

The Estrella War Arts & Sciences Competition FAQ...

Thegn Steffan yr ysgolhaig, ML

Atenveldt Kingdom Minister of Arts & Sciences (August 2005–May 2009)

Last updated 21 October 2009 (by Thegn Steffan yr ysgolhaig, at the direction of THL Raven Mayne, KMoAS). The latest update reflects a change in the Estrella War XXVI philosophy that is reflected in the War Treaty.

What is the Estrella War Arts & Sciences (A&S) Competition?

The Arts & Sciences Competition at the Estrella War is an *inter-kingdom competition* inviting artisans from any Kingdom to compete within defined categories for rank and honor for their home Kingdom and to gain feedback from an inter-kingdom judging team. The categories for competition at each War are selected at least 15 months in advance by Crowns & Heirs of the Principal Kingdoms during the annual Treaty Negotiations for each War, giving artisans goodly time to prepare outstanding entries. In most cases, judging of these entries will take place on the Saturday of each war during the morning and early afternoon, and the displays will open for a populace viewing period later that afternoon.

This competition is fairly unique in that it is an inter-kingdom competition. *Because this competition is considered to be at a higher level than any individual Kingdom-level competition (i.e., a master-level competition), Laurels and other master-level artisans are strongly encouraged to enter.*

The categories and judging sheets will change each year. The rules and scoring principles, while kept as steady as possible over the years, also have a possibility of being updated from time to time as is considered prudent or necessary. Potential entrants are assumed responsible for obtaining the most up to date information, either through their Minister of Arts & Sciences or online via the Atenveldt A&S Website (arts.atenveldt.org) or the Estrella War Website (www.estrellawar.org).

Who is responsible for the war point A&S Competitions at Estrella Wars?

Overall responsibility for the A&S Competition at the Estrella War falls into the hands of the Atenveldt Kingdom Minister of Arts & Sciences. Much of the work, however, is shared by the Ministers of Arts & Sciences (or “official” War A&S Representatives) of the Principal Kingdoms involved in each War, as these Kingdoms must be equally represented, both in negotiations and in decision-making. Atenveldt Kingdom Minister of Arts & Sciences is considered the coordinator here, and, in general, also handles all of the preparation for the competition (paperwork, site, finances, etc.).

Are discussions concerning the categories, rules, and judging sheets for upcoming Estrella War A&S Competitions considered confidential? If so, why?

Because entries for the A&S Competitions at the Estrella Wars are prepared by artisans completely in advance of the War itself, it is considered critical that no artisan or artisan group be given any sort of advantage with respect to time over other potential entrants. Therefore, communications and/or discussions between the A&S Ministers/War Representatives concerning the categories, rules, and judging sheets for upcoming Estrella War A&S Competitions *must be considered absolutely confidential*. [In other words, once discussions have begun, A&S Ministers/War Representatives must not consult with any individuals or groups (e.g., Laurels), with the exception of their Crowns and, perhaps, any deputies or individuals “officially” involved in the negotiations (who must also maintain confidentiality), concerning proposed categories, rules, and judging sheets.]. The competition rules for

the upcoming Estrella War, as well as the A&S categories for the following War, and of the judging sheets for the upcoming War, are made known to all potential entrants at the same times.

How, and when, are the three A&S categories, as well as rules and judging sheets, for each Estrella War decided upon?

By early summer of each year, the Atenveldt Crown has invited neighboring Kingdoms to participate as Principal Kingdoms in the upcoming Estrella War. In the past, the Kingdoms of Atenveldt, Artemisia, Caid, and Outlands have, for the most part, formed the Principal Kingdom group. As soon as the Atenveldt Crown has determined which Kingdoms will be Principals for the upcoming War, the A&S Ministers/War Representatives should begin communications to determine five proposed categories, three of which will be selected by the Crowns at the upcoming Treaty Negotiations, for the Estrella War to be held in the year following the upcoming War. These five proposed categories, together with both concise and precise definitions for each, must be agreed upon by the Principal Kingdom A&S Ministers/War Representatives and then submitted to the Estrella War Treaty Coordinator when required (usually about one month prior to the Treaty Negotiations—1 September is a good general deadline here).

Once the proposed rules and categories have been submitted to the Treaty Coordinator, these are then transmitted, with the entirety of the proposed War Treaty, to the Crowns of the Principal Kingdoms. It is left up to the Crowns to decide if the proposed rules for the upcoming war are acceptable. It is also left up to the Crowns to determine which three categories will be used for the A&S Competition at the following Estrella War.

The Treaty Negotiations are generally held during the month of October. Once the Treaty has been signed, the agreed-upon A&S Competition rules for the upcoming War (four months away), as well as the three categories for the competition at the following War (15 months away), may be made known to all. This gives potential entrants approximately four months of warning with respect to the upcoming competition rules and requirements, and approximately 15 months to prepare entries for the following War.

The judging sheets for the Estrella War A&S Competition must be ready for distribution to the public by, at the latest, the first of January preceding each War. However, this does not mean that the judging sheets could not be prepared any time in advance of this deadline (as the categories for the upcoming War had been published months in advance), giving potential entrants more time to fine tune their documentation. [However, as the responsibilities of the Kingdom A&S Ministers are many throughout the year, early preparation is not always feasible or convenient for all involved.] In most cases in the past, the judging sheets for each upcoming War have been composed, modified, corrected, and agreed-upon by the A&S Ministers/War Representatives between final submission of the proposed rules and categories to the Treaty Coordinator and the judging sheet deadline. In fact, publishing the judging sheets before the Treaty Negotiations may create serious issues if the Crowns decide to change the way in which the competition is scored. In the worst-case, this gives potential entrants five to six weeks to finalize the documentation that must accompany their entries.

How are judges selected for the Estrella War A&S Competitions?

In the past, each Principal Kingdom has supplied one judge for each of the three categories open in the competition. Judges are selected by the Principal Kingdom A&S Ministers/War Representatives prior to the upcoming War. Principal Kingdoms are strongly encouraged to have a backup judge pre-selected and available on site (just in case...)!

Judges are generally selected based upon their knowledge, as well as their experience in the judging, of, entries within the category they will be judging. Judges must have the ability to quickly but thoroughly read the entrants' documentation, thoroughly and professionally review each entry, and supply brief (and tactful) written commentary as feedback for entrants. Judges should not themselves be entrants. Judges should also be fairly skilled in time management, as all the judging must be completed within a defined time period.

How does the judging at the Estrella War A&S Competition work?

After being checked in at the War competition site, the entries are arranged in groups by category on tables. Prior to the War, entrants and their entries were numbered—only the Principal Kingdom A&S Ministers/War Representatives (not the judges) have access to the entrant names and their home Kingdoms (i.e., the judging is blind).

Following entry check-in, there is usually a brief judges' meeting in which the judging system is explained and questions may be answered. Then, the judges are divided into teams by category and the judging begins. The judges work together, moving from entry to entry within their category, applying appropriate scoring and a brief feedback to the entrants.

The Principal Kingdom A&S Ministers/War Representatives compile, record, and double-check the scores. They make sure, as the judging is completed for each entry and the sheets returned, that the sheets are properly completed and that comments made are not inappropriate. The scores on each sheet are totaled and checked, and then the scores are transferred to tally sheets, where an entry's total score may be determined. Once the judging is completed for a category and all the sheets have been checked, the judges are dismissed. When the tallying has been completed, the top three scoring items in each category denote the category winner and the runners-up.

Aside from the rules, category suggestions, and judging sheets, what other tasks are necessary in preparation for the Estrella War A&S Competition?

Publicity is important! Each of the Principal Kingdom A&S Ministers/War Representatives should take the time to make sure that the artisans within their Kingdoms are aware of categories open for the following year, as well as what this competition is all about. Information on the competition (including contact information) appears on the Estrella War Website. In past years, the Atenveldt A&S Website has contained a main information page for the Estrella War A&S Competition, as well as a pre-registration form (to be posted following Treaty Negotiations).

The Atenveldt Minister of Arts & Sciences is completely responsible for seeing that all aspects of the Estrella War A&S Competition are met (and dealt with) with the appropriate individuals and in a timely fashion. These may include (but are not limited to):

1. Work with appropriate Estrella War Event Stewards to make sure that appropriate facilities, time, and equipment are pre-arranged for the competition. There are deadlines here that must be met. Attending Estrella War planning meetings, if possible, is strongly encouraged, and good communication will be necessary. The Estrella War also has deadlines that must be met and forms that must be submitted when requesting use of facilities and equipment necessary to run the Estrella War A&S Competition.
2. Work with appropriate Estrella War Stewards to make sure that publicity is pre-arranged in a timely fashion and is correct when posted (website, gate book, etc.). Again, deadlines must be observed, and any material posted or published concerning the Estrella War must be approved by the appropriate Estrella War event coordinators.

3. Work with local A&S Officers within Atenveldt, and in advance with the Estrella War Volunteer Coordinator, to ensure that enough staff is available on the day of the competition to assist with setup, security especially during populace viewing), and cleanup.
4. Make sure that all of the necessary administrative paperwork for the War Competition is completely prepared in advance, and may be easily packed for transport to the War. A checklist here may be helpful. Necessary paperwork (and supplies) may include:
 - a. Copies of the competition rules and categories;
 - b. copies of all of the entry pre-registrations received;
 - c. a master list of all of the pre-registered entrants and entries (containing all entrant names and assigned numbers, entry descriptions, and assigned entry numbers—different versions, sorted in different ways, may be useful);
 - d. check-in sheets, prepared by category (containing entrant names, entry descriptions, entrant and entry numbers, etc.);
 - e. tally sheets, prepared by category, containing entrant and entry numbers (no entrant names or Kingdoms);
 - f. judging sheets, pre-prepared (and double-checked) for each entry (one sheet per judge);
 - g. extra judging sheets (blank)—these will probably be needed, as “oops” always occurs...;
 - h. a winners list where names of the top three entrants/entries and their home Kingdom may be listed for each category (copies may be needed by the Kingdom Scribe or representative, and by the Crown or Crown Herald—and, don't forget to keep one for later reporting...);
 - i. labels for applying entrant numbers and entry numbers to documentation sets; and,
 - j. plenty of pens and pencils (will be needed by all judges and tabulators), a working pencil sharpener, calculators (with good batteries), staplers, tape, paper weights (wind happens), a notebook, etc.
5. Make sure that the Kingdom Scribe is aware (well in advance) concerning what sort of scrolls will be needed for the competition, as well as who will be asked to prepare these. In addition, make sure that a scribe will be available to assist in preparing any scrolls after tallying has been completed (and confirmed by all of the Principal Kingdom A&S Ministers/War Representatives, as well as the Atenveldt Crown). Make sure that all necessary items and people will be available when needed.
6. Make sure that you understand how to correctly record volunteer hours at the War for all of your staff, including the judges. Appropriate paperwork should be obtained in advance from the Estrella War Volunteer Coordinator.
7. Understand the Estrella War Financial Guidelines. This will be necessary if reimbursement is expected for any expenses made preparing for and running the competition (e.g., judging sheet copies, extra pencils, etc.).
8. Food and drink may be helpful! In the past, a luncheon has often been privately funded and provided exclusively for judges and competition staff—this has prevented judges from disappearing midday, and has been well appreciated. While food will need to be privately funded (due to war regulations), a case of bottled water may possibly be obtained for volunteers through the Estrella War.

Who may enter the Estrella War A&S Competitions?

The Estrella War A&S Competitions are open to all; that is, entrants from any Kingdom may participate.

Why is pre-registration required for the Estrella War A&S Competition?

The Estrella War A&S Competition runs on a very limited and very tight schedule! Entry check-in usually takes place early in the morning for a short period of time (so the judging may begin reasonably early). With pre-registration in place, all the necessary paperwork has been prepared in advance by the Atenveldt Minister of Arts & Sciences, and there is little time needed for entry check-in. This can be especially important when there are a large number of entries in one or more categories.

Knowing how many entries are expected in each category also can affect the equipment needed for the competition (tables, chairs, table cloths, lights, etc.). Requiring pre-registration allows the competition coordinator to make sure that everything, and everyone, needed may be arranged for in advance. Judges may be selected as best qualified to judge the entries expected in each category. Having all the paperwork prepared in advance, without having to prepare a large amount of extra paperwork, can save considerable money.

Most master-level artisans who wish to enter the competition have already considered and/or begun their projects well in advance, and are well prepared to pre-register their entries by 30 days in advance of the competition. In some cases, potential entrants may not know if a proposed entry will be completed in time for the competition. This is OK—pre-registration is set up so the competition staff may appropriately prepare for the event, and potential entrants should not put aside pre-registration simply because they may not be sure that their entry will be completed in time. Usually, several pre-registered entries at each Estrella War A&S Competition fail to arrive on site (for a variety of reasons), and this is quite acceptable.