

# Efficient Conflict Research

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*[Note: This article was originally written in 1990 when the Rules for Submissions were drastically rewritten, so it contains a number of references to the “new” rules. A few minor changes have been made to reflect changes in the rules.]*

**T**his article describes a system for quick but thorough conflict research under the new Rules for Submission. I deal primarily with research in the SCA Ordinary, although some of the techniques can be adapted for use with Papworth and other mundane ordinaries. The article is handicapped by being written very early in the implementation period of the new rules. There are many details that have yet to be worked out or clarified. The major one will be described below under the heading “group theory.” The general approach and logic, however, stand apart from the details of any particular set of rules and are essentially the same as in my “User’s Guide to the New Ordinary” printed in the 1987 edition of the SCA O&A. I will be reusing the examples from that guide and you may compare them for yourselves.

To begin with—a summary of the new difference requirements and how to meet them:

## Difference Requirements:

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- Two “clear visual differences” (a “CD”) are required between all protected armory (with a couple of specified exceptions, see below) but a “difference” can be smaller than the old “major point.”
- Except when considering tertiaries, changes that are not, in and of themselves, a CD may not add to make one.
- Devices and badges with fields are now treated equally for the purposes of conflict. Fieldless badges are encourage by allowing them an automatic CD for being fieldless.
- Mundane and SCA armory are now treated equally for the purposes of conflict.

## How to Obtain Sufficient Difference:

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The numbering system used here refers to specific rules in Part X (“Conflicting Armory”) of the Rules for Submission.

The two exceptions to the requirement for two CDs are:

- 1) **Addition of Primary Charge** is sufficient difference, e.g., *Or, a fess between two mullets sable* versus *Or, three mullets sable*.
- 2) **Difference of Primary Charge** is sufficient for simple devices, such as a single group of charges with a charged chief or bordure.
- 3) **Required Charges Transparent**. This rule is useful only for applying number 2 between two groups’ arms; however the “invisible laurel wreath” rule has been retained:

The required CDs may be taken from the following list:

- 4) **Field Differences**: You can get one CD for changing at least half of the tincture, the line of division, or the treatment of the field. You may *not* get more than one CD for multiple field changes except as provided for in section 4.a.ii below. (Whoops, all this technical stuff brings out the latent lawyer.)
  - a) *Fieldless Difference*—Fieldlessness counts as one CD, even against other fieldless armory.
  - b) *Field Only Difference*—When comparing two pieces of “field only” armory, the above changes may be counted separately. E.g., *Gyronny vert and argent* versus *Per pale sable and argent*.
- 5) **Charge Differences**
  - a) Each group of charges (other than tertiaries) may get a maximum of one CD for each of the headings below.
    - i) *Addition of Charges on the Field*
    - ii) *Addition of Charges Overall*—a special case of b.
    - iii) *Tincture Changes*—if 50% of the group is changed, you get the difference.
    - iv) *Type Changes*—If 50% of the group is changed, you get the difference.
  - b) *Number Changes*—1, 2 and 3 are difference from any number. 4 is different from 6 or more. 5 is different from 8 or more. If two numbers are both greater than 5 they are not considered different.
  - c) *Arrangement Changes*—This only counts if it is not forced by a change in number or a change in some other charge. E.g. *Argent, two mullets vert* has only one CD from *Argent, three mullets vert* even though the position of one of the mullets has also been changed.
- 6) **Posture Changes**—Both of the groups being compared must be able to have a similar posture (you can’t get a posture CD between mullets and lions) and there must be a significant change to the orientation of the major portion of the charges (E.g., for beasts rampant = salient; passant = statant; couchant = dormant.)

- 7) **Tertiary Charges**
- 8) **Addition of Charges on Charges**—The addition of a group of tertiaries is one CD. In practice, the object being charged should probably be of the same visual significance as an ordinary.
- 9) **Changes to Charges on Charges**—Significant changes (as defined above) to any *two* of the following — type, number, tincture, posture, arrangement—count as one CD. A maximum of one CD may be gotten for any one group of tertiaries. “Held charges” are generally not visually significant and so will not add difference.

**Visual Test**—There are two parts to this:

- 1) “Emblazon rules OK!” Just because you can blazon something differently doesn’t necessarily mean you get difference for it. *Argent chapé sable* and *Per chevron throughout sable and argent* are not considered different. *Sable, a pile inverted throughout argent* is not particularly different from them either.
- 2) Two pieces of highly complex armory with a large amount of similarity may be considered too alike even though they have two CDs. E.g., *Vert, on a roundel between three lions rampant argent, a mullet of four points quarterly sable and vert, and a chief embattled argent mulletty sable* and *Vert, on a roundel between three lions rampant argent a compass star vert, and a chief embattled ermine* just might be considered too similar despite having technical difference.

## The Research System

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This system is based on two principles: the elimination of categories of things that you *don’t* need to look at and the judicious use of scanning rather than careful reading. The first is done by logical analysis—I’ll lead you through the steps below. The second is a skill that may need to be practiced. Pick a page in the Ordinary at random and scan for a particular tincture. Take a beast or monster category and scan for a particular posture.

Practice this until you can go down a page without actually *reading* anything and yet can be confident of finding all instances of the search object. In some large categories in the Ordinary, highlighting may be useful. Figure out what you are most likely to scan for: tinctures or postures, type of other charges. Just don’t create a system that is more complicated than it is useful.

What follows is somewhat akin to a flow chart, although I took the format from zoological identification books. Answer the questions and follow the instructions. If it says to “check thoroughly” then read and visualize each blazon. If it says to “scan” then look for the words that match.

1. Is there a peripheral charge (a chief or bordure)?

**Yes:** *Continue to 2*

**No:** *Go to 7*

**2. Is the peripheral charge charged?**

**Yes:** Follow the directions looking at the “charged” categories as indicated.

**No:** Look only at the “uncharged” versions of the categories. (E.g., “chief charged by complex line (azure)” versus “chief by complex line (azure).”)

*Continue to 3.*

**3. Does the peripheral charge have a plain line?**

**Yes:** *Continue to 4.*

**No:** *Go to 6.*

**4. Find the color category:** Check thoroughly under the field match. (“Field match” includes things that are not clearly different, e.g., per chevron throughout and chapé.) Any potential conflict with the same tincture peripheral will have a different field. Any other piece of armor that has the same type of peripheral (chief or bordure) will have it in another tincture, a complex line, or will be charged or uncharged—whichever the item you are researching is *not*. Any of these will give you a CD. Any armor that doesn’t have the same peripheral will have a CD for that.

Therefore, any potential conflict would need to have the same charges in the same tinctures and (except for those with the same tincture peripheral) have the same field.

*Go to 5.*

**5. Scan for the second CD.**

Consider whether it will be easier to scan for the charges in the peripheral category, or to scan for the peripheral in the charge category. (Usually the former—the considerations are the number of items that must be scanned, the ease of recognition of the thing you’re scanning for and the probable location of the scanned item in the blazon—the closer to the front the better.) If the former, scan for the presence of the charges, then check the charge category under the field match. If the latter, pick one of the charge groups. Check thoroughly under the field match and scan the rest of the category for the peripheral.

***End of search.***

**6. The peripheral charge has a complex line.**

Find the complex line category (for bordures) or the color category (for complex chiefs). Check thoroughly under the field match. If this category is clear then you know you have at least one CD—any other piece of armor that has the same peripheral will have a different field, a peripheral with a different line (bordures) or color (chiefs) or a plain line, or will be either charged or uncharged, whichever the item you are researching is *not*.

*Go to 5.*

**7. There is no peripheral charge. Is there an ordinary?**

**Yes: Go to 2**

and substitute “ordinary” for “peripheral charge.”

**No: Go to 8.**

**8. There are neither peripheral charges nor ordinaries. Is there a single group of charges?**

**Yes: Go to 9.**

**No: Go to 14.**

**9. Are the charges identical?**

**Yes: Go to 10.**

**No: Go to 11.**

**10. Find the charge: Check thoroughly under the field match. Scan the rest for the lack of other charge groups. Armory that has more than one group of charges will have the second CD. Check the others carefully. (Remember to repeat this for other charges that will not be clearly different from your selected charged, e.g., moons and roundels).**

***End of search.***

**11. There is only one group; the charges are not identical. Is there a charge that comprises at least half of the group?**

**Yes: Go to 12.**

**No: The armory is very badly designed. Go to 13.**

**12. Find the charge: Check thoroughly under the field match. Scan the rest of the fields for the presence of other charges groups (as in 10). If there is another charge in the group that comprises half of the group, repeat the process for that charge.**

***End of search.***

**13. There is only one group with no charge comprising half of the group. The armory is probably illegal as “slot machine” heraldry. If you still want to research it pick one of the charges. Check thoroughly under the field match. Scan the rest for the presence of one or more of the other charges in the group. Pick another charge and repeat the process until you have checked for all the charge types.**

***End of search.***

**14. There are neither peripheral charges nor ordinaries, but there is more than one group of charges. Does one of the group have identical charges?**

**Yes: Go to 15.**

**No: Go to 19.**

**15. Find the charge. Check thoroughly under the field match. Scan the rest looking for predominant charge(s) of the *other* charge group.**

*Go to 16.*

16. Is there another group of with identical charges?

**Yes:** *Go to 17.*

**No:** *Go to 18.*

17. Find the charge: Check under the field match.

**End of search.**

18. Proceed as in 11, but check only under the field match.

**End of search.**

19. A piece of armory that has two groups of non-identical charges needs to be evaluated very carefully for bad style.

Proceed as in 11, but instead of checking for the presence of other charge groups, check for the presence of other charge that appear in the proposed armory. Repeat for a second charge group.

**End of search.**

[And wouldn't it have been easier to talk the submitter out of the design in the first place?]

Note that in most cases only two categories will need to be checked in the Ordinary, and that one of them generally only needs to be checked for a field match. This will greatly reduce research time. As with conflict scan for key words without having to read the blazons fully.

**[Grimmond - We need to find a better way to begin this next section. I, for one, can't remember what the "User's Guide to the New Ordinary" is. Can you?]**

Now let's walk a few real examples through the process. I will use the examples from the "User's Guide to the New Ordinary" so that you can compare the process.

**Example A:**

***Per pale Or and purpure, a chevron between three mullets of four points counterchanged.***

We start at:

1. No, there is no peripheral charge—go to:
7. Yes, there is an ordinary—substituting "ordinary" for "peripheral charge," go back to:
2. The ordinary is uncharged, therefore we will look only at uncharged categories. We continue to:
3. Yes, the ordinary has a plain line—go to:

4. Ordinaries don't have "color" categories so we go straight to "Chevron." Look at the field match: "per pale Or and purple." There are none as of this writing. Therefore you know that if a potential conflict has an uncharged, plain-line chevron, you have a CD for the field. To be a conflict, it must have a chevron per pale purple and Or and three mullets of four points (or something not considered different from them) with the same peculiar color pattern. Now, you and I know that this is very unlikely on a field divided per pale, but we can't assume that (stranger things have been registered). But check all the per pale field divisions under chevron carefully.

Go to 5.

5. You can now either scan in chevron for "mullet of four" or scan in mullet of four for "chevron." Although mullets tend to have large categories they have been broken down further to help out. The clincher for me is that the word "chevron" should come early in the blazon (right after the field if the item is well-blazoned) which makes it easy to scan for. So look up "mullets of three, four points." You'll find two categories "one" and "two or more." Now, you know you already have one CD for either the field or some aspect of the chevron. And "one" is significantly different from "three" so you only have to look in "two or more."

Check the field match—if you had "per pale Or and purple, an X between three mullets etc." you would only have one CD for an X versus a chevron (There are not currently any entries for "per pale Or and purple" in this category). Scan the rest of the category for chevrons. Check out any you find. And you're done!

Now, you'll notice that we didn't even look at "field division—per pale." The flow chart doesn't even mention looking at field division categories. Are they obsolete? Of course not. In fact, any item under consideration that *has* a field division should be checked under that category *first*. It isn't part of the flow chart because it duplicates work that you have to do anyway in other categories, but it is often the fastest way to find a conflict. (Just don't neglect the rest of the process if it's clear.) Especially with counterchanged designs, if there is a conflict it will probably have the field division—probably, but not always.

#### Example B:

***Per bend embattled azure and ermine, a lion rampant Or and a cross fleury sable.***

Now we come to *Group Theory*. (Remember I told you it was coming?) One of the questions still under debate as of this writing is whether a design like this (and it's a very popular design among submitters) has one group of charges or two. It's not a trivial question. If there are two groups, then changing the tinctures of both charges is two independent CDs. If there is only one group, then however much you change the tinctures of the charges it only gives you one CD. Consider your opinion on the matter. Would that opinion change if

the design had two lions or two crosses instead of one of each? Would that opinion change if there were a bend between the charges? Now do you see why heralds spend so much time arguing with each other? For now I will avoid the question entirely by considering the process under both views. For up-to-the-minute news about interpretation in this area, ask someone involved in the College of Arms correspondence.

*[The College of Arms currently treats non-identical charges as forming a single group if they are of similar size and are arranged in a pattern which would clearly be a group if the charges were identical. It doesn't matter whether the charges are separated by a field division or an ordinary, since identical charges may be arranged in a similar manner.]*

So first we will consider the charges as one group. This time we'll check out the field division first. If that's clear, then you are pretty much assured of one CD for the field (but double check the field match in the other categories anyway—it doesn't take that much time). Now proceed to:

1. No, there's no peripheral charge. Go to:
7. No, there's no ordinary. Go to:
8. Yes, there's a single group of charges (remember, we're considering them as one group this time). Go to:
9. No, the charges are not identical. Go to:
11. Yes, there is a charge that comprises at least half of the group. In fact each of them is exactly half. Go to:
12. Pick one of the charges, let's take cross to start with. Crosses are divided into "cross as an ordinary" and "cross as a charge." The latter is subdivided into "one" and "two or more." Double-check both subdivisions of "cross as a charge" under the field match ("Cross as an ordinary" wouldn't appear in this type of design so you can ignore it). But now you don't have to look any further in "two or more." You have a CD for the field already. If a potential conflict has replaced the lion with another cross, then you've changed the type of half of your group and get a second CD. If a potential conflict has two or more crosses in addition to a lion, then you've significantly changed the number of items in your group and get a second CD. Scan single crosses for the presence of lions. If your scanning were perfect, you could stop now. But we'll double check by looking at the category for "beast—cat and lion." Lions are split up into four posture groups. Between the groups you can get a CD for posture, so comparing a rampant lion against "cat and lion, couchant and dormant" is almost (although not quite) as pointless as comparing it against "mullet."

Check out the field match under "rampant" then scan the rest of the category for crosses. Now you're done.



Suppose that we consider the charges as two separate groups. Again, after checking the field division we start at:

1. No, there is no peripheral charge. Go to:
7. No, there is no ordinary. Go to:
8. No, there is more than one group of charges. Go to:
14. Yes, one (in fact, both) of the groups of charges is identical. Go to:
15. Proceed as above in #12. The only real difference is in how you count things once your scanning turns something up.

**Example C:**

***Sable, in saltire a sword proper and a quill within a bordure rayonny argent.***

There's no field division here so we'll go straight to the flow chart.

1. Yes, there is a peripheral charge. Go to:
2. No, the bordure is not charged. We'll only be looking at uncharged bordures. Go to:
3. No, the bordure doesn't have a plain line. Go to:
6. Find the "bordure by complex line" category that includes "rayonny." Check thoroughly under "sable."

Remember that "complete difference of type of charge" is sufficient difference if both designs are simple.

**Go to:**

5. The bordure by complex line categories are fairly small so scan the rest of the category for swords, quills or objects in saltire. Now, if the bordure has a different line of division, there's a CD. If it is charged, there's a CD. If it isn't there, there's a CD. Any conflict must have a sable field and two objects closely resembling a sword and a quill arranged in saltire. In this case, don't look at "sword" or "quill" per se. The arrangement is more distinctive than the identity of the objects and a category for it exists in the Ordinary.

Look at "arrangement in saltire" under "quill and other charge", "sword and other charge" and "two swords." You only have to look at sable fields.

**End**

**Example D:**

***Argent, on a pale vert an axe argent, and on a chief pean two roses Or.***

1. Yes, there's a peripheral charge. Go to:
2. Yes, the peripheral is charged. Look only at charged chiefs. Go to:

**3. Yes, the chief has a plain line. Go to:**

**4. Look under “chief, charged (fur).” If this is clear then you know you have a CD for either the tincture or lack of tertiaries on the chief. Any conflict must have an argent field and a charged, vert pale.**

**Go to:**

**5. The only group to pick is the pale. Look at “pale charged” (Lack of charging or a complex line of division will give you the second CD). Check under argent fields. In fact, you can scan for “argent, on a pale vert.”**

**Now wasn't that easy? And the process would have been the same even if there had been additional secondaries around the pale. (Although those with paranoia could always double-check under the category for the secondaries.)**

DRAFT