

How to Run A Silent Auction

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So you're agreed to run an auction! Maybe you've run raffles before, or white elephant sales, or other fundraisers, or not. But what the heck is a silent auction, and how do you run that. It IS different from the other fundraisers in several ways, and the same in several ways.

You'll be needing folks and artists to donate items for the sale, just like a raffle or a white sale. You'll need folks to help with the fundraiser, as will all the others. You'll need lots of pens or pencils like with a raffle. You'll need to make sure everyone knows it's happening and is prepared and excited to spend money at your fundraiser.

You won't need raffle tickets, or price tags, or baked goods. You'll need bid sheets, and signs, and pens, Oh My!

I've run a few auctions so far, watched how a few others were run, and stolen ideas from several folks. My goal here is to share the info I've collected so that we don't all need to reinvent the wheel over and over again.

You will probably find that Your Milage Will Vary, you'll find other ways to do what I talk about here. You'll find or create new methods, forms, signs, etc. Please use this as a spring board to get you going, then fly along your own path. But also, please share your ideas and changes and info!!! Let's all work together in creating fun, useful, and well run auctions!

Auction vs. Raffle

Raffle	Auction
Ends with a drawn out process of pulling tickets	Ends quickly
Tickets are sold throughout the day	Money is all collected at the end
Everyone donates money	Only winners pay
Fundraising raffles are no longer allowed in the SCA	Are currently allowed in the SCA

Auction Off What?

- **Select Auction:** An array of selected or curated items. Generally high-ticket or unique. Basket of related items, artist made items, etc.
- **General Auction:** Any and all items accepted.

Because only the winner pays in an auction, Select Auctions aren't as effective a way to raise funds as a Select Raffle, where everyone spends money on tickets. So you may find that a General Auction, with many items, is the better choice for your needs. However if you advertise the Select ITEMS well folks might come prepared to bid high and spend big.

BUT you do still want some select / high ticket items in your auction, and you want to advertise them early and often. Post photos of them in FB groups, display them at events, etc.

Do everything you can to entice folks to attend your event and bid on the items. And remind them they'll need to bring Cash or Checks until such time as we can accept credit cards again.

Auction Items and MORE!

With a General Auction, you'll advertise to folks to bring items that need to go to someone else's home – and folks will bring stuff! Even if you do a Select Auction, folks will bring stuff!

These things will take all kinds of forms. Big item stuff to small items that won't make much in an auction. If you are lucky, there will be so many things that you won't have room for all of them on your tables, or time to put bid sheets on them.

There are things you can do to raise money with these items. These items will be available for sale all day:

- **Name a Price**
 - These are small items, generic garb, fabric, or other items that won't work well in the auction or that you don't have room for or time to deal with
 - Group these items in a box(es) or on a blanket, or table
 - Put a sign on them that says "Name a Price"
 - Make sure everyone who comes by knows that they can pick out as many items as they want, and then name their own price
 - How much they pay doesn't matter, it's all profit
- **Books**
 - If you get a lot of books
 - Pull out the ones that should be in the auction
 - Leave the rest in the box they came in, with the spines up
 - Attach a sign that says: Hardbacks \$1, Paperbacks 50¢ (or whatever price you want)

Before the Auction

Organize

- Create a spreadsheet, document, or notebook. **Keep track of:**
 - Who has **volunteered to help** with their contact info
 - Who has **volunteered to donate** items
 - **What** those items are
 - Will they be brought to the event, or do you need to pick them up, or arrange pickup
 - Who is **donating tables, popups**, etc.
 - What you **need to do**
 - What you've **done**
 - What you need to **bring**
 - Anything else you need to keep track of

Payment methods

Talk with the event's Exchequer about how to handle payments for the auction and associated sales.

- **Can you have your own cash box** or does the money have to go through the gate cash box?
 - If you have your own cash box
 - Who will be in charge of and running that box?
 - Find out who checks are to be made out to (usually "SCA / branch name" but double check)
- **Can you take credit cards? Pretty please!** It makes it easier for folks to bid if they have forgotten to bring enough cash or a checkbook (who even has checkbooks now-a-days?)
 - If so:
 - Who will be running that?
 - Coordinate with the Exchequer to have the reader set up to cover your options (\$1 book, 50 cents book, etc.)

Once you know what payments you can accept, advertise them!!!! Especially if it's only cash and check!

Decide what you'll do with the items that didn't receive bids

- Some items will go back to the donor
- Some will be saved to be used as largesse
- You don't want to have to transport the rest of the items home (to be donated elsewhere), so do you:
 - Give them away for free
 - Let folks to name a price
 - Let folks fill a bag for \$1 (or \$5 or ?)
 - Or ?????

Resources

- Make sure the **Exchequer** is prepared to handle:
 - “Name a Price” item **payments all day**
 - A **flood of payments** when the auction ends (an extra person or two is helpful at the cashbox now)
 - Or see if they want the auction to run its own cashbox
- Line up folks to **help with set up** and with **take down**
- Check with the local group, and its members to make sure you'll have:
 - LOTS of **tables** to display the items
 - **Popups** or other shade (people won't spend time looking at the items if they have to stand in the sun!)
 - **Table cloths** if you are using public park tables, they can be dirty and not good for displaying your items
 - A good STABLE **clothing rack** can also be helpful
- Items to **bring** to the auction:
 - **Bid sheets & signs**
 - Lots of **pens or pencils** – for you to put item names on the bid sheets, and for people to make bids
 - **Blue tape** – to attach bid sheets to items
 - **Safety pins** – to attach bid sheets to items
 - **String** – to attach bid sheets to items and to attach groups of items together
 - **Small Ziploc bags** – to contain jewelry items
 - **Liquid paper** or correction tape – to fix errors when writing item names
- Arrange with a few folks, or the group trailer, to have space in their vehicles to **take unsold items home** with them. These items can go to a local thrift shop or be saved for future SCA fund raisers

Advertise

- Advertise the auction to remind people to **donate items**, and to bring **cash or checks** to the event
- Posting **photos** of really cool donations helps get interest up
- Chose the **FB groups** you advertise in carefully
 - Kingdom of Caid and your local group(s) are good choices
 - Then pick groups based on the item(s) you are showcasing in your ad: A&S groups, Fighter groups, etc.
 - Don't inundate lists with postings, but do keep your auction in people's minds

Create

- **Bid sheets** (I use 3x5 cards) for every item you know will be donated
 - Have the item name on top (in case the sheet gets separated from the item)
 - And spaces for bidder's name and bid amount
- A bunch more **bid sheets** with a blank space for item name.
 - These will be filled in on site for donations that arrive that day
- **Signs**, make multiple copies of:
 - Signs for the **Auction**, that list:
 - **Who benefits** (Caid, local group, etc.)
 - **How to bid** on the items
 - **Closing time** (2 hours before end of event is good)
 - **Payment methods**
 - **“Payment due at end of auction”**
 - If you expect a lot of **books**, make signs that says:
 - Hardbacks \$1, Paperbacks 25¢ (or whatever price makes you happy)
 - Signs that say **"Name a Price"** for items that won't go in the auction, but will be available for sale

Item name here			
Name	Bid \$	Name	Bid \$

Auction to Benefit the Kingdom of Caid

- Put **name / initials and bid** on attached card
- Bid in **event amounts** (no cents)
- **Auction ends at 3pm**
- Pay via cash, check, or credit card
- **Payment due at end of auction**

- Signs that say “**Items on this table are FREE**” or whatever you’ve decided to do with unsold items after the auction
- **Promissory sheets** for donations that won’t be physically on the table.
Either they are promises for a commission item to be made for the winner
Or they will be in use at the event, and will be given to the winner after they are done being used
 - If possible get a **photo** of the type of item that is promised or of the item (if in use)
 - Get a **description** of the item promised
 - Create a **document** with:
 - A LARGE version of the photo
 - LARGE type headline that says PROMISSORY
 - Explanation of what it is and what the terms are
 - The name of the person donating if pertinent
 - If it’s commission item, include the contact info for the donor on the BACK of the sheet, that way only the winner has that info

Prepare

- If you have **received any auction items** before the auction, attach bid cards (with item name on them) to the items. Do it now, not the day of!
- If someone has **volunteered to donate** something, make a bid sheet for that item, with the name of the items on top. Organize these sheets alphabetically or some other way that will make them easy to find and attach to the item when it arrives.
- Do **ANYTHING** you can do before the auction. You will be busy the morning of the auction and anything that can save you time, is wonderful!

Auction Day

Getting Set Up

- Arrive when the site opens for set up
 - Set up **tables**
 - Set up **popups** (or other shade)
 - It’s more important to shade where the bidders will be than to shade most of the items
 - Remember that popups can be moved as the sun moves, to keep shade where you need it
- Designate a **place for auction donations** to be dropped off as they arrive
 - If possible, **NOT on your tables**, but near your space
 - This makes it easier for you to see what’s donated, and which items still need to be put on tables
- **Put items on the tables and get them tagged**
 - **You want several people helping here!!**
 - You will probably have items arriving the whole time you’re doing this. And more after you’re done.
 - I like to **arrange things by type** (garb here, crafting items there, fighter stuff here, etc.)
 - But a good case can be made for **mixing items up** at random as well.
 - Feel free to **group** some like items together as one item. Take a basket that was donated and fill it with craft items; put a plate, bowl, and goblet together as one set; group 2 to 4 books on like topics together, etc.
 - If an auction “item” contains more than one item, use that number as part of the item name: “3 glass candlesticks”, “two pewter bowls”, etc.
 - Tape promissory sheets down to the table with bid sheets attached.
 - Designate a box or area for “**Name a Price**” items and populate it with items that you don’t have space or time for
- Sprinkle **pens or pencils** all over the tables (the number one question will be “Where’s a pen?”)
- Collect names of your **helpers** for your thank you announcement (You won’t remember who all helped)
- Thank your helpers: **Appreciation is the only coin we have to pay our volunteers, spend it often and well!**

- Make an **announcement** at Opening Court, or write up an announcement for the Herald to make. Include:
 - **Location** of the auction
 - Who it **benefits** from the auction
 - When the auction **ends**
 - Perhaps **showcase** an item or two

Running The Auction

- **Pull in people**, as they walk past, or by going out and reminding people that you are there
- **Answer questions:** Where are the pens? When does it end? How much for the Name a Price items? Really any amount I want? How much for the books? Where do I pay? Etc.
- Keep an eye on **items** to make sure **tags** are still attached
- Have Heralds make **announcements** halfway through the day to remind folks about the auction, **1/2 hour before close** of auction to let them know to come on back and keep an eye on their bids.
- **Drink water, relax, maybe bid on a few items**

Ending The Auction

- The auction area is probably **full of folks** milling around, keeping an eye on their bids, and preparing to outbid anyone who outbids them
- Keep an **eye on the time** and **announce** in a LOUD VOICE:
 - 10 minute left (if you want)
 - 5 minutes (if you want)
 - **“AUCTION IS CLOSED, NO MORE BIDS”**
 - **“Winning bids can be paid at _____”** (where ever the cashbox is)
- **Stand out of the way**, folks will grab their items and bid cards and head to the cashbox
- **Direct people** to the Exchequer or auction cashbox

After The Auction

- Collect the items that **didn't get bids**
 - **Sort** out the items that should go back to the person who donated them, or that can be used by the local group or Crown for largesse or other uses
 - All others items go onto one table with a sign that tells people what you've decided (free, name a price, fill a bag, etc.)
 - Let everyone know how to acquire those items - You don't want to have to take anything home!
- Follow up with **bidders who haven't picked up / paid** for their items
 - Have the Heralds call for them and/or if you know them, track them down
 - If they don't come forward, contact the 2nd highest bidder and see if they are willing to pay their bid price for the item
- Have herald **announce about the now available (non-bid) items**
- **Take down** tables and popups
- Announce at closing court that the non-bid items are **available**
- **Gather all the remaining items** (auction, Name a Price, Books, etc.) and get them to the folks who promised to take them home

The Day After

- Write up a thank you announcement with the names of everyone who helped with the auction
 - **Appreciation is the only coin we have to pay our volunteers, spend it often and well!**
 - Include their **title** and full SCA name if possible
 - On Facebook, **link to their FB profile** if possible
 - **Send to local newsletter**, post on FB in the local and kingdom groups

This handout is available online at: <http://lynette.housezacharia.com/Auctions/>

**I hope you find this helpful. Please feel free to contact me with any
Questions, Answers, Comments, Suggestions**

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