

COORDINATING LARGE GROUP ENCAMPMENTS



Gwenlian Catharne

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THE SCOOP

If someone offers you this job, TAKE IT! It requires a minimum of pre-planning, a couple of hours of good hard work on site, and by Saturday morning, you're done! You've made a huge contribution to the event, made a whole lot of people happy, and you still get to play for the weekend. How can you beat that?

REQUIREMENTS

You do not have to be local to the event to coordinate large groups, but you do have to have good internet access and reliable email. You have to be willing to reply quickly and efficiently to the email you receive. You have to be able to get on site many hours before it opens to the public, because you not only have to section off the areas you reserved for others, but you also need to have your own encampment totally set up and ready for you to come crawling home and crash. You have to be able to measure the area you are given to work with and make sure that it in some way corresponds to the measurements you thought you had to work with. It won't always, but life's supposed to be an adventure, right?

Once the hard work of getting the site set is done, people will begin rolling in and needing to know where their camp is. Maps are a Very Good Thing, but do not make the mistake of assuming that everyone can read them. Marking the reserved spaces with the group name is a Very Good Thing too; it's really annoying to have to go remove encampments that spontaneously decided to poach someone else's spot ("Wow! Large roped off area with no one in it! MUST have known I was coming!). It's also nice to have a crew to work with you; adults are good, children are great. Things like holding a tape measure and running out to measure things are fun for kids, and tiring for adults.

SILLY PEOPLE

Remember not to promise silly things to the silly people who ask for silly things. If you try to pacify someone who is being unreasonable by promising them the moon, they are guaranteed to show up at the event and wave a stack of your emails in your face and demand that you climb up there and fetch it down for them. Not everyone can be made happy; in fact, I have run across people who were determined NOT to be happy no matter what you did for them. Silly people. If you do happen to run across someone who just makes your head hurt beyond belief, there is a very easy way to handle it. Let them get their own space. What you are doing is a service to both the populace and the event. It behooves the populace to work with you. If individuals choose not to do so, they can wait in line until you have your reservations marked and gate opens. By the way, save their stack of emails so that you too can prove you're not just being a poo-poo head.

ADVERTISING

It does no good to offer reservations if no one knows about it. Get the news about what you're doing out as quick as possible in the Crier, local newsletter, and on the relevant emailing lists. Make sure that you post with permission to forward the text in its entirety, so it can wend its merry way across the Kingdom. Don't be shy about sending it out a couple of times...say, once a month or so. If you can't get it on the Steps and Cathedral, find someone who can.

EQUIPMENT

What you use to mark the reserved encampments depends largely on what the site you are using allows, and what the event budget will allow. I'm a big fan of stakes and surveyor's tape, because the tape is cheap and the stakes are reusable. There can be a large difference in price for the materials depending on where you shop. On tape, Home Depot usually runs 600 ft for \$3, while everywhere else in my area runs 300 ft for \$3. I buy 1x2x12" surveyor's stakes for about \$7 for a bundle of 50, but again, that's after researching the local pricing trends. Shop around! I really HATE to pay full retail!

THE PROCESS

For the most part, taking reservations is easy. I recommend that you ask for tent sizes rather than encampment size, because it makes it a lot easier to ensure that you aren't going to have to make last minute changes on site due to someone else's inability to estimate area (after you read The Math below, you should be an expert). Get a point of contact for the group, and a list of the tent sizes they will be bringing. If possible, get the names of some of the people in the group, so that you can be sure there aren't two or more gung-ho individuals in the same group making reservations for everybody. Be cheerful, reply promptly, and don't be afraid to ask questions or for clarification if need be. Keep careful track of the reservations you take...I usually open up a document and save it to the desktop so that as I check my phone messages and email, I can note size requests and any special information or needs. It is a lot easier than going back through the stack of emails and notes on scratch paper the day before the event and KNOWING that somewhere out there you've missed someone.

PLACEMENT

It is vitally important that you talk to the person in charge of marking roads through the camping area, and to the person in charge of placing the biffies. Roads need to be at least twenty feet wide (preferably thirty). Plan your roads as though a thirty foot fire truck will have to be able to drive through the entire site...because it might. Biffies need to be placed in such a way that they can be easily serviced. Most biffie trucks can only pump from one side or the other, so placing the biffies in such a manner that they can clean them all in one loop instead of having to turn around and go back endears you to the drivers. Once you know where the roads are and where the biffies will be, it is a lot easier to understand what kind of space you have to work with, and also easier to insure that everyone will have access.

The very first placement is, of course, the Royal Encampment. If a Royal Presence is planned, get in touch with the member of retinue who is handling reservations as soon as possible to determine the estimated size of the encampment, and any special needs they may have. Plan to place them as close to the activities as possible...it is very likely that most of their time will be spoken for, and being able to duck out to the camp for a few minutes of peace and quiet is a very valuable asset. Having to trek through all of the rest of camping and deal with everyone who is certain they only need five minutes of your time when all you really want is your ham and cheese sandwich, however, is a real hassle. Like everyone else you make reservations for, be sure to ask them what they prefer as far as placement, whether they want loud or quiet camping, if there is anyone they do or do not want placed near them (and please be prepared NOT to make that info public), whether they need any type of ADA access (Americans with Disabilities Act...not sure what the Canadian Equivalent is), and which activities they would like to be closest to.

Once you have placed Their Royal Majesties or crossed them off the list, move down through the rest of the Royalty...Their Royal Highnesses, Principality Highnesses (all three sets, just in case), and the Principality Heirs. Then you're free to deal with everybody else!

THE MATH

Instinctive Spatial Analysis is not my strong suit. Sitting down with graph paper and a pencil with a good eraser was, for a long time, the only way I could get stuff to add up. Then I went to college and reawakened some of those dormant math memories from high school, and the whole process got a lot easier. Since I don't think you should have to go to college to be able to do this stuff, I figured I'd just tell you how I now do it and save you the headache and a few hundred dollars in tuition money. The simple way that I have found to do it, while not precise, is just sloppy enough to work.

- Take the measurement of the first tent in the encampment (frontage by depth), and add eight feet to each measurement ((frontage + 8) by (depth + 8)) to give a nice four foot buffer on each side of the tent. This allows for a small walkway if they are smart enough to have included their guy wires, and room for the guy wires to overlap if they weren't. Multiply these two numbers together to get the required square footage of ground for this tent. For example, if you have a 10 by 20 tent, you would add eight to each measurement to get 18 by 28, and multiply the 18 and 28 together to get 504, the required ground space.
- Repeat this process for each of the tents in the encampment, and add all the totals together. If the group asks for space for a central area, get an idea of how much room they think they will need for it, and figure it into the total as though it were one big tent sitting there. Most encampments are fine with a twenty to thirty foot square central area. Some like to hold big parties and need a larger space. Parties are not a bad thing; they get all the people you may have to chastise at quiet time into one spot so you don't have to chastise twice. I like that, and usually give them room.
- Once you have the total square footage required, start trying on measurements to see how much actual ground to give them. Always round up. I have found that the number of people in an encampment who don't show is generally about equal to the number of unplanned campers who suddenly do show up, and the numbers usually level out nicely. I like to lay things out in squares, but I also realize that it doesn't always work out that way. I usually make a sort of a chart... $50' \times 50' = 2500' \text{ sq}$, $60' \times 60' = 3600' \text{ sq}$, etc. If your site does not have nice squares, go to rectangles: $30' \times 70' = 2100' \text{ sq}$, $50' \times 75' = 3750' \text{ sq}$, etc. Don't do circles; you lose all the room in the corners. Triangles involve way too much math.
- Once I have some basic measurements, I sketch a to-scale map of the site and start sticking encampments in. Don't forget that roads should be 20 to 30 feet wide, and go all the way through camping. If someone has an accident at the back of the site, you don't want to have to move tents to get the aid unit to them. This is where the special requests that you asked about come in really handy. Make sure that the archers get as close to the archery range as possible, the fighters close to the erics, etc. Coordinate with the person in charge of ordering and placing the biffies to make sure that you have ADA Accessible units where they are needed.
- Make a big map (poster board size) showing where everyone is placed. Find some way to hang it up at the front of the camping area, or at gate. If it is at gate, everybody else will write on it too, but that's ok. If you can, make two and hang one at each point.
- Stand back and wait for the campers to roll in so you can efficiently send them directly to their spot, point out the requested amenities, and move on to the next person. If anyone is unhappy with their spot, work with them if you have the time. Keep a list of the different encampments and their measurements and placements so that you can switch them if you absolutely have to. Don't be afraid to refer to Silly People above and tell them they will have to find a spot of their own. Don't be snotty, but don't allow yourself to be abused, either. Some people are not happy unless they are unhappy or can make you unhappy. You are not responsible for those people. Send them packing. For some of the more timid folk who like to volunteer but don't handle confrontation well, I have on occasion appointed a Designated Enforcer to assist them in their dealings with abusive individuals. It works well.

EXAMPLE ENCAMPMENT

Tent Size	(Tent + 8')	Square Footage
20 x 24	28 x 32	896
20 x 24	28 x 32	896
20 x 35	28 x 43	1204
20 x 20	28 x 28	784
15 x 30	23 x 38	874
15 x 15	23 x 23	529
15 x 15	23 x 23	529
9 x 16	17 x 24	408
12 x 20	20 x 28	560
15 x 30	23 x 38	874
10 x 20	18 x 28	504
10 x 10	18 x 18	324
12 x 20	20 x 28	560
18 x 30	26 x 38	988

Total Square Footage Required: 9930

Now, you just have to play with numbers until you find the appropriate size piece of land for them. I like squares.

80 x 80	6400	(Way Too Small)
90 x 90	8100	(Too Small)
100 x 100	10000	Just About Right!
110 x 110	12100	(Too Big)
120 x 120	14400	(Way Too Big)

See? It's FUN!

CLOSING

I'm not always good at giving instructions, so please feel free to contact me if you feel that I have missed something or have a question. There are some things that I take for granted that it does not occur to me other people don't know. Remember, too, that this isn't the only way to do it...it's just the one that works for me.

Email: gwenliancatharne@hotmail.com