



## The Use of Corporate Arms

Information Leaflet No. 1

NOTES ON THE USE OF CORPORATE ARMS

November 19, 2025



### I. BY THE COMPANY

The arms may be used by the company in any way or situation it chooses in order to signify the company's identity. In commercial terms, in the ways in which a trademark or "company image" device is normally used.

The arms may be shown on a shield, both to signify the company's identity and to mark the company's property, e.g. the shield may be displayed on all letter-headings, stationary, doors, buildings, vehicles, gates, tools, packagings, etc. either in colour or in a simplified black and white version clearly intended to represent the coloured original, as for example in a stamp or branding iron.

The company's name may accompany the shield or not, at the company's discretion, but it must not be added to the shield by printing it across or within it as this defaces or alters the arms. In effect, the company's arms are a visual equivalent of the company's name, and can properly be used in any situation where the display of the company's name would be appropriate. Thus, it is perfectly correct to use the arms to mark the company's products, either in association with the company's name or not, as with a trademark.

It is perfectly correct for the company to display its arms upon shapes other than a shield, where this may have some special purpose. A company flag, for example, shows the company's arms on a rectangular shape instead of a shield, but *flags are dealt with later in this note*. A rectangle, square, roundel, triangle or free shape are all appropriate and correct shapes for the display of arms, but the use of a diamond (rhombus) shape should be avoided as this shape is reserved in heraldic usage for the display of arms borne by a female.

Where a shape other than a shield is used, the elements of the coat of arms should fill the entire shape to its edges, just as they fill the shield. Leaving a space around the edge would imply that the original arms had a border of that colour.

**COLOURS:** There are no "authentic heraldic colours". Any red is red to a herald, provided it is clearly red and does not verge on purple or orange - or pink! "Crimson" and "Vermilion" are both "Red" heraldically, so a great deal of latitude is allowed to the owner of a coat of arms in the tints he uses to colour it. In general, the strongest and brightest tints of any particular colour will be found the most suitable. This sounds as though it would produce a garish result, but in practice it turns out otherwise. The heraldic rules about the juxtaposition of colours prevent garish effects - usually. Colours are usually shown in a plain flat application, matt or glossy at the owner's choice. But they can also be varied in texture, particularly the metallic colours (treated later) at the owner's choice, and this is often very useful where a large area is being coloured.

**METALS:** This is the heraldic term for gold and silver. These can be shown conventionally as white or yellow, entirely as preferred. Silver can also be shown as any of the "white" metals, such as aluminum, stainless steel, nickel, chrome, etc., either in bright or satin finishes.

**HOUSE COLOURS:** The two main colours, i.e. the most prominently used, in a coat of arms are available for use as "House Colours" or Livery Colours. One of these is always the colour of the background of the coat of arms, and the other is that which appears in the largest quantity. It is correct and appropriate for the company to use these in every suitable way as its House Colours, e.g. in furnishings, carpets (which can also display the coat of arms), curtains, uniforms (e.g. chauffeurs, guards, commissionaires), overalls, and as colours for the works sports teams. It must be clear, however, that the works football club is using the company's colours, not the football club's colours. Any of the company's buildings, vehicles, or property in general can be painted in the House Colours.

### II. BY THE PERSONNEL

#### (a) BY THE MANAGEMENT

**COMPANY SEALS:** These correctly show the company's arms on a shield in the centre, usually surrounded by a circlet bearing the company's name. The usual restrictions on the use of any company seal apply to heraldic ones. Expert advice should be taken on its design.

**MOTOR CAR PENNANTS:** These should take the form of miniature flags, see later sub-FLAGS. They may be flown on the radiator cap (or where radiator caps used

to be), on the front wings, or on the centre of the front of the roof. The latter is unusual, and so far as is known is only practised by the Royal Family who have a special need for the flag to be visible in motor processions among crowds. Motor car pennants (strictly "banners", as a pennant is a triangular shaped flag) signify that the car contains the person entitled to fly the flag. So, in that person's absence from his motor car the flag should be cased or removed. The display of the company's flag on a motor car is restricted to the head of the company, who represents the corporate authority of the company vested in him. But it may also be flown on the car of anyone to whom his authority has been temporarily delegated, and who therefore "represents" him. The head of the company may "impale" the company's arms with his own personal arms, i.e. the flag is vertically divided down the middle and his personal arms fill the right-hand half as you look at it, while the company's arms fill the left-hand half. Strictly speaking he should only display this "impaled" flag while acting on company business, and cease to use it on his retirement or supercession. "Impaled" is an odd word, heraldically meaning divided "in pale", i.e. vertically down the middle.

It is recommended that motor car pennants are (a) of cheap materials of which the normal flag "bunting" is the hardest wearing and cheapest. Pennants wear out quickly in the wind of rapid motor cars and although synthetic materials such as nylon are more expensive they give good results; (b) ordered in batches for the same replacement reasons. If the company's arms have a gold or silver background then Lurex material gives reasonably hard-wearing and very spectacular results. It is correct for the head of the firm to fly both the company's flag and his own

personal banner on his motor car at the same time, but not usually on the same staff. The usual solution is to fly the company's flag on the off-side front wing and his personal flag on the near-side front wing. In Britain the use of motor car flags is apt to attract a deal of leg-pulling, but this is never free of envy and is easily countered where the flag and its use are both legal and correct.

#### **(b) BY THE EMPLOYEES**

**BADGES:** It is correct for the company's employees to wear the company's coat of arms as a badge, in the same way as a school's pupils wear the school's coat of arms as a blazer badge. Similarly, a small metal shield of the company's arms may be worn by the company's employees to signify their attachment to the company.

**LIVERY COLOURS:** May be worn by the company's employees, e.g. as overalls or as football jerseys by the works football teams, as treated sub-HOUSE COLOURS.

#### **III. FLAGS**

The company's flags should be of square or rectangular shape and their entire area should be occupied by the arms, *as though the flag is a rectangular shield*. It is quite wrong to show the company's arms on a small shield in the middle of, say, a white flag. This latter would mean that the shield of the company's arms was white with another little shield in the middle.

Flags may correctly be flown from a vertical staff by one edge, or suspended from horizontal staves by the top edge. The latter is a useful method in indoor exhibition stands. Small weights can be sewn in the hem of the lower edge to help its hang. Flags intended for such vertical suspension in indoor sites are not subject to the buffeting of the weather and very spectacular ones can be embroidered to give substantial tone to exhibition stands, or for draping on walls. Flags are flown over buildings and sites to convey the same message as would the use of the company's shield, i.e. to signify the company's identity. They can properly be flown over all the company's buildings and their use need not be restricted to head offices.