

**The Seven Knightly Virtues:**  
Essential elements of today's code of chivalry

by Scott Farrell

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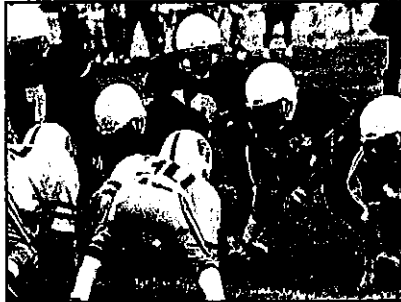
There was no such thing as a "uniform" code of chivalry in the Middle Ages. Many people — from successful knights to contemplative philosophers — compiled lists of virtuous qualities, called the "knightly virtues," which they felt defined chivalry. No two were exactly the same.

There were, however, several common themes found in these lists of knightly virtues. By combining these, we have created what we consider to be the *seven knightly virtues* of the modern code of chivalry:

- **Courage**  
More than bravado or bluster, today's knight in shining armor must have the courage of the heart necessary to undertake tasks which are difficult, tedious or unglamorous, and to graciously accept the sacrifices involved.
- **Justice**  
A knight in shining armor holds him- or herself to the highest standard of behavior, and knows that "fudging" on the little rules weakens the fabric of society for everyone.
- **Mercy**  
Words and attitudes can be painful weapons in the modern world, which is why a knight in shining armor exercises mercy in his or her dealings with others, creating a sense of peace and community, rather than engendering hostility and antagonism.
- **Generosity**  
Sharing what's valuable in life means not just giving away material goods, but also time, attention, wisdom and energy — the things that create a strong, rich and diverse community.
- **Faith**  
In the code of chivalry, "faith" means trust and integrity, and a knight in shining armor is always faithful to his or her promises, no matter how big or small they may be.
- **Nobility**  
Although this word is sometimes confused with "entitlement" or "snobbishness," in the code of chivalry it conveys the importance of upholding one's convictions at all times, especially when no one else is watching.
- **Hope**  
More than just a safety net in times of tragedy, hope is present every day in a modern knight's positive outlook and cheerful demeanor — the shining armor that shields him or her, and inspires people all around.

Each of these concepts is important in itself, and every one of these virtues is an admirable quality, but when all of them blend together in one person, we discover the value, and power, of *chivalry today*. Modern-day knights should strive to keep these virtues alive in their own hearts, but, perhaps more importantly, they should work to bring these wonderful qualities out in the people they see every day — at home, in the office, at school or on the street corner. A person who lives by the code of chivalry in today's world allows everyone to see their best qualities reflected in his or her shining armor.

### Take the Pledge



Today in America, surveys indicate that as many as two-thirds of children between the ages of 6 and 18 are involved in athletic activities— from team sports like soccer, football, softball, tee-ball, water polo and basketball, to individual sports such as ice skating, wrestling, gymnastics, swimming, track and golf. More than 60,000 parks, schools and neighborhood recreation centers in this country sponsor youth sports of some kind.

Athletic activities provide a wide range of benefits to kids, from improved physical health to “quality time” spent with parents and friends. But there’s a basic dilemma that goes along with introducing children to organized sports: How do you teach a child to enjoy competition without instilling an unhealthy “win at all costs” attitude that may lead to professional or interpersonal problems later in life?

That quandary goes back to the days of knights in shining armor; it was, in fact, the very reason why the Code of Chivalry was developed in the Middle Ages. In those days the line between ethical competition and ruthless self-interest was as thin as the edge of a sword.

In today’s world, we’ve seen many examples of how easily disregard for the rules in sports translates into disrespect for authority in other areas of life — in the workplace, in the political arena and in society in general. (How many news stories have you heard about the multi-million-dollar “bad boy” athletes selling drugs, abusing women, or vandalizing property?)

To combat the poor examples set by sports stars who lie, cheat and steal, many youth leagues and athletic associations are adopting codes of conduct and ethical statutes to help young players internalize the concepts of respect, fair play and sportsmanship. These codes emphasize graciousness, self-restraint, integrity and dedication — concepts that would have been very familiar to the armored knights of the Middle Ages.

Knights in shining armor were the greatest athletes of their time. They were admired as both warriors and competitors, but it was their dedication to the ideals of upstanding and ethical conduct that made them heroes for many generations to come — just as sports stars who combine personal values and athletic excellence in today’s world continue to be held in high regard long after they’ve retired from the public eye.

By emphasizing the connection between integrity, sports and the chivalrous knightly champions of old, parents and coaches allow today’s kids to learn more about the importance of ethical conduct on today’s “fields of battle.” To help with this, we’ve created The Athlete’s Code of Chivalry — a simple but effective pledge that incorporates the Seven Knightly Virtues. We hope

that athletes, coaches and parents alike accept the challenge of committing themselves to training, playing and living by the Code of Chivalry as they pursue their athletic endeavors in the 21st century.

### The Athlete's Code of Chivalry

As an athlete, I set an example of integrity, honor and strength. I come from the competitive tradition of knights in shining armor, and whenever I participate in my sport, I pledge to follow these guidelines:

- I will have the courage to prepare myself mentally and physically for my sport, to use all my strength and skills in every game, and to never make excuses for my performance on the field.
- I will know and understand the rules of my sport, and I will play by those rules in all situations and circumstances so that every game is a fair and just competition.
- I will share my enthusiastic spirit generously with coaches, teammates, teachers, officials and everyone who works to make my sport possible, because I know that I cannot excel without the support of others.
- I will be gracious in both victory and defeat, recognizing that every test of my athletic skills gives me an opportunity to improve myself.
- I will be honest, truthful and responsible when participating in my sport, because the bonds of trust that exist between athletes, coaches and officials create a safe environment on the field.
- I will conduct myself with dignity and honor at all times, remembering that I represent the noble image of athletic excellence in every aspect of my life.
- I will possess a positive, hopeful attitude before, during and after competition, because participating in my sport is a privilege, and I want to look back on my experiences with joy and happiness.

I will live by the Athlete's Code of Chivalry, and I will do my best to always be an honorable example of sporting excellence for others to follow and admire.

*Scott Farrell has 25 years of experience in armored, full-contact martial arts in tournament societies and Renaissance Faires. He has twice won the Southern California regional championship of the Society for Creative Anachronism, an international historical re-enactment group, and has received several awards for upholding the ideals of chivalry and honor in competition.*

## A Quick Intro to Heraldry

Heraldry began in the early Middle Ages of Europe to help the knights and foot soldiers identify each other during a battle. Since all of the knights wore shiny (sometimes) metal armour covering their whole body, they had trouble identifying their allies during a battle. Thus, the noble and knightly families designed patterns and symbols to paint on their shields that would represent their family. These shields were called coats of arms, and any family of noble rank could have one. Peasants of the middle class could earn their own coat of arms by performing a great deed or class could earn their own coat of arms by performing a great deed or earning the favors of a nobleman. Many peasants had their own coat of arms that were not recognized by the College. The College was where all the heralds learned their heraldic skills and where all the official records were kept. Families had to be recognized by the College for their coat of arms to be official.

Heralds went to school at a very young age and were taught to read and write. they had to memorize all of the coat of arms that were in existence, and they were used at battles to help determine where the positions of the enemy and allied knights were on the battlefield. Heraldry had their own language for describing shields, called Blazon. All coats of arms were described in this language; it was an abbreviated way to describe what could be a very complicated coat of arms.

<i>Blazon</i>	<i>English</i>	<i>symbolism</i>
Metals		
Or	Gold	generosity and elevation of mind
Argent	Silver	peace and sincerity
Colors		
Gules	Red	warrior, brave and strong but generous and just; the martyr's color
Azure	Blue	truth and loyalty
Vert	Green	hope, joy, and love
Sable	Black	constancy or grief

# Heraldry Symbols and Their Meanings;

(In alphabetical order)

Anchor - represents hope  
Arrow - symbolizes readiness(for battle)  
Battle Axe - symbol of the execution of military duty  
Bear - strength, cunning, and protection toward one's own kin  
Boar - bravery; one who fights to the death  
Boar's head - hospitality  
Bow - same as arrow, usually go together  
Bull - valor, bravery, generosity; horns represent strength and fortitude  
Camel - patience and perseverance  
Castle - safety  
Cock - courage and perseverance; badge of a hero  
Cypress - death and eternal life thereafter  
Dolphin - swiftness, diligence, and love(dolphin depicted having scales)  
Dragon - valor and protection  
Eagle - person of deeds and of noble nature, strength, bravery and alertness - wings symbolize protection  
Scallop Shell - traveller to far places; victorious naval commander  
Goat - one who wins through politics  
Goose - resourcefulness  
Griffin - valor and bravery  
Hand - sincerity, faith, and judgement  
Harp - composed person of tempered judgement; contemplation  
Hawk - one who does not rest until he achieves his objective  
Heart, Flaming - intense, burning affection  
Heart, Human - clarity and sincerity  
Hind(female deer) - peace and harmony  
Holly - truth  
Horse - readiness for all events  
Horseshoe - good luck and safeguard against evil spirits  
Laurel - peace and/or triumph  
Lightning Bolt - swiftness and power  
Lion - dauntless courage  
Mermaid - eloquence

Oak Tree - great age and strength; w/ acorns: continuous growth and fertility  
Ostrich - willing obedience and serenity  
Otter - individual who lives life to fullest  
Peacock - beauty, power and knowledge  
Pelican - (shown piercing her breast to feed her young) self-sacrifice, person of charitable nature  
Portcullis - protection in an emergency  
Rainbow - good times after bad  
Ram - leader, represents authority  
Raven - divine providence  
Rock - symbol of safety and protection; a refuge  
Rose, red - grace and beauty  
Rose, white - faith and love  
Serpent/snake - wisdom  
Spear - honorable warrior, valiant knight  
Spur - preparedness, readiness for battle  
Stag - one who will not fight unless severely provoked; peace and harmony; antlers represent strength and fortitude  
Sun - (in splendor) glory and splendor; fountain of life  
Swan - poetic harmony and learning  
Sword - justice and honor  
Tree trunk - (sprouting) new life sprouting from old  
Unicorn - extreme courage, *Christ*  
Vine tree - strong and lasting friendship  
Wheel - fortune  
Wings - swiftness and protection  
Wolf - reward from perseverance and hard industry  
Wyvern - valor and protection

# COAT OF ARMS

*In Medieval times the Coat of Arms was placed on banners and shields to signify a knight's allegiance. On it was a representation of their lord's heritage, values, and accomplishments. It was used to identify friends and foes during battle.*

*Here is how you should create your coat of arms.*

**Section 1:** Draw an animal that you feel represents you

**Section 2:** Draw a picture of your greatest accomplishment

**Section 3:** Draw a picture of what you see yourself accomplishing in life

**Section 4:** Draw a picture of your most prized possession

**Section 5:** Draw a symbol of your strength that is not an animal

**Section 6:** Draw a picture of one of the most important people to you in the world and label them

**Remember:** Fill every space completely. This way, each section will work together to make a whole composition.

