**BECOMING A KNIGHT**

There were two ways that a man could become a knight during the Middle Ages. The first was earning the right on the battlefield. If a soldier fought particularly bravely during a battle or war, he may be awarded knighthood by the king, a lord, or even another knight. The second way was to become an apprentice to a knight and earn the title through hard work and training.



**What is a Page**?

When a boy decided that he wanted to become a knight, he would go to live in the household of a knight when he was seven years old. There he would serve the knight as a page. As a young page he basically was a servant for the knight, performing tasks such as serving meals, cleaning his clothes, and carrying messages. While working for the knight's household, the page learned the proper way to behave and good manners.

The page also began to train to fight. He would practice with other pages using wooden shields and swords. He also would start to learn how to ride a horse using no hands and carrying a lance

**Who could become a knight?**

Many young men growing up in the Middle Ages dreamed of becoming a knight, but only a few could afford to become knights. The first requirement of a knight was someone who could afford a knight's weapons, armor, and war horse. These items weren't cheap and only the very rich could pay for them. Knights were also people from the noble or aristocratic classes

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**What is a Squire?**

Around the age of fifteen, the page would become a squire. As a squire, the young man would have a new set of tasks. He would take care of the knight's horses, clean his armor and weapons, and accompany the knight to the battlefield.

Squires had to be ready to fight. They trained with real weapons and were taught fighting skills by the knight. They had to be in good shape and strong. Squires continued to practice their horsemanship, perfecting their skills at jousting and fighting from the saddle. Most future knights worked as a squire for five or six years.

**Dubbing Ceremony**

If a squire had proven his bravery and skill at battle, he would become a knight at the age of twenty-one. He gained the title of knight at a "dubbing" ceremony. At this ceremony he would kneel before another knight, lord, or king who would then tap the squire on the shoulder with his sword making him a knight.

At the ceremony, the new knight would take an oath to honor and protect his king and the church. He would be presented with a pair of riding spurs and a sword.

**Interesting Facts about Becoming a Knight**

* Squires often learned about castle and siege warfare from their knight. They would need to know how to defend their own castle as well as how to attack an enemy's castle.
* The word "squire" comes from a French word meaning "shield-bearer."
* Wealthy knights would have had several pages and squires to assist them.
* Squires would practice jousting using a wooden dummy called a quintain.
* Not all squires were made knights through an elaborate ceremony. Some were awarded knighthood on the battlefield.
* Before the dubbing ceremony to become a knight, squires were required to spend the night alone in prayer.