

Running A&S at Events While Social Distancing

These are strictly suggestions, not mandates. Please refer to your Kingdom and local branches for information about how your particular group or area is handling plans during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Arts & Sciences competitions and displays at events can be done while maintaining social distancing, with some work and common sense.

Just a word of advice before anything else, masks are essential for stopping the spread of the virus. Using gloves is good to help, but not a replacement. When gloves are used, they should be disposable, not a replacement for sanitation, and changed frequently. Wearing latex gloves is in no way a substitute for handwashing. Just like your bare hands, the COVID-19 virus can also survive on latex gloves. So regardless if you are wearing gloves or not, if you touch a contaminated surface and then touch your face, you are still risking infection. According to the CDC, you should wash your hands thoroughly before putting on latex gloves. They should cover your hands completely as well as your wrists. When removing your gloves, throw your gloves away in a trash can immediately and then wash your hands. Do not use a pair of latex gloves more than once. If someone has an allergy (to latex) or other medical reason to eschew protective items, they should work with the coordinator to make appropriate arrangements to maintain safety (nitrile or PVC disposable gloves may be an option).

Sign-In and Set-Up

The first thing you have to handle is signing-in and set-up. Sign-ins should be done in a contactless manner as much as possible. This means having the sign-in sheets available in a central area and clear instructions included with them. Ask your entrants and judges to bring their own writing utensils. Ideally, I'd suggest having each entrant sign in on a separate sheet (which could easily be a 1/4 sheet of paper) and drop them into a box for collection. When the person running the competition handles the sheets, they should use gloves. The length of time that coronavirus lasts on paper varies. Some strains of coronavirus live for only a few minutes on paper, while others live for up to 5 days. Be safe first, then deal with the paperwork. Be sure to include email in the requested information from the entrants (for feedback purposes).

Next, the entries need to be set up. While individuals should still respect the social distancing guidelines, maintaining a space of six feet, the actual displays do not cough and can be closer together than people. Each entrant should set up their own display with gloves and without assistance from the coordinator (aside from direction on where to set up the display). It's a good idea for the coordinator to mark off the specific areas for each display space with tape or string to aid with this. Because most displays are not going to be able to be handled, an entrant should include pictures of any important portions of the entry that cannot be seen. For example, an embroiderer should include a picture of the back of the embroidery. Documentation should be in plastic page protectors so that it can be disinfected. When in doubt, play it safe.

Viewing and Judging

When someone views an entry or display, they should maintain social distancing guidelines and treat the item as if it were a museum piece. No touching. Look with your eyes, not your hands. Unfortunately, a pandemic is not the time for a practical hands-on activity. Additionally, only a few people should be

allowed in the display area at any given time. The coordinator should monitor the viewing and make sure that the populace maintains social distancing guidelines. One thing that many competitions do is the "bean in the cup" method of judging, where each member of the populace is given a bean or bead and they drop them in the cup of the entry they like the best. This is a horrible, germ-filled method of judging during a pandemic. Even worse, it gives the entrants zero feedback outside of a popularity contest. If this method must be used, have the individuals tell the coordinator their choice and the coordinator can keep a tally. Tokens should also be avoided. While they are a lovely way to show appreciation for an entry during normal times, they're not really the safest way to go during a pandemic.

Judging in these cases can be a little tricky. A judge often **needs** to feel an item in order to adequately give feedback. In these cases, the judge should use gloves and the coordinator should have those on hand for these situations. While there is still a tactile barrier, this will allow them at least a closer viewing and feel of the entry. A judge is also going to give feedback; this is literally the job of a judge. Paper, as mentioned earlier, is not really good for social distancing so we might need to get creative with how this is done. I suggest setting up a website, like a Google form, where the judge can input their feedback. Have a laptop available, with internet if at all possible, and let them enter it there and email it to the entrant. If internet isn't possible, have them fill it out on the laptop in a word processing program and email it to the participant later. The laptop can be disinfected between uses. Multiple laptops do make this go much faster. This does add a level of work for the coordinator and it might be a good idea to have assistants to handle the distribution of feedback.

Timing

Timing needs to be very specific. Sign-in is going to take longer. Judging is going to take longer. Pick-up is going to take longer. Plan for this. If possible, give each entrant a specific time to pick-up their entry when they set up their display. This allows you to control the number of individuals in the area during the pick-up times. Judging should take place separately from the time for populace to view the entries and there should also be a specific time for the royalty or baronage to view the entries. Again, plan for this.

Specific A&S

Now let's talk about a few specific types of A&S that need special precautions.

- First, consumables... If someone is displaying/entering consumables into the competition, they need to pre-package a set number of servings for the judges (and possibly royalty or the baronage). Packaging should be done with gloves and put into sealed containers of some type. This limits the contact from person-to-person and allows for the judges to be able to sample. Unfortunately, the populace will probably not be able to sample the wares but having a couple extra servings is always a good idea because we all know that one cooking laurel who's going to come by and need to sample (Note: This is a good thing.)
- Next, be sure to turn up one each of the seams on garb. People are going to want to be able to view that. Otherwise, keep in mind that people can't really touch the material, so give as much information and separate pictures as possible. For the manuscript arts, remember that you can't really disinfect a painting. Illumination, if possible, should be framed or otherwise harder to touch.

- Last, we have an entire genre of the arts: Performing Arts. The performing arts can be very tricky because they often involve vocal projection. If you are projecting your voice, you could also be projecting the virus. Prof. Matthias Echternach, head of the Division of Phoniatics and Paediatric Audiology at the Department of Otorhinolaryngology for LMU University Hospital Munich and himself a trained singer, suggests a distancing for a singer of 8-9 feet rather than the normal 6 feet. In order to make things a little safer, the use of modern sound systems or amplification could help tremendously and keep folks from having to project quite so vigorously. Dancing and theater should also maintain social distancing guidelines. This, in most cases, kills dancing but some folks could find some creative work-arounds.

Every situation isn't going to be covered here, but please approach each situation with common sense and an eye for the details. Think about how many people will handle an item and see how you can insert disinfecting into the scenario. Have hand sanitizer available and encourage folks to wash their hands. Take care of one another and help us maintain the health of our friends.

Yours in Service and Art,
Seigneur Etienne Le Mons d'Anjou
Society Minister of Arts & Sciences