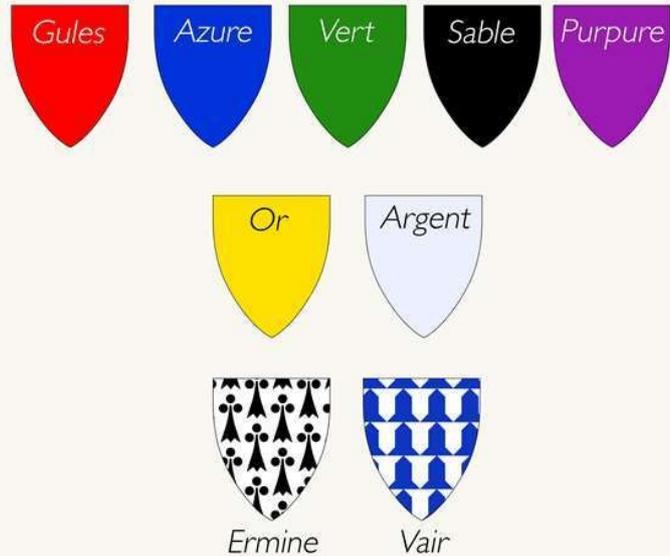


The Colours of Heraldry



If you are making your own heraldry, use bright, strong colours. The five traditional colours are, with their heraldic names:

- Red = *Gules*
- Blue = *Azure*
- Green = *Vert*
- Black = *Sable*
- Purple = *Purpure*

Plus the two 'metals'

- Gold or yellow = *Or*
- Silver or white = *Argent*

There are also 'furs', the most common being:

- *Ermine*: representing the white winter fur of stoats, with their black tail tips.
- *Vair*: representing squirrel skins, in blue and white.

If something (say a dog or badger) is shown in its natural colours, it's called *proper*.

Heraldic Ordinaries



Fess



Pale



Bend



Chevron



Cross



Saltire



Chief



Bordure



Pile

Ordinaries are the simple shapes used on heraldic shields, against a colour, metal or fur background. If you are making your own design, choose one of these main ordinaries:

- *Fess* = horizontal stripe across the shield
- *Pale* = vertical stripe down the shield
- *Bend* = diagonal stripe
- *Chevron* = like a house gable, pointing upwards
- *Cross* = a plain cross
- *Saltire* = a 'St. Andrew's cross'
- *Chief* = bar across top edge of shield
- *Bordure* = border round edges of shield
- *Pile* = downward-pointing triangle

You can also divide your shield into two colours, either vertically or horizontally, or into four different-coloured quarters.

You don't have to use an ordinary, but if you do remember to **never put a colour on colour or a metal on a metal**. Try to remember this heraldic rule: colours don't show up well against colours, or metals against metals. This also applies to charges.

Heraldic Charges



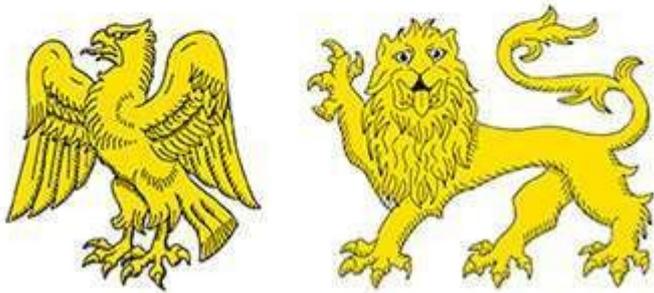
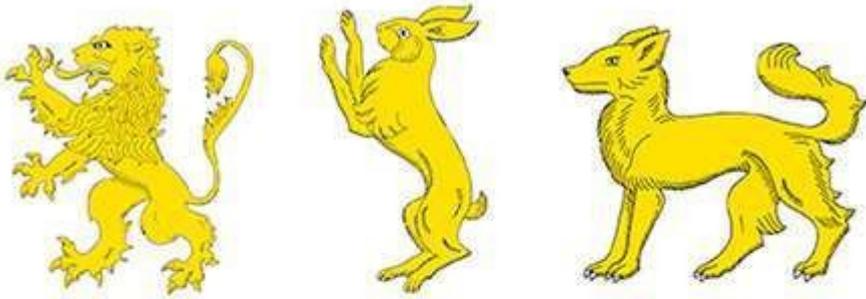
Charges are emblems added to the shield, on the background, the 'ordinary', or both. There can be one big charge, or several smaller repeated ones. Here are some of the common charges you could use:

- Crosses - of many different types
- Stars
- Rings
- Balls
- Crescents
- Diamonds
- Flowers

They can be any colour, but remember **never put colour on colour**, for example a green star on blue, **or metal on metal**, for example a white flower on yellow.

Many knights also used animals as charges.

Animal Charges

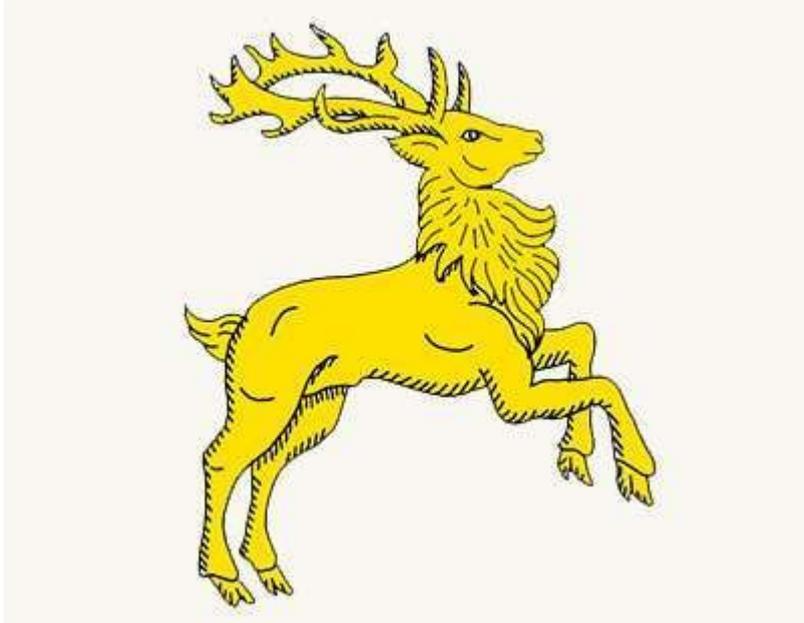


Any animal - either one big one or several smaller - can be used as a **charge**. They can be shown in many different ways, for instance:

- Rearing up (**rampant**) - like the lion and the hare in the pictures
- Standing (**statant**) - like the dog
- For birds, with wings outstretched (**displayed**) - like the eagle
- Walking along (**passant**) - like the other lion

If the animal is looking towards you, it is also **guardant** or 'on guard'. So the lion in the picture is passant guardant. The ancient royal arms of England are three golden lions, one above the other, walking along on a red shield: or in heraldic code gules three lions passant guardant or. (Just to make things more complicated, lions passant guardant are also called leopards - but they don't have spots!)

Animal Meanings



Animals symbolised different qualities. So for instance:

Lions = bravery

Dogs = faithfulness, reliability

Stags = wisdom and long life

Eagles = power and nobility

Hares= speed

Badgers = endurance or 'hanging on'

You could also design your own animal charge--for instance a cat, horse or other favourite pet. Or you could choose a fabulous beast.

Fabulous Beasts



Though often used as 'charges', these fabulous beasts never really existed. But some people believed they did, maybe because they'd heard about them in stories made up by travellers to distant lands, like crusading knights or merchant adventurers. Pictures of them also appeared in 'bestiaries', a popular kind of illustrated medieval story-book.

Here are some you could use:

Dragon: the earliest and most common fabulous beast, also used as a badge by Romans, Anglo-Saxons and Welsh. A brave and cunning defender of treasure.

Griffin: a combination of lion and eagle. Symbolises watchfulness and courage - and also guards treasure.

Cockatrice: a cross between a cockerel and a dragon, supposedly hatched from a cock's egg [!] by a snake or toad. Could kill by looking at you, and symbolised protection.

Manticore or 'man-tiger': a fearsome man-eating creature with a lion's body, man's face, tusks, horns and a deafening trumpet-like voice. (Are you really like one of these?)

Examples



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Bremner



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Cooke (Eire/England)

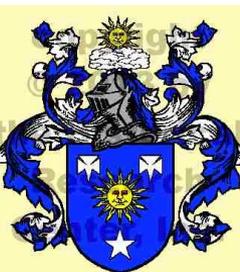


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Every



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Gilchrest



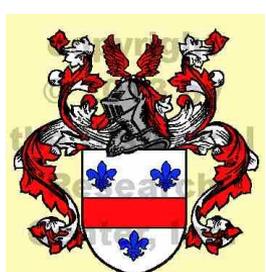
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Gregory



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Haight



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King (France)



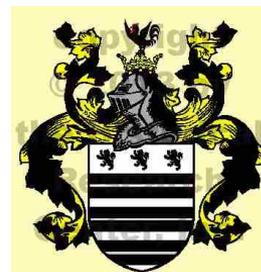
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Powell (Wales)



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Thornton



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Willats