

Manual of the Sword

The Manual of the Sword

All newly made Knights should be taught the basics of marching, drill and the Manual of the Sword, each of which is used in all rituals of the Commandery and in competitions. Ease and grace can only be acquired by frequent exercise of these basic requirements. Attention to minor detail is essential in order to avoid the forming of awkward habits or taking incorrect positions when in formation.

The sword should be carried with a flexible wrist and without a tight grasp. The old adage of 'grasp and hold as a bird; not too firm as to crush the life from it, yet not so lax as to lose control of it' will ring true the more one handles his sword. It should perform as an extension of the arm and hand: natural yet deliberate, graceful yet studied. Officers and members of drill teams should practice these moves, both individually and as a group in order that they become as a second nature if they are to present an impressive display.

Each Commandery should have available a sword, scabbard, belt hooks or brassards available for each officer in line, if they do not have their own. Scabbards, guards, and hilts of swords should be silver in color for all Sir Knights, except for those who are, or have been elected Commander of a Commandery, which entitles them to have gilded swords and scabbards as a mark of distinction. Each sword should be clean, polished, and in good repair.

Care and common sense should be exercised when using the sword in close order drills to avoid any possible injury. Remember: the sword is a weapon! Its intended purpose is to defend from attack and to inflict injury if used in attack!

As Knights Templar, we wear and wield the sword in the tradition of our ancient Brethren, in the defense of Christian Masonic beliefs, and as a show of our dedication to charity and aid toward our fellow man. Its use and display can only be effective if taught correctly and practiced.

Most of us find the sword awkward to use, only because we have not handled it of necessity as our ancient brethren had to. This portion of the handbook is intended to give you the basics in the handling; use and display of the sword as practiced by Knights Templar based on traditional military tactics.

About this section

This manual, while not the complete Manual of the Sword, is intended to give the new Knight the basics of how to handle the sword and how to give and carry out the commands given during our rituals and ceremonies.

This manual is written in a manner that is easy to understand and has illustrations to show the correct position and posture for each of the commands. Commands are printed in **Boldface type** and hyphens are used for pauses (e.g. **Carry---Swords!**) The pause is made between the preparatory command, which tells the Knights what position, or movement they will make, and the action command, which tells the Knights when to assume the position or make the move.

The exclamation point is to show where the emphasis is given when speaking the command. All commands should be given in a crisp, clear voice that can be heard by all effected so there is no doubt as to its purpose. Commands should not be shouted. Orders are to be given only by the officer who has command of the rank at the time.

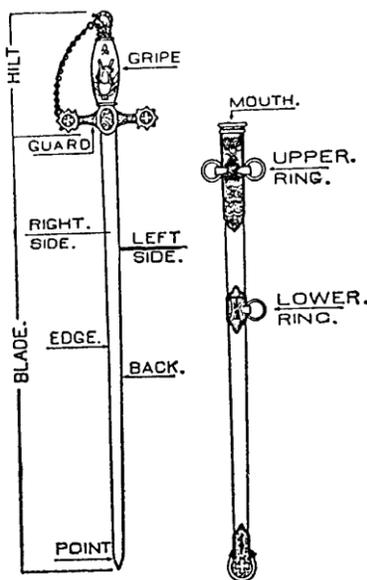
General rules on the Use of the Sword

The sword is an instrument used to place emphasis and give show to our rituals. The following rules should be exercised at all times when wielding a sword:

- The sword is always carried on the left hip and wielded with the right hand.
(Note: the custom of shaking hands with the right hand originated with the true Knights of old to show that they came empty handed and meant no harm or attack.)
- The sword is sheathed with the back of the sword facing the rear of the scabbard, so when grasped it is on the 'up' side when drawn.
- A command is given in two parts, the preparatory moves are made on the first part and the execution is made on the second part of the command.
- Never speak 'through the sword'. This means that when giving an order, or replying to a superior officer you sword should never be in the 'present' position.
- A salute should be given whenever a Knight is addressed by a superior, given a command, or acknowledging a command prior to carrying it out. It should also be given prior to addressing a superior officer.
- Swords and scabbards should always be polished and in good condition.
- Swords should always remain in scabbards unless ordered to draw.

The Sword and Scabbard

The sword is divided into two major divisions with seven parts, as depicted in the illustration. The gripe is the 'handle' by which the sword is grasped by the hand. The guard is the crosspiece separating the gripe and the blade and protects the hand from an opponent's blade sliding down your blade.



The Sword and Scabbard

The blade has five parts: the point, the left and right sides, the edge and the back. The back is usually thicker than the edge and not sharpened. It is used to block cuts by an opponent, thus saving your edge. The back can also be determined by the knight's head pommel. The back of the blade is the same side as the knight is looking.

The right and left sides are determined when in the position of carry swords, with the edge facing forward.

The scabbard is the receptacle of the sword used to protect and carry it. The opening at the top is called the mouth and allows the sword to be placed in it with the backup, or on the side of the upper ring. The rings are used to suspend the scabbard from the belt or brassard.

The hand position is in tierce, or third, when grasping the sword; with the back of the hand up, and in quarter, or fourth, when holding the sword with the back of the hand down. When grasping and holding the sword all four fingers should be wrapped around the gripe, with the thumb resting in a line with the back of the sword. Sword movement is accomplished with the wrist aided by the little finger. All rotations and movements of the sword are around a point midway on the gripe.

When marching, the left hand is used to stabilize the scabbard, which should be carried with the lower end pointing back at a 60° angle. When returning the sword to its scabbard, it is very helpful if you place the left index finger on the mouth to guide the point into it. This allows you to return the sword without looking at the scabbard. The left hand is also used to stabilize the scabbard when drawing out the sword.

When exercising the Manual of the Sword all knights should be at intervals, unless in formation, to allow ample room to wield the sword without injury or the necessity of abbreviated movements. When performing exercises it is sometimes done 'By the Numbers!' This is accomplished by giving each command a number to be carried out in sequence, the first movement performed on the command 'By the Numbers---One!'

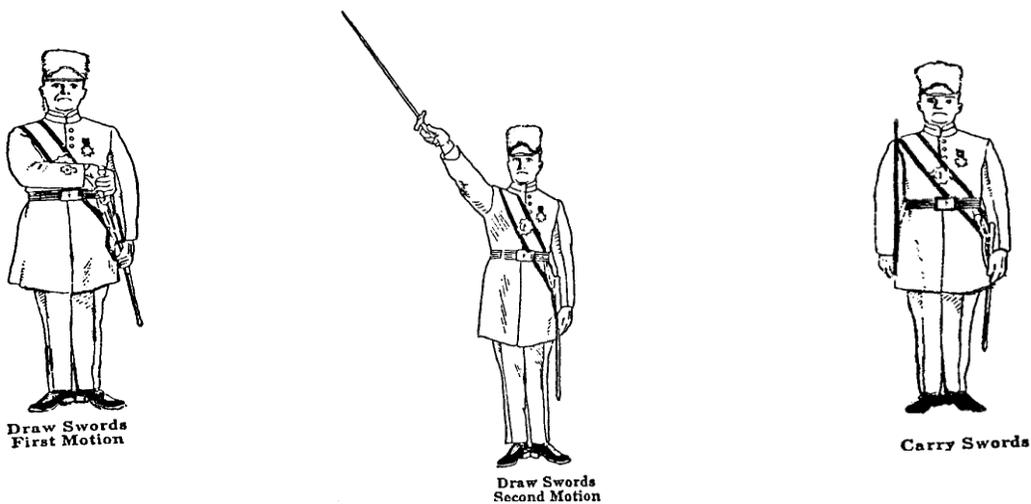
All commands are divided into two parts. The first part alerts the formation what movement is to be done, followed by a short pause to give them time to prepare. The second part is the word that causes the formation to execute the movement as a body. This two-part command allows the movements of a unit to be done in unison. The remainder of this section gives the most common exercises used in Templar ritual and formations. The command is given in **bold face capitals**, each tactic is illustrated. Some tactics require more than one movement, in such cases there are two illustrations, the first movement, or motion, and the second, or final position.

DRAW---SWORDS! CARRY---SWORDS!

These are the first two commands a Knight Templar should be proficient with, since they are the start of most all other tactics of the sword. While they sound simple it takes practice to make them look fluid and automatic. At the command 'Draw' grasp the scabbard with the left hand near its mouth tilting it forward at a light angle. Grasp the gripe with the right hand, with the back of the hand facing outward from your body and draw the blade approximately half way out so your right forearm is horizontal across the lower breast.

At the command 'Swords' quickly withdraw the blade from the scabbard completely, raising the right arm to a 45° angle, the sword in line with the arm edge down pointing the same direction as the right foot. From this position the right arm should be dropped down to the right side with the back of the sword resting on the right shoulder, the right hand against the outer seam of the pant with the back outward in the position of Carry.

As mentioned, most tactics involving the sword start from the Carry position. When marching, if the sword is held in any other position, it is returned to carry on the order **HALT!** without any further command.



FROM THE RIGHT, TAKE SWORD INTERVALS---DRESS!

At the first part of the command all Knights in file except the right guide execute an eyes right and raised the right hand, from the elbow, to the right shoulder. The back of the right hand should be forward. The sword is pivoted down to a horizontal position with the edge up. At the command 'Dress' all Knights in file, except the right guide, take one side step left to an interval that leaves the tip of the sword just clear of the left shoulder of the Knight on his right. At this point the Knights in file execute an eyes front and brings his sword to Carry.



FROM THE LEFT, TAKE SWORD INTERVALS---DRESS!

Similar to the last tactic, except the Knights in file guide from the left, exercising and eyes left. They then bring the right hand across the body until the right hand is touching the left arm; the forearm horizontal with the sword extended edge down. The Knights then take one side step right until the point of the sword just clears the shoulder of the Knight on his left. At this point the Knights execute an eyes front and return to Carry.

These two tactics are used when in files to allow ample room for the Knight in formation to exercise the Manual of the Sword in comfort and without injury to his companions. It also assures that the files are in order and aligned for inspection.

PRESENT---SWORDS!

On the command Swords the right hand is brought to a point in front of the body with the elbow tight against the side. The guard is chin high approximately six inches in front of the neck, edge to the left. The point of the sword should angle out approximately five inches from the hilt. The thumb should extend on the back of the gripe, wrist straight, all fingers wrapped around the gripe, back of the hand forward, body at attention with left hand down.

NOTE: This is the first movement for the Salute tactic

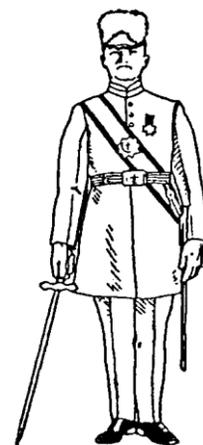
SALUTE---SWORDS

At the command Salute, execute the Present Sword position. At the command Swords, drop the right arm with the sword point in line approximately 15 inches in front of, and in line with the right foot. The arm should hang naturally, with the elbow close to the body; back of the hand should be down, with the edge to the left.

NOTE: This is the position that Knights not in ranks should assume when the command present swords is given to the Commandery.



Present Swords



**Salute Swords
Officers Present**

ORDER---SWORDS!

The first movement is made by dropping the sword point to the ground, with the hilt inclined to the rear, the back of the blade to the front. The second movement brings the blade to a vertical position by bringing the point against the toe of the right shoe. The right hand is placed with the ball of the hand resting on the pommel, three fingers to the front, thumb and little finger pointing to the rear. The elbow should be close to the body, at attention.



First Motion
Order Swords



Order Swords



Support Swords

SUPPORT---SWORDS!

Bringing the sword to the Present position makes the first movement. The blade is then carried in a vertical position to the left side of the body, lowering the right hand until the right forearm is horizontal across the body. Bring the left arm to a horizontal position in front of the right arm. The left thumb should rest on the right arm, left fingers extended just touching the right elbow. The sword's guard should rest on the left arm, with the blade vertical.

SWORDS---PORT!

From the carry position, seize the blade with the left hand in front of the right shoulder with the fingers forward and thumb to the rear, left elbow close to the body. With the left hand, lower the sword to a diagonal position across the body with the edge down. The left hand should be just in front of the left shoulder. The left thumb should extend along the blade with the fingers wrapped over the blade. The right hand should be at the right hip, body at attention.



Swords Port



**Carry from
Port
First Motion**

CARRY---SWORDS! (from port)

From the port position the blade is moved into position by moving the left hand to the right shoulder, fingers closed and to the front, pressing the blade to the right shoulder. When the sword is in position the left hand is dropped to the left side of the body, at attention.

ARM REST---SWORDS!

Both hands are carried to the center in front of the body with the arms extended. The left hand should be over and in front of the right hand. The sword blade should rest on the right forearm, with the right hand gripping the hilt as it would in the carry position.



Arm Rest-Swords



**Carry from
Port
First Motion**

CARRY---SWORDS! (from port)

From the port position the blade is moved into position by moving the left hand to the right shoulder, fingers closed and to the front, pressing the blade to the right shoulder. When the sword is in position the left hand is dropped to the left side of the body, at attention.

ARM REST---SWORDS!

Both hands are carried to the center in front of the body with the arms extended. The left hand should be over and in front of the right hand. The sword blade should rest on the right forearm, with the right hand gripping the hilt as it would in the carry position.



Arm Rest-Swords



Shoulder Swords

SHOULDER---SWORDS!

Raise the right hand to a position in front of the right armpit. At the same time the blade of the sword should slide back on the right shoulder. The point of the sword should be elevated slightly oblique to the left just clear of the chapeau at the rear. The right elbow should be close to the body, at attention.

REVERSE---SWORDS!

The first movement is made by dropping the blade forward and down until it is directed towards a point about one pace in front of the right foot, at the same time allow the fingers to grasp the lower part of the gripe and move the right hand forward about twelve inches. The second movement is made by swinging the blade, by the right wrist, to the rear. The point should be down at an angle of 45° with the edge up. As the sword swings into position it is brought up under the right armpit, the right hand should grasp the gripe with the thumb and forefinger, the other fingers closed into the palm. The hilt of the sword should be about nine inches in front of the right shoulder. To resume the Carry-Swords position, bring the sword to the first movement and from there to the carry position.

LEFT REVERSE---SWORDS!

From the first movement of reverse the sword is carried to the reverse position under the left arm. The left hand then replaces the right in grasping the hilt, while the right hand is dropped to the right side.



**Reverse Swords
First Motion**



Reverse Swords



Parade Rest

PARADE---REST!

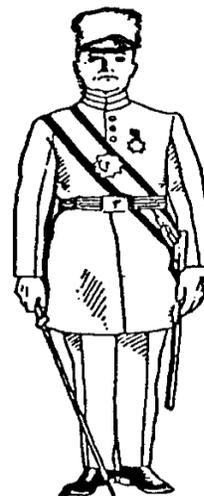
This command is given from the Carry or Order swords position. The first movement is to drop the sword point to the ground in front of the center of the body in line with the left heel, edge to the right. The palm of the right hand should rest on the pommel, the thumb and fingers extended along the gripe; the left hand should clasp over the right, fingers extended. At the same time the right foot should be moved about six inches to the rear, the left knee slightly flexed, the body erect.

ATTENTION! CARRY---SWORDS!

At the command Attention, bring the right foot to the side of the left foot, heels touching, toes pointed out at 45°. The left hand is dropped to the left side, while the right hand is brought back in line with the right side. The point of the sword is left in place, leaving the blade angled back. At the command Swords carry the sword to the Carry, or Order position in one motion.

INSPECTION, WITH SWORDS.

When the inspecting officer approaches, bring the sword to Present. Turn the wrist clockwise to display the front of the blade, and then back to the Present position. As the inspecting officer passes to the next Knight bring the sword back to the Carry position.



**Attention
From
Parade Rest**



**Invert Swords
First Motion**

INVERT---SWORDS!

From the Carry position, drop the sword point forward about fifteen inches, grasping the blade with the left hand about nine inches up from the guard, with the palm forward. Release the gripe from the right hand; rotate the sword counter-clockwise to a vertical position with the left hand. The sword should be approximately four inches in front of the body. Grasp the blade with the right hand at belt level; both hands should have their backs forward, fingers closed around the blade.

To return to Carry from the Inverted position, reverse the above procedure.



Invert Swords

NOTE: The position of Inverted swords is used primarily for ceremonial purposes and devotions in lieu of Present Swords; such as during religious services when prayer is offered.

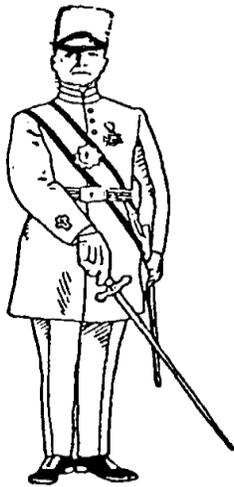
GUIDE---SWORDS!

With the right hand, bring the sword to a vertical position in front of the body, the right hand approximately six inches in front of the neck. The back of the sword should be to the right. Clasp the left hand over the right with the back of the hand towards the front fingers should be together. The elbows should be close to the body.

NOTE: Upon taking post on the line, as in successive formations in battalion drill, guides will take this position without command. The guides will return to the Carry position at the command Guides---Post!



Guide Swords



**Return Swords
First Motion**

RETURN---SWORDS!

At the command Return, seize the scabbard near the mouth with the left hand, inclining the mouth a little towards the front. At the same time, keeping the right hand near the body, drop the sword blade forward and to the left so that the point is about six inches above the floor, pointing to a line in front of the left foot. Move the right hand to the left until the blade comes between the first two fingers of the left hand. Raise the right hand, drawing the blade between the left fingers until the point can be inserted into the mouth of the scabbard, edge to the front (Using the left thumb and index finger aids this move without the need to look at the scabbard). Thrust the blade into the scabbard until the right forearm is horizontal across the body (this is the same position as the first motion of Draw-Swords!). On the command Swords allow the sword to slide completely into the scabbard, releasing the scabbard from the left hand, returning the right hand to the right side, body at attention.

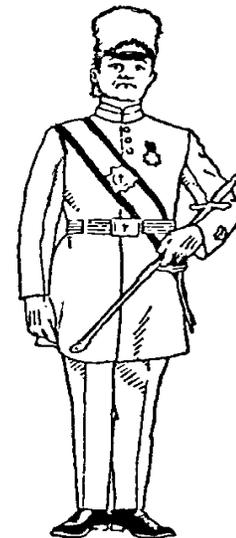


**Draw Swords
First Motion**

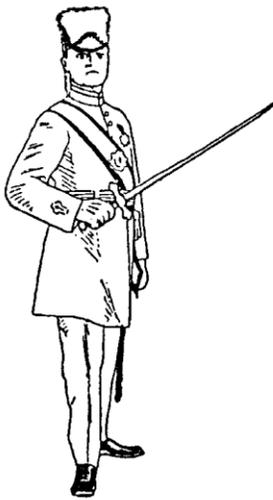
POSITION OF THE SWORD AT DOUBLE TIME DRILLS

The general rule for Officers only, in ceremonies, and when marching in double time, the commands of Secure and Drop are used, while the ranks use the position of Shoulder. To secure swords, seize the scabbard with the left hand, palm forward. Raise the scabbard bringing the left hand to the front, just under the belt resting on the left hip. The guard should be at the hollow of the left elbow. On the order Drop! lower the scabbard to it's usually resting-place hanging free on the left side and release the scabbard.

Whenever the command double time---March is given files take the position of shoulder while officers take the position of secure. At quick time all take the position of Carry.



Secure Swords



On Guard

ON---GUARD!

Turn the left foot square to the left side, turning on the right heel, and plant the right foot firmly about eighteen inches to the front. The feet should be at right angles, the weight being principally on the right, with the knee slightly flexed. The shoulders are oblique to the front, head and eyes square to the front. At the same time raise the sword hand on a line with the lower edge of the belt, the guard just to the right of the buckle. Drop the sword point diagonally to the left, the blade about 18 inches in front of the left shoulder, edge to the front, thumb on back of gripe. The sword is held without constraint.

CUTS OR PARRIES

In giving the parries (referred to as 'cuts' in the ritual), the Knights should first take the position of **On Guard**, keeping the feet at right angles looking into the eyes of the Knight opposite. The flats of the blades should cross, or touch, about ten inches from the points. The sword arm should be extended in a straight line. The cuts and parries should be given with spirit, but the touching of the blades should be light on contact

PARRY---ONE!

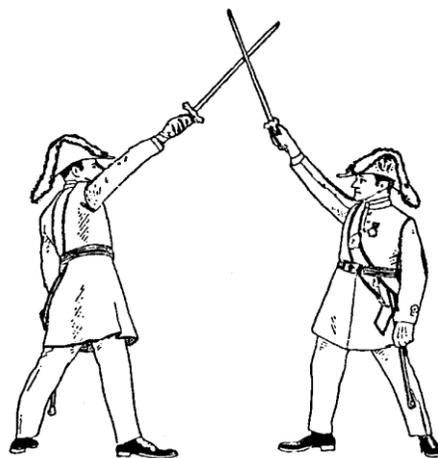
From the on-guard position raise and extend the sword arm, back of the hand to the left and up, without changing the grasp, wrist as high as the top of the head. The edge should be up blades touching on their right flats in a straight line with the arm.

PARRY---TWO!

Disengage the sword and keeping the arm and sword extended; describe a circular movement with the wrist towards the rear counter clockwise with the back of the hand down. Continue this movement until the blade engages that you're opposite crossing in the same position as in Parry-One, blades touching on the left flats.



Parry Three



Parry One—Cross Swords

WIELD---SWORDS!

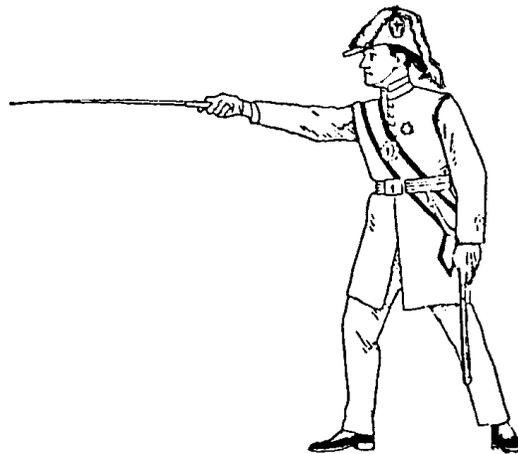
Raise the sword with the sword arm fully extended as in the second movement of Draw-Swords. With the wrist describe a circular motion clockwise a total of four times stopping with the sword pointed up at approximately 60°.

FORM ARCH OF STEEL, CROSS---SWORDS!

Two lines are formed facing each other, about three paces apart. From the Carry position come to Present-Swords! on the command Cross. On the command Swords, each Knight will advance his right foot forward one step at the same time coming to the position of Parry-One with his opposite. The arch should allow room for the tallest person, uncovered, to walk erect. If two are to go through the lines side-by-side the right wrist may be bent just enough to allow the blades to engage while only taking a half-step forward. To retire from the arch, come first to Present, then to Carry.

CHARGE---SWORDS!

Turn the left foot on the heel until the toe is square, in line with the shoulders. At the same time plant the right foot forward about eighteen inches, with a slight flex at the knee, foot forming a right angle with the left body weight primarily on the right foot. Extend the sword arm full length to a horizontal in line with the right shoulder. The back of the right hand should be down, the sword blade extended in a straight line with the arm. The point of the sword should be aimed at the opponent's breast. To retreat come directly to the Carry position.



Charge Swords



Kneel
Rest on-Swords
Reg. 127.

KNEEL!

There are two different variations of kneel, depending on whether the sword is in, or out of its scabbard. If the sword is sheathed, then each Knight drops to his left knee, with the heel of the right foot even with the left knee and drops both arms to their sides, head and body erect.

If the sword is at Carry, the Knights will drop the point of the sword to the ground in a vertical position. They will then kneel on their left knee with the heel of the right even with the left knee. The right hand rests on the pommel while the left arm is dropped to the side.

REST ON SWORDS!

While in the Kneel position, raise the left hand and cover the right hand on the pommel of the sword. Incline the head forward and look directly at the point of the sword.

This command can also be given while the ranks are at parade rest. If so, then cover the right hand with the left, and incline the head down, looking at the point of the sword.



Un-cover

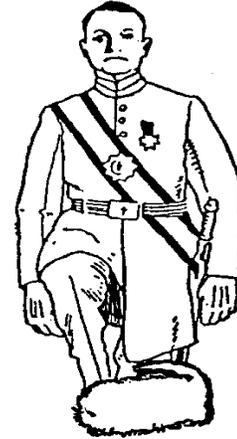
UN---COVER!

At the command grasp the front bill of the chapeaux in the left hand. Raise the chapeaux from the head and rest it on the right shoulder, inclined to the front.

RE---COVER!

Replace the chapeaux on the head and drop left arm to the side.

NOTE: the command un-cover is only given while at parade rest, kneeling, or rest-on-swords, attention, or while swords are secured. In the event the Knights are at secure then the right hand is used to un-cover and re-cover.



**Deposit
Chapeaux**

DEPOSIT---CHAPEAUX!

From the un-cover position, while kneeling the chapeaux is placed on the floor next to the right foot. The feathers should face to the left with the visor towards the body. If using the cap in place of the chapeaux, the cap is placed on its crown with the front towards the body.

SECURE---CHAPEAUX, RE---COVER, SIR KNIGHTS---RISE!

After communication of the Immaculate Word, or devotions, grasp the visor by the left hand and place it on the right shoulder in the un-cover position when commanded to secure. The chapeaux are then placed on the head and the left hand is dropped to the side for re-cover. On the command rise, return to attention by rising on the right foot/leg and bringing the heel of the left to the heel of the right.

Alarms

All alarms given at the doors should be given with the sword. When giving an alarm, or responding to an alarm the flat of the blade's point should be used. Never use the pommel. During ritual work on an order the door's knocker may be used so all may hear the alarm.

Silent Manual of the Sword

To secure a spectacular show, and achieve machine-like accuracy of the Manual of the Sword, any desired combination of sword movements may be executed in a consecutive fashion, without pauses, and without vocal commands. With each Knight in formation silently counting a predetermined set of commands are carried out in regular cadence.

Drill Team Routines

Many Commanderies have formed drill teams that perform various combinations of close order drill routines with various movements from the Manual of the Sword to present a very showy and precision performance. In several states and at the Tri-annual of the General Grand Encampment there are competitions between drill teams for ribbons, cups and trophies.