



# By the Boke

*An educational series of articles presented by the Northshield College of Heraldry.*

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## How to Conflict Check Your Arms Submission

*By Aryanhwy merch Catmael, Boke Herawde*

### I. What this article is

This is a quick and dirty run-through of how to conflict check your arms. This article assumes that all stylistic problems have already been taken care of, and that the arms in question are SCA legal.

### II. On overview of the rules

The rules governing conflict of armory submissions in the College of Arms are found in Rules for Submissions X (<http://www.sca.org/heraldry/laurel/rfs.html#10>). RfS X is divided into five parts. The first two gives ways that two pieces of armory can be cleared through one change, and the fourth lays out the rules for clearing two pieces of armory by counting “CDs” (clear differences) between the two. (The third section has bearing only for branch arms with respect to X.1 and X.2, and the fifth discusses visual conflict, and shall not be covered here). I shall cover each of these briefly before moving on to specific examples.

**X.1 Addition of Primary Charge** — Any submitted arms that do not have a primary charge automatically do not conflict with any submitted arms that do have a primary charge; vice versa is also true: If you submit arms with a primary charge, they automatically do not conflict with arms that don’t have any primary charge. A primary charge is the charge that is placed centrally on the escutcheon, either directly on the field, or on top of strewn charges; an overall charge can never be a primary charge.

**X.2 Substantially Different Charges** — For the purposes of this rule, “Simple Armory” is defined as armory that has no more than two types of charges directly on the field, and no overall charges. If your submitted arms are “Simple Armory” per this rule, then if the type of your primary charge is substantially different from the primary charge type of any other piece of simple armory, there is no conflict.

What counts as “substantially different”? Here is where you can generally use common sense. If two charges look extremely different, such as a lion vs. a bend, then they are almost certainly X.2 clear. If two charges were not used interchangeably in period, such as lions and griffins, then they are X.2 clear. An example of something that is not X.2 clear are certain types of crosses: Some types of crosses were used interchangeably in early armory, and thus are not considered substantially different. If you are in doubt as to whether something is substantially different from something else, you can probably find the answer for yourself at the Precedents of the College of Arms (<http://www.sca.org/heraldry/laurel/precedents.html> — always start with the most recent ones and work back), or by asking your local herald.

**X.4 Significant Armorial Difference** — This rule and its subrules cover all arms that are neither X.2 simple or clear via X.1. Any piece of armory that fails X.1 or X.2 must have at least two Clear Differences (CDs) from any other piece of registerable armory. These differences come from:

- a. Changing the field
- b. Adding charges to the field
- c. Adding overall charges

- d. Changing the tincture of charges
- e. Changing the type of charges
- f. Changing the number of charges
- g. Changing the arrangement of charges
- h. Changing the posture of charges
- i. Adding charges to charges
- j. Changing charges to charges

There are certain provisos for each category above, but in general, you can get one CD per each change or addition listed above.

### III. How to Conflict Check

Now that we have a basic idea of what the rules say, how do we implement them? The SCA Ordinary and Armorial is available online at various locations; you can find links to them at <http://www.sca.org/heraldry/OandA>. The focus of this article will be using the online OandA, but the strategy works the same using a paper copy.

The very first question that you should ask yourself is “What is the primary charge?” If your arms are simple, then there is no need to check armory that has a primary charge that is substantially different. (If your arms are not simple, you might want to consider redesigning, since simple armory usually both has fewer conflicts and is closer to medieval style). Of the “Search Forms for the SCA Armorial”, you want to use the “Online SCA Ordinary – Master Index”. This breaks down the OandA into categories, and thus you can significantly reduce the number of places you look by only looking in the category of charges that are not X.2 different from your submitted arms.

Once you’re in the right category, look at arms with the same field, focusing first on ones where the primary charge is the same tincture. Compare each of the registered arms to yours, and then compare both to X.4, to see if you can get CDs through addition or change of secondary charges, etc. If you find no conflicts, look next at ones with the same field, but different tintured primary charge. After that, look at arms that have different fields and different tintured primary charges, but the same peripheral charges (like chiefs, bases, and bordures), or the same secondaries. Again, compare each piece of registered armory to the submitted armory via the RfS, and see if you can find two CDs.

The goal is to look first at devices as similar as possible to yours. Then, as you look at things less and less similar, you will be automatically building in CDs as you hunt; for example, if your submitted arms have a sable field, and you have found no conflicts with other sable-field devices, you know that against any other device, you will have one CD for field tincture (for anything other than sable).

### IV. An example.

To provide many detailed examples would far expend my space allotment, and so I have focused on just one, provided me by a Northshield herald who is consulting on these arms for a submitter:

*Sable, a fox’s mask argent a bordure Or pellety.*

A “fox’s mask” is a fox’s head, facing the viewer, so the relevant category to look in is “Head - beast - dog - sole primary”. “Pellety” is short-hand for “semy (strewn) of pellets,” where a pellet is a roundel sable. These arms are X.2 simple, since there are only two types of charges directly on the field (the mask and the bordure). We look first at arms that have the same field, sable. Since there are many of these, I will then narrow the search down to ones that also have the same tincture of the primary charge, argent. It is important to keep in mind that for purposes of heraldry, wolves = foxes = dogs, so we will not be getting any CDs for type.

*Fandral Silverfox, “Sable, a fox’s mask argent.”*

Versus the proposed arms, there is one CD for adding the bordure (X.4.b), and one for charging the bordure with the pellets (X.4.i). This is clear.

*Derek Fairhair, “Sable, a fox’s mask per pale gules and argent within a bordure argent.”*

There is one CD for changing half the tincture of the primary charge (X.4.d), one for changing the tincture of the bordure (X.4.d), and one for adding the pellets (X.4.i). This is clear.

*William of Hoghton, “Sable, a grey wolf’s head erased proper. [Canis lupus]”*

“Erased” means that the head is facing to the viewer’s left, not straight out at the viewer. A charge that is “grey...proper” is drawn as argent. So, there is one CD for changing the posture of the head (affronty vs. erased, X.4.h), and the same CDs for adding the bordure and the pellets. This is clear.

*Talanque, “Sable, a horned wolf’s head erased argent.”*

This has all the same CDs as the above one, but there is a fourth for adding the horns: Horns, drawn large enough, when added to a head that doesn’t normally have horns constitute an addition of charges on the field, and thus there is a CD by X.4.b. This is clear.

*Kille Dere Silverwolf, “Sable, a wolf’s head cabossed argent and in chief a coronet Or, a bordure argent semy of hawks striking gules.”*

“Cabossed” is similar to “affronty”, except that “cabossed” shows more of the neck; there is no significant difference between the two. Here, we have one CD for removing the coronet (X.4.b), one for the tincture of the bordure (X.4.d), and one for changing the type and tincture of the charges on the bordure (X.4.j.ii.c - you can get at most one CD for making changes to charges on charges). This is clear.

*Rhiannon de la Medewe du Leu, “Sable, a wolf’s head cabossed argent between three cinquefoils within a bordure dovetailed Or.”*

There is one CD for removing the cinquefoils (X.4.b), one for changing the type of bordure (plain line vs. dovetailed, X.4.e), and one for adding the pellets. This is clear.

*Maximilian Utz von Wulfen, “Sable, a wolf’s head cabossed argent, on a chief checky argent and sable two double-bitted axes crossed in saltire gules.”*

Here, we have one CD for changing the type of peripheral charge (from chief to bordure, X.4.e), one for changing the tincture, and one for the cumulative changes to the charges on the peripheral. This is clear.

*Aldric of Wolfden, “Sable, a wolf’s head contourny erased within a bordure indented argent.”*

This has one CD for the orientation of the wolf’s head (X.4.h), one for the type, and one for the tincture of the bordure, and one for adding the pellets. This is clear.

*Collwyn MacErnin Caernarfon, “Sable, a wolf’s head coupé within a crescent inverted argent, a bordure argent semy of hearts sable.”*

“Coupé” is like “erased”, except that the neck is severed in a straight line. Thus, there is one CD for posture, one for removing the

crescent, one for the tincture of the bordure, and one for changing the hearts to pellets. This is clear.

*Kassandra Tenebrosa, “Sable, a wolf’s head erased affronty and on a chief argent three clusters of holly leaves inverted vert, fructed gules.”*

Again, we have a CD for changing the chief to a bordure, and one for changing the tincture of the peripheral. The change from three clusters of holly leaves to many pellets, as well as the tincture change, results in a third CD. This is clear.

*Taran Blackwolf of Darkwood, “Sable, a wolf’s head erased affronty between mullets in annulo, and a bordure argent charged with leaves vert.”*

We have CDs for removing the mullets, changing the tincture of the bordure, and changing the type and tincture of the charges on the bordure. This is clear.

*Fergus de Botha, “Sable, a wolf’s head erased contourny argent, a bordure compony gules and argent.”*

This has a CD for changing the posture of the wolf’s head, as well as one for the tincture of the bordure, and one for adding the pellets. This is clear.

*Eliot Hawkes, “Sable, a wolf’s head erased to sinister and on a chief triangular argent, a crescent gules.”*

This has the same CD count as against Kassandra’s above, as well as one more CD for “erased to sinister” vs. “affronty”. This is clear.

*Conrad of Northfield, “Sable, a wolf’s head erased within a bordure argent.”*

This has a CD for the tincture of the bordure, and for adding the pellets. This is clear.

*Phelan Wolfer of Warrington, “Sable, a wolf’s head erased, on a chief argent three swans close vert.”*

This has the same CD count as against Kassandra’s above. It is clear.

*Garwulf Nightsbane, “Sable, a wolf’s head, coupé and sinister facing, between three hammers inverted argent.”*

This is clear through the posture of the wolf’s head, for removing the hammers, adding the bordure, and adding the charges on the bordure.

Once we have checked all arms with the same field and the same tintured primary charge, then next we look at arms with the same field, different tintured primary charge, and same secondary charge. There are in fact none, and so we know that any other arms with the same field are clear through the tincture of the primary charge and the addition of the bordure.

After that, we need only look at arms with a different field, but the same tintured primary charge in the same posture and same secondary charge. There are in fact none of these as well. Therefore, we can conclude that these arms are clear, and conflict free.

## V. Practice makes perfect.

The only way that you’ll improve your conflicts skills is through practice — practice, and through having your logic checked by others. If you have any question about interpretation of the rules or precedents, don’t hesitate to call on the collective knowledge of the Northshield College of Heraldry, ns-heralds@mailman.itasca.net.