

Cottington Woods

Community Values, Code of Conduct, Harassment Policy, and Game Play

Community Values

Community is the heart and soul of Cottington Woods, and we seek to foster a community that is warm, welcoming, and safe to all. If you plan to join Cottington Woods, know that you are joining a community of people, and we ask that you understand and uphold our values.

If there is something we can do to better support our community, please contact us and give us the opportunity to do so.

Our community – Staff, NPCs, and PCs alike – has members who have chronic, invisible illnesses, have chronic, visible illnesses, are neuro-atypical, are LGBTQ+, are POC. We represent a diversity of thought and being, and where an individual may not be one of those things, they are expected to support and respect those who are. We are imperfect, but we strive to be and do good, and we collectively care deeply about the community we have here.

The Golden Rule may be a fairytale, but it is one we uphold: Do unto each other as you would have done unto you. Be nice. Be respectful. Love one another. Be the good you want to see in the world.

If you join Cottington Woods, know that are joining a community who all strive to be and do good while having fun together, and that we expect the same from you in return.

We do not tolerate hatred or harassment of any kind, full stop.

We reserve the right, without notice, to remove players violating our values from our community. There may be times we remove someone from our game and do not provide a full accounting as to why to the community at large; this is because we have an equal obligation to protect any victims who may have been wronged and not re-traumatize them or force them into the spotlight if they do not chose to be there. Our priority is to maintain a safe and inclusive community, and we hold ourselves equally accountable to being the change we wish to see in the world, requiring constant vigilance, work, learning, and action.

Code of Conduct

"Be Nice."

This is the heart of our intentions and policies at Cottington Woods, and it is our expectation that every player, NPC, and Staff member embody this policy as well. We expect everyone to treat everyone with respect on an out of game level.

For example, if someone disregards an attack, give them the benefit of the doubt before yelling at them in combat. If you feel it is egregious or they are cheating, step out of combat and find a Staff member.

If you have a disagreement with another player, before you confront them, ask yourself if you would appreciate and/or be receptive if the same was given to you. If not, then moderate your approach to be respectful.

If an insult your character would make would offend someone on an out-of-game level, consider a different insult that can be taken entirely in-game. We do not tolerate the use of slurs or language stigmatizing mental health, non-neurotypical, or disabilities.. Per Core Accelerant rules: "Abusive language or actions are not tolerated, whether they are in game or not. Language or actions that are derogatory or that are deemed to be harassment are not allowed. References to explicit sexual behavior or concepts, particularly violent ones, are not allowed. In game threats should be worded so they are clearly in game."

When providing feedback in PELs, understand that there are real people who worked hard and slept little to try to bring you a bit of fun, and so coach feedback in a respectful manner.

In short, BE NICE.

Have Fun, Be A Good Sport.

We want everyone at Cottingham to have fun. We realize that this is not always obtainable, but it is something we very much desire to have, players and NPC/Staff alike. We hope to tell an engaging and entertaining story, one where we expect the Players to have agency to influence the stories told and to create their own that take us by surprise.

We therefore expect everyone to take on the responsibility of ensuring that not only they are having fun, but the players, NPCs, and Staff they are encountering are likewise. If you are NPCing/Staffing, remember that you are there to entertain the players. If you are playing, remember that the NPCs are volunteers giving of their time to entertain you, and show them courtesy for this. Players or NPCs who consistently push boundaries, cause problems, or deliberately impede other's enjoyment of the game, whether they are breaking the letter of the rules or not, may be asked to leave.

Harassment Policy

All attendees are expected to treat others with respect. Physical and verbal harassment and sexual assault will not be tolerated, period. LARPing can be an intense activity, and the staff wishes to provide a safe environment for players, NPCs and staff alike, regardless of gender, gender identity and expression, sex, sexual orientation, disability, mental illness, neuro(a)typicality, physical appearance, body size, race, age, religion, nationality, or any other factor.

Harassment is generally any behavior that annoys, alarms, or threatens another person or group, whether it occurs at in person or online. This includes (but is not limited to) unwanted or inappropriate physical contact, following someone around without their consent, threatening to physically attack someone, offensive verbal comments, display of explicit images, deliberate intimidation, unwelcome sexual attention, and online harassment or hate speech. If you approach someone and they tell you "no" or to leave them alone, you must do so immediately and have no further contact. If you fail to honor their response, they may have a legitimate complaint of harassment.

We do not tolerate harassment in any form. Period. Game participants violating these rules may be given formal warnings, expelled from an event without refund, or banned from the campaign entirely, at the discretion of staff.

If you experience harassment or if someone is making you uncomfortable, or you believe you have witnessed harassment against another, please inform John Mangio, Michelle Mangio, or Alysha Bartlett, so we can handle the problem. You may send an email to harrasment@cottingtonwoods.com to reach us directly and immediately with any issues. We care deeply about creating a welcoming and safe community.

Accessibility

LARPing by its nature is a physically demanding activity that also requires one to remember a lot of rules and information. We understand that this is not accommodating to a number of people, and strive to make our game more accessible and accommodating.

We have two standard classes that can allow those for whom physical accessibility is a concern, and whose skills are largely By My Voice or By My Gesture: Bard and Architect Path under Sandman. Both of these can play support or combat roles, or a combination of both. Additionally, the Hearth Witch role is centered around healing and support in central gathering places.

For those who do not wish to participate in combat, we have a section on Non-combatants and rules to support them.

We print copies of character sheets for players at the beginning of game so that you do not need to remember all of your skills, or have the means of making your own copies. We allow you to use a phone or tablet device to access information or skills during the game, but we do kindly request that you try to use a case or cover for modern devices to make them appear more in-game. If you do not have a case or cover, let us know, and we'd be happy to loan ones for the event.

We include two skills to help as needed: our "Nope" skills (Having the Miasma) and our "Bathroom" skill (Answering the Call of Nature). The first allows you to opt out of any encounter, for any reason, from not feeling well, to needing to practice self-care. You do not need to explain yourself; you may just leave and everyone in the game will respect and support your need to do so, no stigma attached. Bathroom skill allows you to travel by spirit to the bathroom, allowing you to leave any in-game situation or bypass any dangers. You may also use this to get needed medications, food, or water from your cabin.

We cannot always control the accessibility of our campsites, but we will work with you to make the facilities and the content of our game as accessible as possible. However, please keep in mind that this IS still a boffer combat LARP and physical challenges will be a normal part of the gameplay.

If you have need of accommodation beyond that which our current rules and policies provide, please reach out to us at staff@cottingtonwoods.com. We respect and protect the privacy of our players, and will not share any medical or other information provided to us except in the extreme situation where your life may be on the line (for example, you inform us that you have a peanut allergy, someone accidentally gives you something with peanuts in it, and we need to call 911 to save your life).

We also welcome feedback and suggestions on how to make our game more accessible.

Pronouns

We kindly ask that you do not make assumptions about the pronouns of a player or of a character/NPC, unless you know with certainty or have been told their choice of pronouns. If you do not know the preferred pronouns of an individual, please use they/them.

Physical Contact

Cottingham Woods is a no physical contact game. This is core tenant of the Accelerant Rules Systems, but it is worth repeating. You may not touch another player unless they have explicitly given you permission to do so. Undesired physical contact is against both the rules and the policies of the game.

Sobriety and Campsite Rules

Cottingham Woods is an alcohol, tobacco, and recreational drug-free game, per the rules of our Campsite. Usage of alcohol, tobacco, or recreational drugs on site, or playing while impaired or under the influence of such substances, is grounds for an immediate and permanent ban, and the player is liable for and will pay the loss of the \$2,000 Security Deposit.

You are expected to follow Campsite or other Event Space rules and insurance requirements and local laws with regards to alcohol, tobacco, and fire, as well as all other concerns communicated by Staff during Pre-Game Briefing.

Masks and Contagious Illness

Cottingham Woods would like to codify our support of Mask-wearing going forward, to protect yourself and others from the spread of Contagious Illnesses. LARPing typically occurs during flu and cold season, and as we consider the return to LARPing, we also recognize the potential return of "LARP crud" and the spread of contagious illnesses among the LARP community.

If you are sick with a contagious illness, we ask that you do not attend a Cottingham Woods event.

If you are at an event, and suspect you are becoming sick and/or exhibit symptoms, we ask that you don a mask that covers mouth and nose to protect others, until such time that you deem you are not ill or you remove yourself from the event.

We recognize that there can be overlapping symptoms between contagious illnesses and non contagious maladies such as allergies. We trust people to act in a manner that is safe and reasonable for their own health and wellbeing as well as the health and wellbeing of those around them in making determinations about whether they are safe to stay at an event or whether to leave early.

We encourage anyone and everyone to wear a mask if you wish to take precautions against getting sick. Use hand sanitizer and regularly wash your hands.

In-Game, not everyone has ready access to a Witch or a Priest, and so it is common in the Written World for those who are ill, or who might be near those who are ill, to wear a mask to protect themselves and others.

Game Play

A Note on Our Plot/Story Style:

We really enjoy making deeply interconnected stories that also weave into player and NPC backstories. This helps with the “small town” feel of Cottingham, but also deepens connections between players, NPCs, and the plotlines we – and you - create. Your character histories DO matter, as do the NPCs you write into them. We may not use everything you write, and we may take it in unexpected directions, but we WILL draw on your character history.

This is not to say that every plotline is connected to one another – they are not – but neither are plotlines “sandboxes” with no connection to one another. What it does mean is that you may find out clues and information about one plotline in a seemingly unrelated plotline, so it is important to talk to one another and share information. We like to encourage players and communities to come together and work together; while there may be times you should not reveal info to a particular NPC, we will rarely if ever have plotlines where we expect PCs to keep knowledge from each other. (In fact, Priests have skills to encourage knowledge sharing.)

This also means that details matter. We acknowledge that we aren't perfect and that we do make mistakes (and we will inform everyone if one was made), but we do everything we can to ensure that everything that goes out is relevant, even if only minorly so. If you are wandering the woods and come across some “wandering pain” but are being attacked by something out of the ordinary, that is actually information about something going on. For example, in our original campaign, the PCs once were misled by a villainous NPC to attack a tower that they were told had been enchanted by the Evil Fairy Queen, but rather than fighting Redcaps, Mischievous Sprites, and other minions that would fight for the Evil Fairy Queen, they were instead attacked by Dryads, Treants, and Will-o-Wisps. This was an intentional clue that the Tower had been enchanted by the Guardian of the Woods, not by the Evil Fairy Queen.

We aim for a bit of the “Sixth Sense” feeling: enough information that you can figure things out but might not, hopefully giving you that “ah ha!” moment when it all comes together and you see that you could have solved it and had all the pieces to do so.

Content Disclosure

This is a game based on fairytales, folklore, urban legends, stories and more. While there will absolutely be moments and plotlines of silliness, frivolity, and light-heartedness, many fairytales are dark, and Cottingham often looks to twist those dark tales in unexpected ways. Thus, some story matter may be disturbing and may contain elements of trauma, systemic and personal abuse, mental illness, self destruction, addiction, the horrors of war, and other difficult topics. We strive to keep our game “lighter” than many mature LARPs in the area, but we do expect to touch on some difficult subject matter from time to time. Wherever possible, we will warn you if a particular module or encounter will have difficult or

potentially triggering content. We have also created an in-game skill to "Nope" out of any encounter with no in- or out- of game consequence.

Add to the Immersion; Don't Detract From It

Take the game world as seriously as it is presenting itself at the time. Do not take actions that take away from the gravitas of a situation, especially where it would negatively impact the enjoyment of other players or NPCs. There will be moments of absurdity in Cottington for certain, but there will also be moments where terrifying things occur. Staff will do what they can to make things as terrifying in-game as possible, and we ask that you immerse yourself in the experience and refrain from using infantilizing nicknames for scary things, refusing to be affected by what's going on (unphaseable characters unfortunately don't work well in LARPs), or otherwise detract from the scene.

Ask yourself: Is my roleplay increasing the fun of the people around me? Am I raising up the roleplay of others and contributing to the collective experience in a positive manner? Is my roleplay adding to the emotion of the scene or detracting from it? If we all strive to be immersive and to consider the fun of one another, player and npc alike, we will all walk away having an amazing experience.

The following section is copied directly from the Endgame web site with permission from Mac Brown, the Campaign Director. I decided not to repurpose the text because, frankly, I could not say this any better. Please read it, and understand that while our content will be different from that of Endgame, our concerns regarding good and bad, both in game and out, are the same.

Ethical Concerns

The people of Endgame Earth have gone through, and are continuing to experience, massive change and suffering. They are desperate, and in this sort of situation, custom and morality tend to drop far down a person's list of priorities.

That said, the players of Endgame [Cottington Woods] are intended to be a cut above normal people. They are heroes, and they may be humanity's best hope of survival. The Endgame campaign will be the story of their efforts to do what's right.

Now, this is not to say that our staff will force anyone to create a "good" character, or control anyone's actions. It does mean that the majority of our staff's efforts will be put toward writing a story in which people can be heroic. Anyone not willing to work for the good of humanity, or at least go along for the ride with those who are, might not enjoy the game very much. We make no apologies for this, and are doing it quite intentionally. It's difficult enough to create an engaging world and series of storylines for heroes, without trying to accommodate villains as well.

People who want to fight other players, or enjoy sabotaging the efforts of the majority, might find a different LARP more to their liking. If any player character is caught betraying humanity or acting against the players, staff will not mitigate the consequences, and they should not expect to be able to continue playing as that character merely because they are paying to play.

In our (Cottington Woods) own words:

- Characters in Cottington Woods may be the common people dealing with uncommon circumstances, but they are still encouraged to ultimately be Heroic. This is a fairy tale, after all. Being good does not mean you have to be pure - the best tales are ones with struggles, internal as well as external, and a bit of internal strife and actual flaws makes things interesting. We will not, however, reward evil behavior, and characters that fall or become "wicked" should not expect to be able to continue playing their character. Staff will not mitigate the consequences of being villainous.

- That said, the oldest fairy tales are dark. They deal with morality and difficult choices and sometimes with the fact that doing the right thing sometimes means some bad things have to happen. Sometimes bad things happen to good people. Sometimes you will lose, but when you win, it is because you earned the victory.

- We hope to challenge you, terrify you, bring you to tears, and make you shout with joy.