

## The SCA and Young Children

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The SCA offers many wonderful activities for children to participate in – however, they are rarely geared towards the very young. This leaves the parents of young children to fend for themselves. Well, you can create a more enjoyable environment for your young children with just a little planning.

I can guess what you may be thinking. It's not possible to take your young children to an event and still enjoy yourself. YES, it is possible! The Society of Creative Anachronism BEFORE children was just a matter of packing for yourself, but now you need to gather another car load of items just for your children. This can be a daunting task and if not thought out it can leave the parents and children frustrated and unhappy. Unfortunately, the SCA loses many promising members because of this, but it just does not have to be that way! By addressing a few simple things you and your children can enjoy SCA events as a family.

**Garb** – Children dressed in beautiful period garb is always a wonderful sight! If you have the time, money, and the know-how then this is most definitely the way to go. However, children grow so fast so it can be difficult to keep them clothed. When they are so young it might be best to just make simple tunics, pants and tabards. If you have girls and you want them to look like little ladies you can make their tunics longer or make a gathered tie string or elastic waist skirt to go with a simple tunic. Hand-me-downs are also great source of garb (more about this later). **REMEMBER** - Young children have accidents! Always bring extra shoes and socks, clothes, garb, and underclothes/diapers and large zip-lock bags for the dirty clothes and “toxic waste”. Better to be prepared than sorry – I've been there... it is not fun.



**Toys and Activities** – A large basket or plastic tub full of favorite toys is perfect. Because other children may want to play with your child's toys, mark them indelible marker or fingernail polish. This will help you identify which toys are yours and which belong to someone else. If you buy a coordinating play set (such as the Little People Castle and Accessories sets) you are more likely to remember what belongs and you won't have many mix-ups. Children love to listen to stories so bring age appropriate books and have a story time. This might be perfect right after a snack and before nap time.

**Nap Time** – Don't forget to bring a blanket and small pillow for your child to rest on. It can be very hard to get children to nap at events so a familiar blanket and pillow can be comforting. If you use the same items each time then the child will associate them with nap time which increases the likelihood of you getting them down for a nap.

**Snacks and Lunch** – Make sure you have your child's favorite snack and drink on hand. If they are in daycare during the week then they are used to having breakfast, a snack, lunch, and another snack at school and then dinner at home. It is a good idea to continue this on the weekends to keep them on their schedule. Snacks can be whatever you and your child can agree upon, of course. Lunch is pretty simple. Most children like meat, cheese, crackers, and juice.

**Feast** - Well, this can be a little tricky. Small children are not always willing to try some of the “interesting” things that our wonderful feast stewards create. If it looks funny they might not give it a try. If a children's feast is offered, sign up your child. They are more likely to serve something that your child is more familiar with. If not, then be prepared to offer your child something from your own cooler such as items from their lunch and snack menus. If you have ever taken your child to a sit-down restaurant where the dinner may last an hour or more, you know to bring small toys or crayons to entertain your child. Feast is no different and can be even longer. As you know, a child's patience is rather short. If possible, plan on taking turns with someone to routinely take the child for a walk if they appear to be becoming too “antsy”.



Court – No one wants to hear a child fussing during court – especially not the parent holding the child. Finding a spot at the back of the room where you can spread out and let your children play with toys would be perfect. You can keep them entertained and have easy access to the door should you need to whisk a child out for any reason. If this is not possible then you may want to find someone to watch your children. (See next section.)

Above all, remember you're not the only one! Get to know the other parents of young children. You can be a support team for each other. Share event tactics – not to mention toys and garb that your children have outgrown. If possible gather children together and form an event play group. Parents can take turns hosting this group. This will allow parents to take turns attending classes, participating in martial activities, enjoying feast, dancing, or attending court.

Once you have formulated a plan that works most of the time and established a routine, you will find that attending events with small children becomes easier and more enjoyable for you and your children.

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