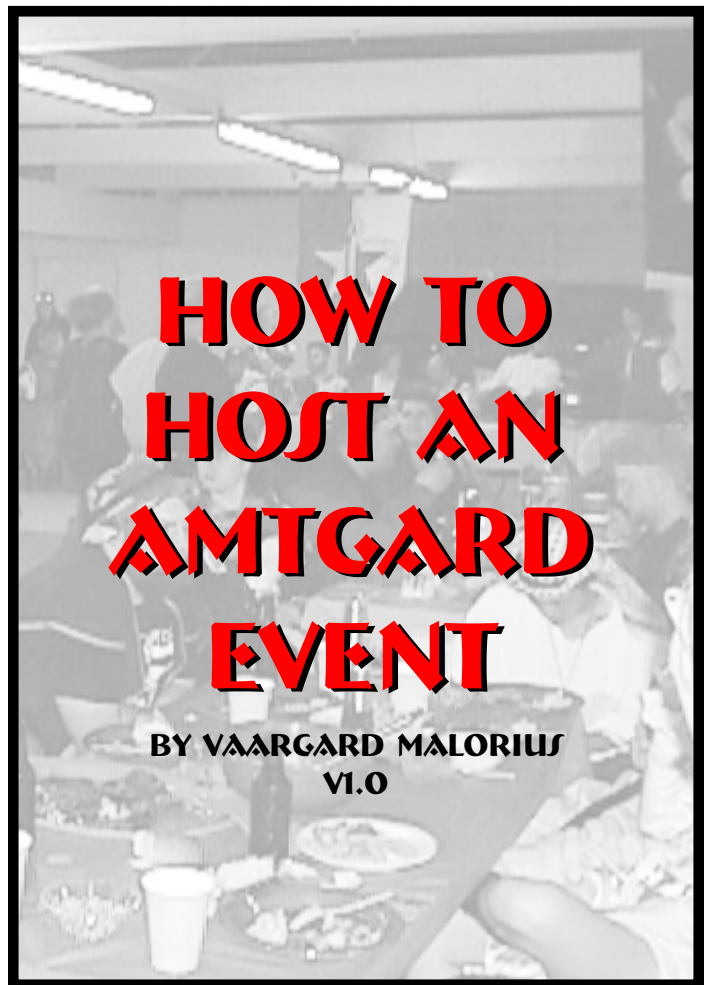
You will need the following to host an Amtgard event:

- A place to hold the event (a site)
- A date to hold the event
- A whole bunch of Amtgarders to attend the event

Normally, the individual responsibilities are “parted out” to several individuals (commonly referred to in Amtgard parlance as ‘o-crats’ - Feast-o-crat, Reeve-o-crat, Security-o-crat, etc...). For the purposes of this how to, I will assume a single individual will be responsible for *all* aspects of the event but readers should recognize it is not only acceptable, but *preferable* that responsible individuals be found to assist anyone attempting to host an event and that *delegation* of responsibility is truly the key to a successfully run event)

### **STEP 1, SET THE DATE**

Initially, before you do anything else, you must establish the date your proposed event will occur upon. While this sounds simple, it can actually be quite complicated. Consult the local Monarchy and consult a Kingdom calendar (if one is available). It is also wise to check the Kingdom calendar of nearby Kingdoms for potential scheduling conflicts. Also check for national, school or religious holidays; they may seem like a good time for events, but more people have familial obligations on those weekends than you might assume. Keep in mind that the most obvious three day weekends and holidays, almost without exception, are the annual dates for established Amtgard events. Your best bet is to find a free weekend that does not coincide with a holiday or recognized event date. Often this is impossible, but the key to good attendance is choosing a time when the majority of people have no obligations and are not financially or emotionally depleted from a previous recent event. One last bit of advice: *never* change the date of the event once you establish it, especially after advertising has begun unless it is *absolutely* necessary. Changing the date will inevitably confuse people and imply that the event is ill-planned. Almost without exception, events that have their dates changed, especially late in the planning stages, suffer attendance and organizational problems. Try to plan for all scheduling contingencies initially to ensure fewer problems once the event reaches the later stages of development.



### **STEP 2, ESTABLISH THE SITE**

This may be the most difficult aspect of event planning if your Amtgard group does not have an established event location or agreement with a local landholder. Finding a site is not as simple as picking a state park and telling Amtgarders to show up. State parks are often tempting, but they **are** state parks: they will have noise ordinances, local regulations, admission fees, parking limitations, opening and closing times, higher ‘mundane’ attendance, and often restrictions on alcohol consumption and/or glass containers. Before you try to use a state park, be sure you are aware of all the intricacies involved and factor that into your event planning. Advertising an Amtgard event that attendees do not realize is alcohol-free or that regulates loud noise after nightfall due to park regulations or an event that has no ‘toilet facilities’ will cause many hard feelings and often result in loss of potential return visitors. If you do decide to go with such a park, make sure you announce it on your advertising (see **Step 8, Advertise**). ‘Primitive’ sites (sites with NO amenities

such as deer leases or privately owned land) are often inexpensive to secure, but it is almost mandatory to secure bathroom facilities and potable water for such sites which may become more prohibitive and expensive than other site opportunities. It would do an event organizer well to understand that the majority of Amtgarders do not have access to large sums of free cash and that high event fees will often keep most from attending. Search your local parks for one that has nearby amenities and regulations that are amenable to Amtgard participation. Unless the event is being organized specifically to attract interest or new members, event organizers should avoid heavily populated parks or camping areas. Factors that need to be considered when establishing a park are:

Accessibility: Is the park easy to get to? Is it easy to find? Is it on state maps? Are the roads in good repair? Can the site be easily departed in severe weather? Is there regular groundskeeping? No one will attend an event they cannot find nor a site that their cars are not capable of arriving at intact. Look for a park with paved roads and adequate parking. Directional signs are a big plus. Wheelchair access is a big plus as well. We don't have a tremendous number of handicapped Amtgarders playing our game, but the few that do should not feel discouraged from event attendance where avoidable. If the site has handicap access, advertise it.

Attendance: Can the site comfortably accommodate everyone expected to attend? Is there sufficient space for parking? Is parking close to camping/activity areas or will arrangements for transportation of possessions need to be provided? Are the bathroom facilities sufficient for the number of people expected? Is there sufficient space for camping or will



*In hotter areas, try to choose a site that has shade enough for meetings and gatherings.*

ground need to be cleared (and if so, will the site owners allow ground clearing)? Make sure the site you choose can accommodate everyone you expect to attend.

Hours: Is the site open 24 hours or does the site close at a regular time? Are certain areas or amenities subject to closing in the evening? If the site does close in the evening, can special accommodations be made for late night arrivals or an Amtgard gate committee?

If the park does close it's gates or have a curfew, insure you make arrangements to receive people who arrive in the middle of the night or at odd hours.

Cost: Is the site reservation fee economical? Are there hidden fees such as camping, water, electricity, sporting, trash disposal, grounds keeping, additional vehicle, or daily rates? Are certain areas of the park or amenities only available if they are pre-rented or



*Parking that is convenient to camping areas may not be 'period' but it is always appreciated .*

reserved? Make sure that you (or your Amtgroup) can actually afford the site. Always assume you will *not* break even on an event– if this should regrettably occur, will the out-of-pocket cost be negligible or will it break the group’s treasury? Make sure any site you choose is not charging you more for the land use than other available sites with competitive (or perhaps better) services.

Privacy: Amtgardeners are often a loud lot and often prone to substance abuse and behavioral lapses. Make sure that any site you choose is **AWARE** of the type of behavior they can expect including the mock combat that will be occurring. Know all the regulations for a site before you agree on it and be willing to enforce any site-stipulated requirements. Laws broken or accidents that occur on the site will legally be the responsibility of the event organizer and, as such, need to be considered beforehand. It is



*If you intend to have a ‘feast’, make sure there are cooking facilities on-site; if not, you’ll have to provide your own.*



*Portable shelters are available at most hardware stores for around \$200. They often make for a great reusable retreat that can be borrowed for event needs.*

**ALWAYS** recommended that you *thoroughly* explain the types of behavior that can be expected to site owners in advance and assure the site owner(s) that cleanup responsibility will be assumed by the event staff. Making sure that no one will be offended by the enthusiasm and revelry that accompanies Amtgard events beforehand will ensure that there will be no late-night surprise visits by local authorities or eviction from the site, and ensure that the site will be available for use in the future.

Amenities: Are there nearby bathroom facilities? Running water? Phones? Electricity? RV hookups? Shelter in case of inclement weather? Nearby food

and drink? A nearby department store? Despite the occasional ‘commando’, most Amtgardeners enjoy their toilet paper, local store, and electrically lit ditch field. It is also imperative that there be some kind of phone on site for emergencies. In the recent boom of cellular phone use, this isn’t as much an issue as it once was, but don’t take anything for granted; make sure there is a phone available on site in case of emergency.

Insurance: Be aware that any accidents that occur will be the responsibility of the event organizer or the highest Amtgard officer on-site. A lot of landholders will require insurance (almost always exceptionally costly), and even if they do not, will insist that mishaps are the responsibility of the visitors. While accidents are terribly uncommon, make sure you are prepared to handle one should it occur.

Waste Disposal: Does the site handle waste disposal or will the event organizers be responsible for removing waste? This might seem like a given, but **always** make sure that you are not going to have to transport your own trash off-site. More sites are lost due to poor cleanup than any other reason. Bring large trash bags to the site with you and check occasionally to see they are being used (in an emergency, they make good rain ponchos as well). Also find out where trash bags should be left if the site provides waste elimination services. If the site must clean up after you, you can often expect a fine (at the least) and permanent loss of the site.

Once you have established where you wish to have your event, talk to the site owners about reserving the site. Make sure you explain what Amtgard is and what behavior the site owners can expect. **ALWAYS** be honest. It is better to be told you cannot use the site due to an intolerant owner than to be evicted from the site in the middle of the night. It is fairly common for a site owner to live nearby (or on-site) or to drop by an event to insure his/her site is being used responsibly. It often helps to explain that Amtgard is nonprofit and a competitive contact sport; nonprofit may earn a discount in reservation fees and if your local group participates in community service (telethons, food drives, toy drives, clothing drives, recycling efforts, etc.) make this known ‘casually’ in your conversations as it will often make some difference both in site cost and how rigidly site regulations are enforced.

If you locate your site using nonvisual means (phone, web page, word of mouth, travel guide, etc.), it is always recommended that you go visit the site and look it over prior to making any monetary deposits. As the cliché goes– “know what you are buying *before* you pay for it”; the same goes for any site you choose to use– go walk the site and visually inspect it before you put any money down.

### **STEP 3, SECURING THE SITE**

Once you have found the site you intend to use, secure the necessary funds to reserve the land and any on-site amenities that may require rental fees (pavilions, kitchen facilities, food halls, bathrooms, etc.) If it is a local event, you should secure funds



*Adequate room for ‘ditching’ is a basic necessity for most any site.*

privately or from your local Prime Minister (or treasurer); If is a Kingdom event, you should secure funds privately or from your Kingdom Prime Minister (or treasurer). Remember, most Amtgroups have a budget and/or Corpora mandates dictating expenditures and cannot dedicate their entire treasury to any one event, so make sure in advance that the funds are available and will be reimbursed if you intend to use group funds. If the site you are using requires you to reserve parts of the site based on attendance, try to accurately estimate the number of attendees you will be hosting. It is almost always safer to guess low than to overestimate (which might run contrary to common sense) as you can frequently purchase more sites for use, but you can rarely get your money back if you reserve too many sites. Reserve pavilions or places required for ‘court’ or ‘feast’ early on. It is not wise to “wait & see” or to hope you can just use the facility without paying for it as you might very well find your event hosting someone else’s company picnic. Make sure you get a receipt and a written confirmation of your reservation in advance. While uncommon, it is not unheard of for some sites to double-book a location to insure site usage and upon arrival you find that the site was first-come-first-serve. Make sure the site is reserved and paid for before you announce the event.

### **STEP 4, THE ‘HOOK’**

Now that you have a date and place established, come up with something that will make your event unique. While hosting ‘just another Amtgard event’ without a scheduling conflict is often reason enough in and of itself, it is always better to try to get a ‘hook’ that will make people want to come specifically to your event. A war, a quest, a faire, a contest, a tourney, a cook-off, an alternative to standard Amtevents, *any* excuse to be original will do! Take the ‘hook’ idea and make it your own. Make it sound important and interesting. Rather than announcing “there will be a bardic and a warskill tourney at our event”, try “Announcing the First Annual Song and Sword Grudge Match!” The more interesting the idea you come up with, and the more interesting you present it to potential attendees, the more likely people are to come out and witness it, even if all it is only a new way of presenting an eating contest or holding a common tourney.

## STEP 5, ORGANIZE AND DELEGATE

At this stage it is generally expected that you will assign each of the broad categories of event maintenance to an individual (or group) to be responsible for or 'crat'. Some of the most common 'crat' positions (though not always necessary) are listed below. Delegation of responsibility is the key to a well run event. While it is feasible for a single person to be responsible for all the aspects of an event, it is not terribly realistic to expect someone to do so, even at a very small event. Delegating responsibility allows the event organizer (or more commonly referred to in the Amtgard community as the 'Autocrat') to concentrate on organizational requirements and crisis management. The individual 'crats' concentrate on their one area of responsibility so that each aspect of the event is handled with specific attention (as opposed to an event whose autocrat's attention is too divided trying to do everything to do any one job to it's full potential).

Some commonly instituted 'crats' are:

Autocrat- The event organizer and head decision-maker for the event. Responsible for overseeing the success of the event and that the other 'crats' are fulfilling their responsibilities.

Feast-o-crat- Responsible for the feast at the event (usually a single large dinner).

Security-o-crat- Responsible for event security and attendee safety. Responsible for enforcing site regulations as well as any state and local ordinances that might become relevant.



*Well organized sign-ins allow for speedy entry, accurate attendance estimations, and a good record of who attended your event after it is over.*



*A good enclosed, well-lit area is a great for feasts and court activities.*

Gate-o-crat- Responsible for collecting admission fees and signing in guests (including 24 hour attendance and admission).

First Aid-o-crat-Responsible for first aid should an accident occur.

Reeve-o-crat- Responsible for organizing any required reeving of battlegames or contests that don't have their own 'crat'.

A&S-o-crat- Responsible for cultural event(s).

Warskill-o-crat- Responsible for warskill event(s)

Trash-o-crat- Responsible for providing trash bags to all campsites and for policing the site after the end of the event to make sure all trash (and lost-and-found items) is accounted for and disposed of properly.

PR-o-crat- Responsible for advertising the event.

Web-o-crat- Responsible for updating the event web page (if any).

If you choose to change the titles or disregard them altogether, that is fine, but the more help you have, the better off you will be, and the more specific an individual's duties the better the job they can do without being distracted by other responsibilities. The above designations are not mandatory, but they are time-tested offices and are easily assumed by anyone wishing to do the job in question. There are many other possible 'crat' positions, but the ones that are actually required are left solely up to the autocrat of the event in question.

## STEP 6, PLAN THE EVENT SCHEDULE

Is there going to be a 'court' Is court going to have a feast? Are you going to have a tourney? Is there going to be an all-day battlegame? All of the above? Establish what events you are going to have and account for any cost they may incur. Feasts are not free. If you intend to have one, you need to establish what is on the menu and how it is going to be paid for. If your tourney has a prize, who will be providing it? If glow sticks are needed for your ingenious night battle, who is going to provide them? Get together with your 'crats' (if any) and find out exactly what will be planned to occur at the event. It is always better to have a few strong events than many weak ones. If more events are needed it is easy enough to make up new battlegames, but if you schedule too many events, people are forced to choose between them or forego them altogether in favor of another choice (such as food or socializing). Try to keep your schedule minimal and allow people time between events to enjoy themselves as they see fit.

## STEP 7, ESTABLISH ADMITTANCE FEE

Once you have all the cost variables (site, feast, prizes, miscellaneous, etc.) divide that amount by the number of people you expect to attend: that is your base gate fee that will be charged to everyone entering the site for purposes of attending the Amtgard event (*Example: Site use cost \$300, feast will cost \$150, Prizes for events cost \$50; for a total of \$500 to hold the event. You expect (conservatively) that 100 people will show up. \$500 divided by 100 (people) would result in a base gate fee of \$5 per person, just to break even*). If the base event fee is over \$10, you should reconsider your options until you can find some way to lower costs to bring the fee down to below \$10 per person. Optimally, you should adjust gate fee to recoup event costs and "a lil bit more" that will go back into the treasury to allow the next event holder to have an easier time of it. Normally adding \$1-\$2 to gate is permissible with the understanding that the excess funds go back into the group treasury for future events. A good average gate fee is \$8-\$10, which is usually \$6-\$7 per person for weekend-long site use, \$1-\$2 for feast and \$1 for the hosting group's treasury. It is recommended that the



*Well lit areas, clearly delineated rings, and sufficient reeves are all keys to a successful warskill tourney.*

site fee be fixed and that everyone pays the same amount even if they are not staying the entire event, not eating feast, or not planning on ever participating in Amtgard again. This is fairly established practice and 'expected' of almost every Amtgard event. It might seem more honest or a nice change to charge only for day attendance or attendance without feast, but there is no simple way to do the bookkeeping in such a manner and relying on 'attendee honor' is dubious at best. It is a frequent practice to pay for Saturday's monetary requirements with Friday's gate fees; while acceptable practice, this relies entirely upon attendance and an event relying upon this form of financing often has to cancel events due to low attendance which results in even more angry people who have already paid for expected events or services they will no longer receive. Only use this method of financing if you are experienced at it. It is better to use what money is available and have fewer announced events than it is to have to cancel events you over-budgeted but announced anyway. **NEVER** change the gate fee after an event has started if it can at all be avoided. You cannot reasonably collect additional funds from people already there if the gate fee is raised, and you cannot reasonably return money if the fee is lowered. For better or worse, it is wiser to establish a fixed gate fee and stick with it. If there is a danger of not breaking even, it is almost always preferable to seek another source of income such as a 'dollar tourney' or seeking donations rather than it is to change the gate fee mid-event.

## STEP 8, ADVERTISE

Once you have your schedule of events and a means to finance them, it is time to make sure you have sufficient attendees to break even or turn a profit for the group. While color flyers and photos are nice, they are prohibitively costly and should not be used unless you have a discount source. Black and white photocopies should be more than sufficient. If you have access to a page layout program, feel free to design an elaborate brochure with pictures and graphics but keep in mind that you will often be better served by good text and a good map that you will by a flashy flyer with less information. On your flyer you should include the following:

- The name of the event (and hosting Amtgroup if desired).
- The date of the event.
- The fee for the event.
- Verbal directions to the event (including landmarks if possible).
- A visual map .
- Whom to contact for more information. With phone number and 'real' name.

Other things that are nice to include (if you have the space for it) are miscellaneous event rules that may vary from the norm, a feast menu, site-imposed regulations or notifications about amenities (or lack thereof), event 'crats' and means to contact them, web site address (if any), Kingdom information or insignia, map of the site (as opposed to a map *to* the site), or even pictures of the site. The more attractive your flyer is the more likely people will attend, but remember, information is more important than flashy appearance—try to find a good balance between information presented and 'flash'. Make sure you also have a 'text only' version of your flyer for dissemination to electronic information sources as well (mailing lists, bulletin boards, web pages and the like).

## STEP 9, PRE-EVENT MAINTENANCE:

This is the time to make sure that any 'crats' are fulfilling their obligations and that any necessary supplies are acquired. This is the period between advertising and the actual event date. During this phase, you have to do any preplanning and provide any required props such as fabrication of costumes, making targets or boundary rings for events, or



*Adequate well-lit areas and tables for displaying cultural entries should be provided if you intend to hold an arts & sciences competition.*

renting tables or port-o-potties. Use this time wisely. Try to get everything established early on so nothing waits until the last minute. A well planned event virtually runs itself if handled correctly. Again, for any rentals you may require, get receipts and verify transportation of the goods to and from the site. Most autocrats have weekly meetings to gauge progress as the time of the event nears.

## STEP 10, THE EVENT

The Autocrat should be on-site first or be completely confident that someone is there in their place who can make any necessary decisions or last minute alterations due to unforeseen circumstances. Arguably the most important job on the first day of any event is gate duty (or more specifically collecting admission fees). The autocrat should try to be on-site for the duration of the event for any necessary decisions. If the autocrat needs to leave the site for some reason, make sure a *single* individual is left with decision-making responsibility (nothing is quite as annoying as leaving a smoothly running event for a quick lunch and coming back to a war zone resulting from two individuals with clashing egos who wanted to be in charge in your absence). If you have chosen 'crats', it is important you let them handle their own problems in their own way unless they request your assistance or it is mandatory that the Autocrat intervene. If you had enough faith in their abilities to choose them to begin with, have enough faith to allow them to do their job without needless interference. Address each problem as it arises and deal with it as efficiently as possible.



*Plastic tape, used in construction and available at most hardware stores, makes a cheap, easily seen, easily constructed, easily repaired, and easily cleaned-up combat ring. Just tie to tent-stakes, then hammer the stakes flat into the ground in the desired shape of the ring.*

## **STEP 11, POST-EVENT MAINTENANCE**

Even after the event is over and everyone goes home, there are still a few vital things to address. The first is site cleanup. Even if you have a Trashocrat or someone else designated to be responsible for cleaning up the site, a good Autocrat will stay to make sure the job is done right and done thoroughly. As I mentioned earlier, I think that in my experience, more disputes over site use have arisen over trash being left on the site than anything else. Excellent sites are often lost simply because someone left the site a mess. If the reader gets nothing else from reading this discourse, please exercise common courtesy and clean up after your guests at an event site even if you don't intend to use the site again. Habitually leaving sites a mess result in 'word getting around' to other landholders and an increasing difficulty in securing sites, not only for your specific group, but for Amtgard as a whole, and for all live-action role-playing groups in general. Use the proceeds from gate to pay for the site first if you have not already done so (most sites require payment in advance). After the site is paid for, repay anyone with valid receipts for event expenses (most often incidentals such as feast, bottled water, rented port-o-potties, etc.) If there is anything left, that will be your 'event profit' and should be turned in to the appropriate treasurer (local or Kingdom). **GET A RECEIPT!** Whenever you pass money in Amtgard,

get a receipt; not because of distrust, but for security reasons. If any money should be misplaced, you have covered your bases and absolved yourself of any financial irresponsibility.

As a nice final touch, it is always a good idea to write an event review for the local newsletter or web page. Even if the event was not particularly successful, a good review will intrigue people who might possibly attend the *next time* you should choose to host an event and it contributes to the Kingdom by letting everyone share in the event, even if they were unable to attend.

I hope this How-To gave you with some insight into what goes into providing the events you may have attended (and perhaps even taken for granted). I realize this may all sound daunting and a bit more responsibility that it might appear, but events are the forum for us to meet each other and to exhibit our talents and are a very important venue for Amtgarders to participate in. Not every event requires legal contracts or extensive knowledge, some of the most enjoyable events I have been to started out as a small camping get-togethers with little or no responsibility for the organizer beyond attending and inviting a few friends. Like everything in Amtgard, you won't know how well *you* can do it until you give it a try. It may sound imposing on first read, but it really isn't as difficult as it sounds. Find a date, pick a site and have yourself an event! The best teacher will always be experience, but now, you should have a bit better idea of what to look out for.



*'Bingo hoppers' are a great way to randomize tournament competitors or raffle tickets.*