

On Forms of Address

an article by Sir Nigel the Byzantine, Fleur-de-Lis King of Arms

Part 1

Forms of address are a source of great confusion in our empire. Since most of us have had little experience dealing with Royalty in our mundane lives, our usual source of information comes from movies and television, which, more often than not, get it wrong. In this article, I hope to clear up some of that confusion.

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Most of us encounter formal forms of address during Court, which usually entails addressing either the Ruling Noble or the Populace. (Note: the word "populous" means that there are a great many members of the *populace* of a region.) Most people will encounter three types of Nobles sitting on our thrones: Viceroy, Dukes, and Kings.

To start off with: **anyone**, from the brashiest newcomer or the youngest child, all the way to the Emperor himself, may be addressed as "My Lord" (or "My Lady" if you are addressing a female).

For Shire Viceroy, the correct form is "Your Excellency".

For sitting Dukes, there are two proper forms of address: "Your Royal Grace" and "Your Grace." The former is the more formal of the two. In general, it is acceptable to use both of these forms when speaking formally, especially since repeating "Your Royal Grace" over and over again can get dreadfully dull.

For Kings, there are a wealth of choices: "Your Majesty" is the obvious (and most often used one), but there are others, including "Your Highness," "Your Grace," and "Sire." If you are in direct fealty to that (or any) Monarch, you may address him as "My Liege," such as a Marquess addressing his King.

It is interesting to note that the use of "Your Highness" and "Your Majesty" did not come into general use until the middle of the 16th century (at least for speakers of English). The form "Your Grace" was originally used ONLY for kings, but came to be extended to princes and dukes (especially considering that throughout our Period, dukes were oftentimes petty kings in their own right). In our Game, any form is correct.

When speaking to the Emperor, you have an additional choice: "Your Imperial Majesty." Any of the forms appropriate to Kings are also acceptable to be used when addressing the Emperor.

When addressing the assembled audience at Court, it is incorrect to merely address them as "Populace." Better form would be to begin by saying, "My Lords and Ladies" or "Good Gentles." Remember that we are all assumed to be of Noble birth, so addressing the assembly as mere rabble is somewhat of an insult. If you are a member of the Estates addressing the Estates Meeting, you may use "Cousins" or "Gentle Cousins."

You may also use the word "Cousin" when addressing someone of equal rank to your own. This is most often seen when a Ruling Noble addresses another Ruling Noble, such as the Duke of York addressing the Duke of Aragon. It is not appropriate to address someone of lower or higher rank with this form.

There are, in general, three different ways of speaking in our Game: Intimate, Semi-Formal, and Formal.

Intimate speech is that which takes place in camp or with our immediate group of friends. Formal terms are of little use here. It is extremely impractical to be constantly addressing the recalcitrant Duke who is supposed to be pounding tent stakes as "Your Royal Grace."

Semi-formal speech is used when one is out-and-about at an event. "Good day, Your Highness." "Your Grace, I have a question regarding...." Use the formal form once, and then only sporadically, when you need to. In this style, it is acceptable to refer to the Noble to whom one is speaking as "you." Most Courts in the Empire operate under semi-formal conditions.

Formal speech is best reserved for High State occasions, or when one is trying to impress someone. "Your Majesty, I was wondering if Your Grace would be interested in..." In the formal speech one NEVER uses the word "you" to address Royalty or Nobility that is higher in rank than yourself. This also works the other way, when one of higher rank is dressing down one of lower rank in high formal style.

The [next article](#) will deal with forms of address for lesser nobility, and how to use all of this in a letter.

Part 2

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The previous article dealt with addressing Kings and Dukes, in formal, semiformal, and intimate contexts. This article will deal with forms of address for other ranks, and how to use all of the forms of address when writing a letter.

The first type of Royalty we will deal with is Heirs to the Throne. Generally speaking, Heirs to Kingdom and Imperial Thrones are addressed as "Your Highness." "Your Grace" would also be acceptable, but our ears are more accustomed to hearing "Highness" used for Princes. Heirs to Ducal Thrones are generally more short-lived (receiving their Coronets in less time than Kingdoms or the Imperium), hence no special form of address has evolved in our Game for them. Since, in Period, the firstborn son of a Duke was referred to by courtesy as a Marquis (usually by bearing one of his father's lesser titles), one could presume that it would be acceptable for an Adrian Ducal Heir to be addressed as "Your Excellency."

Which leads us to lesser Nobility.

All of the following Adrian ranks (not including those discussed earlier) are entitled to be addressed as "Your Grace": Lord Protector, Earl, and Founding Viscount. All of the following Adrian ranks are entitled to be addressed as "Your Excellency": Marquis, Count, Viceroy, and Baron. Lords Baronet may be addressed as Your Lordship.

For all other ranks and job descriptions, use the following guide:

Everyone in the Empire, from the Imperial Crown down to the youngest child, are entitled to be addressed as "My Lord" (or "My Lady", depending on gender). We are all assumed to be of Noble birth, even if some of us choose non-Noble personae. If a person's title is known, you may refer to them as "My Lord" with their title added on, thus: "My Lord Squire".

With persons holding Ministerial positions, this form is also correct: "My Lady Chancellor". This form is especially useful when you need to address someone whose name you do not know (or recall), but whose job is readily apparent: "My Lord Page" or "My Lady Lists Mistress".

One note: combining titles (such as "Earl Sir" or "Lady Dame") is non-Period and unnecessary. As most Noblemen in our Period had been Knighted as youths, the Knightly title was left off when they ascended their inherited title. Instead, when writing a formal letter, Nobles would sign their names and list their titles and Orders afterward.

This brings us to the art of letter-writing.

Writing letters is your chance to show off your Courtly graces to their fullest. Here, there are a wealth of choices for beginning and ending letters that lend a definite Medieval verisimilitude to your writing.

Here is a sample of a letter written in formal speech:

Unto His Royal Majesty, Henry of Twodoor, King of Erewhon, does Charles the New, Marquis of Acirema and Autocrat of the Tournament of Woses, send Greetings and Salutations.

Your Majesty:

If it please Your Majesty, the good Populace of Acirema wishes to invite Your Grace to the upcoming Tournament of Woses. The pleasure of Your Majesty's response is eagerly anticipated.

Your servant,

*Sir Charles the New
Marquis of Acirema
Lord of the Empire
Order of the Wose
Captain, HMS Sweathog
Autocrat of the Tournament of Woses*

See how it starts? First the writer says who the letter is to, using the formal form of address ("His Royal Majesty"), followed by the name ("Henry of Twodoor"), then the title ("King of Erewhon"). Then he identifies himself using his name ("Charles the New") followed by his title ("Marquis and Autocrat"). Charles does not call himself "My Excellency, Charles the New", as that would be pretentious and in very poor taste. He then sends his Greetings and then opens the letter as if he is speaking directly to his audience: "Your Majesty".

Charles then begins the body of his letter, speaking in extreme formal mode. If he were writing a note as a mundane, he would probably say this:

Please come to our tournament. We'd like to know if you're coming.

However, in formal mode, you never come right out and say what you want; circumlocution is the proper way to do it.

Charles then ends his letter with his name, job, title, and order (in that order). Note that if Charles were to use all three of his available titles, he'd sound awfully silly and pretentious: "Marquis Sir Lord Charles the New". Better to pick one title and stick with it, in this case, since Charles is a Knight, he uses "Sir". If he wasn't, then he could use "Lord Charles" instead. However, using "Marquis Charles" is redundant, since he will list his job after his name: "Marquis of Acirema". If Charles was going to be really formal about it, he could do it this way:

*Charles the New
Marquis of Acirema
Knight Bachelor
Lord of the Empire
Companion of the Order of the Wose
Captain of the HMS Sweathog
Autocrat of the Tournament of Woses*

Always use your highest title first: in this case, since Charles is a Marquis (and therefore holds a seat on the Estates Major), that goes first, followed by the first-level Knighthood, the Lord title, and then his non-precedence-bearing award and his Corsair captaincy. Last, for impact, goes the position as Autocrat. It's best in formal protocol to put your precedence-bearing titles first, unless you are writing specifically in your job description as one of your non-precedence-bearing titles:

*Charles the New
Captain of the HMS Sweathog*

If you have no precedence-bearing titles, that is, if you are a Chamberlain, Lady-in-Waiting, Page, Man-at-Arms, or Squire, or if you hold Corsair rank or a position in the Church, pick whichever title you feel warrants the most respect, and use it.

It's also acceptable to just use Autocrat titles, in fact, for this letter, His Excellency could very well have gotten away with:

*Charles the New
Autocrat of the Tournament of Woses*

Generally speaking, when closing a letter, use one or two of your available titles as applicable, and only pull them all out when you are writing a severely formal letter, or are pulling rank. I'm sure that Charles could pull a few more titles out of his hat when he writes his letter of complaint to the Ministry of Weather for letting it rain on his tournament!