

Make a Coat of Arms

If you are going to be a medieval knight, you need a **coat of arms**.

Coats of arms were officially started in the 12th Century AD (1100's). Knights and warriors wore helmets that covered their faces, so they painted unique designs onto shields so that people could identify each other in battle.

The study of coats of arms is called *heraldry*.

Here are some English arms from the 1300's. How many different shapes and colours can you see?

Everything on a coat of arms had meaning, so if you could read someone's coat of arms, you would know a lot about them.

Coats of arms are still given out today. Individual people, families, towns, clubs, schools, and even companies can apply for a coat of arms, but they have to be approved by the **Kings of Arms**, who work for the Queen.

If you keep a look-out, you'll probably see coats of arms in your daily life. Does your school, town, or anyone you know have a coat of arms?



Designing your coat of arms

Some coats of arms are very complicated. If a coat of arms has been around for a long time, it'll have been added to and changed over the centuries. When people got married, they would combine their coats of arms, and if they were granted titles or land by the King or Queen, they might also add symbols to represent that on their arms.

You can design your own coat of arms, but there are some rules.

The coat of arms is only the part within the shield but you can add other things to it to make a **heraldic achievement**.

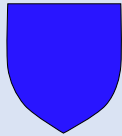



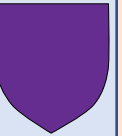
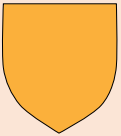
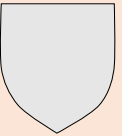


Coats of arms are described using very old words that come from Norman French. When you have designed your own coat of arms, see if you can work out how to describe it using heraldic terms.

Britain's heraldic achievement and coat of arms today:



Make a heraldic coat of arms

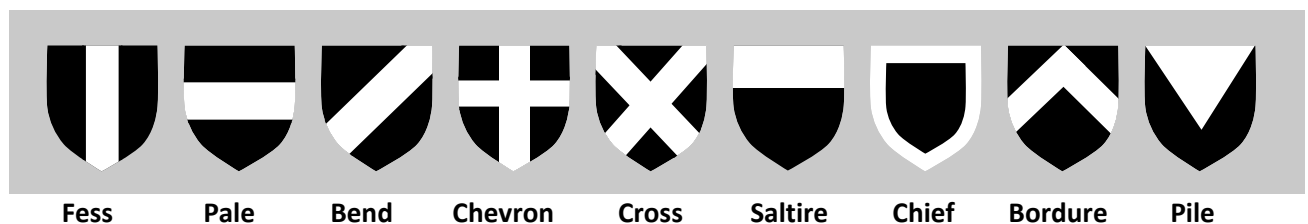
Colours:

Colours					Metals		Furs	
								
Blue	Red	Green	Black	Purple	Gold or yellow	Silver or white	Stoat	Squirrel
Azure	Gules	Vert	Sable	Purple	Or	Argent	Ermine	Vair
							(These represent the animals' winter coats)	

Rule: When designing your shield, never put a *colour* on another *colour*, or a *metal* on a *metal*. Colours can go on metals and metals can go on colours, but keep similar things apart. So you could have yellow on blue, or purple on white, but not yellow on white or purple on blue!

Shapes:

This first set of shapes are called **ordinaries** and they make the base layer of your shield. You could also just divide your shield in half or into quarters:



Charges:

Charges are extra designs that can be added on top of your **ordinaries**. You can add one charge, many or none!

You could use a shape like the examples below, and you can even use animals or flowers. The first design here is the “fleur de lys” or lily, which was the symbol of the medieval Plantagenet Kings, and still appears on the Queen’s coat of arms today!



Some charges have special names:

Ring = annulet
Circle = roundel



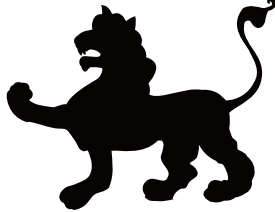


Rectangle = billet
Diamond = lozenge

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Animals:

Animals often appear on arms. They can be real animals like dogs and lions, or fantastical ones like dragons and unicorns. Animals can be used as charges, and also as **supporters** – animals that stand either side of the shield and look as if they are holding it up.

Animals are shown in different positions, and each position has a different name.

		
This griffin is rearing up, so we say it is rampant	This eagle's wings are open, which means they are displayed	The lion is walking, or passant
		Standing: Statant
		Walking: Passant
		Rearing: Rampant
		Wings open: Displayed
This dragon is standing, so it's statant	This rearing lion is also facing us, so it's rampant guardant	Facing you: Guardant

Directions

If you want to say something is on the left, or facing left, you say it is **sinister**.

Something on the right is **dexter**.

Now you know a little about heraldry, you can make your own shield or coat of arms.

Don't get too worried about making a traditional, sensible coat of arms. Some ancient shields have the craziest designs.

There's a town in the Netherlands that has a chicken wearing trousers!



Make a heraldic coat of arms

Now use this template to design your own shield. When you are happy, you could cut a shield shape from a big piece of cardboard and paint your new design on it.

