



# Empire of the Wolf Handbook

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## **Introduction & Empire Goals**

This writing is given to you, whether you are a new Initiate, member, Gestir, or Ally, as a crash course in the complex and joyous life of being a part of the Empire of the Wolf.

We as a group participate in many different combat games, but we do not anchor ourselves to any single game in particular. The Empire stands as its own entity. We are a re-enactment group based on the Northerners commonly referred to as "Vikings," though we do not limit our timeline to the "Viking Era." Instead, our timeline spans from the Vendel Era to the late Kievan Rus'--allowing members to portray any cultures that may have had contact with the "Vikings," including Middle Eastern Saracens, Slavic Warriors, and more.

As a Thrall, your time among us will not always be easy, but anything worth keeping rarely is. As you go through that fire and join our ranks as a Karl you will learn what it means to be family.

As a Gestir, or honored guest, you will be accepted with open arms as an extension of our family.

As an ally, you will find brotherhood -- both on and off the field -- as well as like-minded individuals that will work with you towards common goals.

Above all else, we are a family. Whether at an event, on a field of battle, or at a fellow brother's home, we are a family. To be part of one of the most loyal and aggressive groups of man is an honor and privilege that should not be taken lightly.

## Our Laws

1. All members hail each other as valued brothers & sisters and should treat each other as such, no matter their rank.
2. The Rite of Challenge shall be upheld by all of the Empire.
3. As is tradition, the Challenger makes the Challenge, but the one who is challenged shall decide what form the Challenge shall take.
4. Titles that CAN be challenged for include:  
The Crown, Stallari, Chieftains
5. The Crown has the final say in all matters.
6. The Crown is charged with maintaining Empire Structure, Membership and Ranking, and the handing out of awards and special Titles.
7. The Empire is governed by a council consisting of the Crown as well as the Ealdorman – Elected Leaders within the Empire
8. When a member leaves the Empire, they give up all earned titles and rankings and must re-thrall to prove themselves if they wish to return. Exceptional circumstances may exist that the Ealdorman may decide a returning member MAY retain full membership, but these are conditional, scarce, and on a case-by-case basis. They are not the norm.
9. Member Ranking Eligibility is determined at Althyngs and Thyngs and awarded at Court.
10. All members shall follow the standards set forth by in this handbook.
11. If a member wishes to have affiliation with another group, they may do so in an Honorary, or guest position. The Empire must come first in any and all cases of loyalty and camping.
12. Should a member of the Crown depart from the Empire for whatever reason, the existing members of the Crown shall maintain positions and make any changes **as needed**. If all members of the Crown are lost, the council of Ealdorman shall convene to determine a successor.

## **Empire Membership**

For most that want to join the Empire, and all members currently within, part of our passion is Viking Age Reenactment. This passion involves crafting things from the “Viking” time period, reenacting battles and studying the combat used, as well as pretending to live like the people did during that time period. Being a member of the Empire means being a member of an extended family with a common goal of medieval reenactment, revelry and reinforcement. This means we support each other in our endeavors, we strive to reenact the Viking age as best we can, and we celebrate our precious time together. Membership in the Empire has a “vetting” process, and it involves membership ranking. Member ranks are themed after specific classes within the Viking age Society. This includes Thralls, the Norse word for slave, Karls, the Norse word for Free Man, and Huskarl, the Norse word for House man, and so on. These are merely membership rank titles themed after Viking age society, not meant literally.

### **Thrall**

The initiation period of membership, Thrall status is a vital part of joining our Empire and family. It gives both current and new members the opportunity to get to know one another, helps thralls understand the group’s inner workings, and ensures that our family is a comfortable fit.

This period of initiation may seem difficult at times but rest assured that every single member has experienced it. Every task betters the community and serves to display initiative, dedication, and respect to other members thus earning loyalty and respect in turn.

Thralls wear a brown sash for at least 1 year and after that year the thrall is expected to review their membership and decide if they are ready for Karl. If they have met all Karl Requirements, they should petition for Karl at the next Althyng.

### **Karl**

Obtaining Karl status means proving to the Empire that a Thrall has achieved their membership requirements and also proven they are a fit for the family. Karls are full members of the Empire, and wear a green Empire of the Wolf membership sash. Karl status bestows many privileges, including access to higher rankings in advanced membership, the ability to issue the right of Challenge, as well as eligibility to petition for Awards.

These benefits do come at a price, while all Empire members are expected to pitch in and help out, Karls and advanced members are held to a higher standard in this regard. Karls may be asked to assist in any number of ways including (but not limited to) camp duties at events, hauling gear, kitchen help, etc.

- **KARL REQUIREMENTS** - Thralls who meet the following requirements should petition during the Member Service Section of a Thyng or Althyng to be considered for Karl. Should the member be found worthy, they will be Karled at the next Court or Althyng. (Though it is recommended to receive the Karl Sash at Court, because it is more formal.)
  - Exhibit satisfactory honor on the field, if a fighter.
  - Develop a persona name and basic background from a culture from the early Vendel Era to late Kievan Rus' (6th to 13th century, 500-1299 AD) either from Norse lands or from cultures that would have had contact with the Norse.
  - Own one event's worth of garb (a fighting tunic, a feast tunic, and a pair of pants), all with a Viking era theme.
  - Attend at least 1 event with Empire Presence while wearing a Brown sash.
  - Complete 3 Hearthstone Awardable Actions as defined by the Advanced Membership Guide
  - If a Fighter, obtain the Standing Army Rank of Fotmann.
  - Wear the Brown sash for at least one year
    - Please keep in mind, the Empire strives to help its membership. These tasks may seem daunting, but with the help from your new family, this will be a breeze.

**Gestir** - Those who prove their worth to the Empire but have prior allegiances that keep them from committing fully are awarded with Gestir Sashes. In regards to Professions and some Orders, Gestir can gain rank in them as if they were Karls. Gestir can also receive a limited amount of Awards.

Becoming a Gestir requires service to the Empire and once an individual has become worthy, they will be offered a sash at Court. Examples of service include working as a Crat or helping in other ways at an Empire event.

## **Advanced Membership**

Once a Member has become familiar with this handbook, it is recommended they read the Advanced Membership Handbook. The Advanced Membership Handbook covers advanced member rankings such as the Huskarl and Nobility as well as Orders and Professions. Professions are meant to depict what a person living in the Viking age might pursue, and Orders are specialties within the professions that strive for excellence in their focus.

## Structure

The Empire of the Wolf is organized into a medieval inspired kingdom. It is headed by what is called “The Crown” that is made up of a king, queen and princes.

### The Crown

Leading the Empire of the Wolf, “The Crown” is tasked with managing membership, organizing events, and divvying up duties for events. The Crown also is responsible for handling member disputes and deciding on any actions necessary. The Crown is considered Royal among the members of the Empire (See the Roleplay section for more info). Members of the Crown have the final say in all matters, should the need arise, and are also charged with handing out awards and ruling on certain membership titles and ranking. Crown titles can be challenged for by Karl ranked members or higher, or appointed by an existing Crown member.

The Ulfrik and Dronning are the King and Queen of the Empire. They are the Highest Ranking Royalty that exists in the Empire.

- Duties:
  - Head of the Ruling Body of the Empire.
  - The Ulfrik and Dronning are asked to hold High Courts at major events meant to improve moral as well as hand out awards and scrolls determined at Althyng.
  - Can also perform any duties pertaining to lower ranks as deemed necessary.
- The Prinz rank is given to the leader of a Principality. There are currently 2 principalities.
  - Leaders of their respective territory. They manage their respected territory, hold Althyngs and make sure people are properly represented.
  - Prinzes can also hold Courts at events.
  - Prinzes are required to hold an Althyng at least every 6 months.
  - Can also perform any duties pertaining to lower ranks as deemed necessary.

#### Duties of the Crown

Hold Courts

Hand out Awards

Hold Althyngs

Determine Member Ranking

Uphold & enforce the laws of the Empire

Oversee maintenance of the Empire’s membership, policy, paths, ranking & Orders. (This includes house management)

Above all, the crown should always strive to make membership of the Empire fun!

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## **The Council of Ealdormen**

The Council of Ealdormen helps the Crown with their duties. The council is made up of elected and appointed officers and leaders of houses. Ealdormen are responsible for helping The Crown with their duties and making sure members are properly represented.

## **Ealdorman Offices**

### **Ealdorman**

- Sits on the Council of Ealdorman
- Term: 1 year
- Karl Rank or higher required
- Provide Counsel to the Crown and assist with Crown Duties.
- Assist House Leaders and the Stallari with duties.
- Elected once per year by all Principality voting members.
- 2 Ealdorman per Principality (unless less or more are deemed necessary)

### **House Leaders**

- Elected or appointed to oversee a local region within a Principality. This is usually a local practice, Hird or Drott. House leaders focus on recruiting new members at their local practice, training them for combat (if they do combat), and helping them advance in ranking.
  - They are asked to hold Thyngs once every two months to conduct member service & update members on the status of the Empire.
  - House leaders are asked to educate members on empire structure and rank advancement, organize craft days, and kit inspections.
  - House leaders report to the Council of any member activity that is worthy of Recognition.
  - Sits on the Ealdorman council
  - House leaders can hold votes to designate Thralls at their Thyngs, so long as 5 Empire members are in attendance and a majority vote is for the designation.
  - Requirements: Karl rank or higher
  - Term: 1 year – elected based on House Traditions
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### **Stallari**

- Act as Generals to the Army of the Empire under the Crown
- Determined by Combat Tournament once per year.

- 1 Stallari per Principality
  - In charge of Empire Fighter Training,
  - Should strive to host or teach at Hersir Training Camps
  - Should strive to help at their local practices, teaching technique, game rules and safety.
  - May designate Officers/deputies to act in their stead per local practice.
  - Requirements: Karl rank or higher
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## Althyng

An Althyng, or Thyng, is a meeting of the members of the Empire. Thyngs are a chance for the Empire to discuss policy, bring up problems within the Empire, decide upon the rank and mastery advancement of members of the Empire, and consider non-Empire members for membership. Matters of finance, the preparations for and running of events should be decided upon. The Crown, Ealdorman or a Chieftain will preside over a Thyng. The Presiding member has a duty to call for votes, and conduct Thyng business smoothly.

Members are requested to petition during the Member Service section of a Thyng to join the Empire, Increase rank, Join an Order, Request or Nominate others for Awards or ranks, and Report any issues they may have.

### General Thyng Structure

- Structure
  1. Call to Order by Presiding member
  2. Announcements
  3. Member Service - This is where a member would petition for just about anything in an official capacity.
  4. Old business - discussion of any business that was tabled since the last meeting.
  5. New Business - Discussion of any new business.
  6. Admin updates - Althyngs only. Discussion of admin ranks, how they are doing, and the potential voting for the rank.
  7. Call to Close by Presiding member
- Voting can occur during most of the Thyng, but they must be related to the current topics.
- **Thyngs can also be held online.**

### Types of Thyng Business

- Event Planning
- Structure updates



- Awards for Members
- Member Service - has special section in thyng structure.

## **Voting**

Everything discussed at a Thyng can be voted on, especially adding new thralls.

## **Voting Members**

All members are eligible to vote during Thyng and when electing Ealdormen except for Gestir.

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## **Houses**

Houses in the Empire of the Wolf are themed after actual households in the Viking age. Most of the time, people inhabited a longhouse, overseen by a lesser Lord or a wealthy Free man. Free men would offer their loyalty to the household and be given a space to live in the house as physical dwellings were rarer, and expensive to build. Houses in the Empire can be based around a practice location or themed after an ideal of some sort. There are three levels of houses.

## **Clan or House**

An unofficial organization of members not yet recognized by the Crown, a clan or house can be of any theme, or based on any location. Clan or house leaders do not sit on the Council of Ealdorman and do not gain House Leader rights within the Empire.

## **Drotts**

The first official Empire household level, the Drott's leader, a Drottin, sits on the Ealdorman Council and can enact the rights of the House leader as described in the Structure section.

Drotts are expected to dress and equip themselves in a similar fashion to cultures within the time frame of the Empire and develop a history/back-story for the Drott, as well as drott traditions and bylaws. Drotts can develop their own heraldry (that must somehow include the Empire's red hook/spear), display their heraldry on gear and garb and can fly a 2' x 4' banner in camp or on the field.

*To apply for Drott status, a potential Drottin must petition for household recognition at Althyng/Court with 5 members (Thralls or higher), an established history/back-story for the Drott, and an example of the potential Heraldry. The Crown will then make a decision then, or can choose to deliberate until the next Court, where an official answer will be given. (It is recommended that a scroll of petition be created for presentation at Althyng, along with a tribute of some sort.)*

## Hirðs

The final level of household available in the Empire, Hirðs are led by a Hertogi, a landed noble within the ranks of the Empire. Hirðs should further develop and establish their history/backstory to explain how they came under the rule of the Empire and how they contribute to the Empire's future. Hirðs can display their heraldry on a 2' x 4' banner in camp or on the field.

*To apply for Hirð status, an established Drott must petition at Althyng/Court with 10 members (Thralls or higher, at least 4 Karls), and the improved history/back-story for the Hirð. The potential Hirð must have an official petition scroll drawn up for presentation and a token of the Drott's loyalty, an answer will then be given at the next Court.*

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## Awards

Awards are awarded at the behest of the Crown for exceptional service in one or more fields. These can be earned only by members ranked Karl or higher, aside from the Award of the Rising Star, which is only available to Thralls.

- *Award of the Anvil:* For excellence in the sciences of non-artistic creation. (ex: Weaponsmithing)
  - *Award of the Bowed Head:* For service to the Empire above and beyond expectancy.
  - *Award of the Rising Star:* For amazing improvement to kit, combat, service, or persona for a thrall.
  - *Award of the Mask:* For excellence in portrayal of one's chosen persona, going above and beyond the norm.
  - *Award of the Tipped Brush:* For exceptional creativity in the arts and contribution of such to the Empire
  - *Award of the Sable Helm:* For Exceptional presence on the Battlefield
  - *Spirit of the Wolf Award:* A very special award that has only be given to one member.
  - *Golden Helm:* For years of Combat Prowess, Combat Service and Loyalty to the Empire on the field of battle.
  - *Silver Hand:* For service to the Empire when none is expected. (non-member/Gestir award) (Minor award, printed on a smaller scroll 8.5"x11")
  - *Silver Leaf:* For Continued service to the Empire when none is expected. (non-member award of greater import) (Full size Scroll)
  - *Silver Sword:* For fighting with the Empire, and showing great loyalty, when no loyalty is expected. (non-member combat award)
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## RP

The Empire of the Wolf is a Family. We enjoy History and fantasy. So in addition to Combat and the arts and sciences we delve into Role Play. We pretend to take on personas that fit into that medieval history or fantasy and live our precious days away from the real world as someone else.

In that way, the Empire participates in different forms of Role Play.

## Court

- The Empire holds what is known as Courts. In medieval times, they were a combination of formal parties and administrative meetings. Awards were handed out, feasts were had, and people could come forward and make requests of their Lord or King. The Crown oversees Court. This is where Members are acknowledged for their achievements. This could include increasing in rank, joining an Order, or receiving an Award.
- Including Member achievement acknowledgement, Court is also used to have role play. Members should strive to set up mini-dramas that can be enacted at Court.
- The Ulfric and Dronning hold what is known as High Court. It is an even fancier form of Court, which is held by Prinzes.
- “Pomp and Circumstance” – During Court, formal titles must be acknowledged, and certain medieval formalities are followed. If you attend a court, please strive to acknowledge markers of honor (Usually Circlets) and address titled members accordingly. This adds to everyone’s immersion, and is meant to be fun. As always, please respect everyone’s personal boundaries and report any uncomfortable forms of role play to the nearest Ealdorman or Crown member.
- Fun is the focus.

## “Alt Days”

At an event, the Empire requires a historical persona for at least 2/3 of the Event days. The other days will be considered free days to portray any kind of character you wish. These days are known as “Alt Days”. Day events do not have multiple days, so certain day events may be chosen as “Free RP” days or Alt Day Events. We like history, but we also like fantasy.

(Example: At Ragnarok Wednesday, Friday and Saturday would be “Main Character/Viking Persona” days because Althyng is held on Wednesday, High Court is held on Friday and Saturday we March to the field as a unit.)

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## Banner Standards

Flying a personal coat of arms, aka Heraldry, or a specific House Banner can be a very rewarding experience and a source of pride. Members or houses with Banner rights may fly a specifically sized banner in camp and on the field at events and practices. Specific Rules apply to banners when flown in camp. Please see below for banner specifics.

**4' x 8' Banner** - This size is reserved only for Empire of the Wolf Banners. No other banners this size may be flown in an Empire of the Wolf hosted Camp.

**3' x 6' Banner** - This banner size is no longer in use. Any existing royal or noble banners in this category are grandfathered into the new standards.

**2' x 4' Banner** - The 2' x 4' banner is the size that will be noted most often in camp as it applies to most houses and personal heraldry. As long as the Banner stays below 8 square feet it can be of any length and width, however, All Empire House banners should be made to fit a 2' x 4' banner.

- Knights, both Empire and Recognized non-Empire, may fly their personal heraldry on this size.
- All noble ranked members may fly their personal heraldry on this size.