



Forms of Address & Order of Precedence

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Introduction

This document is meant to be a guide on the proper etiquette for addressing and referring to other characters. The first section contains general rules with details and examples that will add nuance and color to the charts later on.

Every character's Name, Rank, and some other silent details will be provided on their name badges, so you will not have to memorize any of that information. We will also be trying to provide clues to the correct form of address in the name badges. So for instance “**Miss** Laura **Middleton**” and “**Miss Phoebe Middleton**” would suggest the convention of eldest sister being addressed by surname, and younger by full name; and “**Lady** Elinor **Davenport**, Countess of Davenport” would suggest addressing her as “Lady Davenport”.

If certain rules and guidelines in this sheet conflict with ways characters are addressed in your character sheet, use both to decide what makes sense for your character. Perhaps there are some people your character intentionally is over-familiar with, either out of disrespect or close affection. No rule is without flexibility and exceptions, after all. And this is all meant as flavor, context and historical grounding – we assure you there are no penalties for unintentionally mis-speaking. There is absolutely no expectation that you read this, let alone memorize it.

General Rules

*First Names*¹

First names were almost never used in speech, except in extremely limited circumstances. Basically, you would only address younger family members (children, grandchildren, nieces and nephews), siblings, and cousins you were particularly close with by first name (see “[Family](#)”). Some married couples would use first names with each other, but it was equally common for them to use “Mr/Mrs + Surname” for each other, even in private (see “[Couples and Lovers](#)”).

¹ For more detail and textual examples, see: <https://www.wattpad.com/602943837-reading-the-regency-forms-of-address-part-2>





Sometimes, close friends would use first names with each other – usually restricted to homosocial friendships that began as children (see “[Friends](#)”). If a man was overheard addressing a woman he was not related to by her first name, it would give rise to the speculation they were engaged, or otherwise “intimately” involved - how scandalous! Children that grew up together would generally continue to use their childhood forms of address throughout their lives.

Dandies, as always, are an exception to the rule and should be referred to exclusively by first name alone. Bastards are also referred to by first name if they have not earned the use of a surname through reputation – to avoid confusion with dandies, we’re using “Mr. + First Name” as a convention for bastards of insufficient reputation.

Sir and Madam²

“**Sir**” alone is a respectful way to address any gentleman for whom “my Lord” is not appropriate, even strangers or those you don’t know particularly well. “Sir” followed by a name is reserved for addressing knights and Baronets. Children might also call their father “Sir”.

“**Madam**” is similarly a respectful way to address any adult woman, except in situations where “my Lady” would be more appropriate. A man may also call unmarried women to whom he is not well acquainted “madam”. It can also be shortened to “ma’am” as in modern English.

Like modern English, “sir” and “madam” are versatile terms that can change meaning with tone of voice and context. Used warmly, they can connote friendship and welcome. Used coldly, they can convey displeasure, be a snub, or to create distance.

² For more detail and textual examples, see: <https://www.wattpad.com/601034895-reading-the-regency-forms-of-address-part-1/page/1>





Mr., Mrs., and Miss

“**Mr.**” is the way to respectfully address any man who does not use any other title.³ The most senior man in a household should be addressed as “Mr. + Surname.” Younger men would add their first names – “Mr. + First Name and Surname”. A son or younger brother may go by “Mr. + Surname” if his father or elder brother is not present. Bastards should not be referred to by surname unless they have sufficient reputation as to have “gained a name” and instead use “Mr. + First Name” (see “[Dandies and Bastards of insufficient reputation](#)”)

“**Mrs.**” follows roughly the pattern as “Mr.”⁴ Unless she has a title by courtesy of her husband or father⁵, the most senior woman of a household would be addressed as “Mrs. + Surname.” Wives of any sons or younger male family members would add their (or their husband’s) first names to distinguish them.

“**Miss**” can be used to refer to any unmarried woman, no matter her age.⁶ Similarly to “Mr”, the eldest unmarried daughter is “Miss + Surname” with her younger sisters addressed as “Miss + Full Name”, or just “Miss + First Name” if among friends, and a younger sister may be addressed as “Miss + Surname” if her elder unmarried sisters are not present.

“I am so glad your eldest cousin is gone, that he may be Mr. Bertram again. There is something in the sound of Mr. Edmund Bertram so formal, so pitiful, so younger-brother-like, that I detest it.” - Chapter 22, Mansfield Park, by Jane Austen

³ For more detail and textual examples, see: <https://www.wattpad.com/601034895-reading-the-regency-forms-of-address-part-1/page/2> and <http://laura.chinet.com/html/titles12.html>

⁴ It was not a requirement that a woman be married to be addressed as “Mrs.” in this period, as it was a shortened form of “Mistress” and therefore a respectful term to use for any woman in a position of authority or of a certain age. However, in *Lies & Liability* we are using it exclusively for married women for ease of conveying that information.

⁵ For example, if Lady Mary Davenport married a man without title, she would remain “Lady Mary” and not “Mrs. Husband’s Surname”

⁶ For more detail and textual examples, see: <https://www.wattpad.com/601034895-reading-the-regency-forms-of-address-part-1/page/3>





Examples:

- ❖ If the father is Mr. Hale, then his eldest son would be Mr. Christopher Hale, and his youngest son would be Mr. Alexander Hale. When away from home without his father present, Mr. Alexander Hale might instead be addressed as Mr. Hale.
- ❖ If the father is the Viscount Pembroke, then his eldest son would be Mr. Pembroke and his second youngest son would be Mr. Jos Pembroke. When his elder brother is absent, Mr. Jos Pembroke may be referred to as Mr. Pembroke.
- ❖ Prior to Pippa's marriage, she and her younger sister, Bridget, would have been referred to as "Miss Cross" and "Miss Bridget Cross" respectively. Once she married Mr. Pembroke, Pippa became "Mrs. Pembroke" and Bridget became "Miss Cross."

Lord and Lady

With few exceptions for formal occasions, peers below the rank of Duke are always called "Lord" or "Lady" in speech, and never by their titles.⁷ For example, you would say "Lady Davenport" rather than "Countess Davenport."

Peers in their own right and their wives should always be addressed as "Lord [Title]" or Lady "[Title]." ⁸ "Lord/Lady" followed by a first name should never be used for a peer or their wife, as it implies the title is by courtesy (ie: Lord Collin Davenport and Lady Mary Davenport). ⁹

On your character sheets or other documentation, you may see a peer in their own right referred to as "Lord/Lady [First Name] [Title]", but this is **an OOC convention for clarity** and they should not be called as such IC.

⁷ <http://laura.chinet.com/html/titles12.html>

⁸ <http://laura.chinet.com/html/titles08.html>

⁹ <http://laura.chinet.com/html/titles05.html>





For example: Lady Davenport is the Countess of Davenport in her own right, and her heir, Collin Davenport, is “Lord Collin Davenport” or “Lord Collin.” The use of his first name after “Lord” signifies that he is not yet *the* Lord Davenport, and that “Lord” is a courtesy title. Once his grandmother passes and he inherits, he will be Lord Davenport (rather than Lord Collin). Similarly, Lady Mary Davenport should never be referred to as Lady Davenport, even if her grandmother passes before her brother marries, as she is only a “Lady” by courtesy.

*Family*¹⁰

“Mama” and “Papa” or “Mother” and “Father” were common forms of address for **parents** – the latter particularly favored by adult sons. “Sir” and “Madam” could also be used, either affectionately or formally, depending on the context, tone, and family in question.

Similarly, “Grandmama”/ “Grandpapa” or “Grandmother”/ “Grandfather” were common forms of address for **grandparents**, with the latter being favored by adults.

“Aunt/Uncle + Surname/Title” or “Aunt/Uncle + First Name” were both acceptable ways to address an **aunt** or **uncle**, and the level of formality depended on how close the family was, or how often they saw each other. An aunt or uncle’s title might be used to refer to them in the third person in company, but not to address them directly unless they were particularly formal or distant.

Parents might use first names when addressing their **children**, as would **siblings** to each other. However, it was not uncommon for parents and siblings to address a child by title alone (e.g. “Davenport”) or some diminutive of it (e.g. “Davey”) if one were available.

Cousins raised together would follow the same conventions as siblings. However, if they were distant relations, or rarely saw each other, a more formal form of address as befitting acquaintances would be used instead.

¹⁰<https://www.wattpad.com/601034895-reading-the-regency-forms-of-address-part-1/page/4>





In private, **in-laws** would use the same familiar forms of address as family or close friends: first names of daughters- or sisters-in-law, first name or surname/title alone for sons- or brothers-in-law, etc. In public, or if they didn't know each other well, more formal forms of address would be used.

Friends

Since **coed friendships** were not terribly common in this period, **adult men and women should not call each other by first names unless they are blood relatives, in-laws, spouses, or fiancés**. Even if they have an intimate friendship, adult men and women should maintain more formal modes of address for each other (see “General Rules”). Using first names (or other intimate forms of address used in homosocial friendships) would give rise to the assumption they were engaged; or, more scandalously, involved in some other manner of intimate relationship. (Your character's mileage may vary on this, depending on how proper their character may or may not be, and how much they care about their reputation or causing scandal.)

Men rarely called each other by their first names, even if they'd known each other their whole lives and were as close as brothers.¹¹ Instead, men of equal status showed intimacy and affection by dropping “Mr.” or “Lord” and using surnames or titles alone. Close friends might also use a nickname instead. For example, a close friend who met the Duke of Devonshire after he inherited his title would call him “Devonshire” to express familiarity, whereas his friends from Cambridge call him a diminutive of his surname, “Higgs”, since he was still Mr. Heathon-Grey when they met him.

Women who were close friends might call each other by their first names, though how quickly they would dispense with formality and adopt the informality of first names would depend on the women involved. If there was a status difference between them, it might delay or discourage the familiarity of being on a first name basis.¹²

¹¹ For more detail and textual examples, see: <https://www.wattpad.com/602943837-reading-the-regency-forms-of-address-part-2/page/3>

¹² For more detail and textual examples, see: <https://www.wattpad.com/602943837-reading-the-regency-forms-of-address-part-2/page/2>





*Couples and Lovers*¹³

How **married couples** addressed each other was dependent on the couple's dynamic. It was not uncommon, or considered too formal, for married couples to refer to each other as "Mr./Mrs. + Surname" or "my Lord/my Lady." A wife might also call her husband by title alone, as his intimate friends and family would. A younger married couple might use first names, whereas an older married couple might not. Spouses might also use affectionate endearments like "my dear" or "my love", even in company.

A couple that is **engaged** to be married might use first names for each other, though it would not be uncommon for a woman to call her fiancé by his surname or title alone, if he had one.

Lovers might similarly use first names in private, though when meeting in public they would likely be more circumspect and maintain more formal modes of address to avoid a scandal. Similar to engaged couples, it would not be uncommon for a man to address his mistress by first name while she referred to him by his title or surname.

*Character Titles and Address, in Order of Precedence*¹⁴

The information below is how characters should refer to each other **in public, by default**. With the exception of dandies and bastards, first names alone without title should almost never be used, except by close family members and very good friends of the same gender. Information on when to use first names and other informal forms of address can be found in the "[General Rules](#)" section of this document.

The Order of Precedence established here is mainly for organization and possible formal uses, as an added layer of subtle hierarchy. You might note that Rank and Order of Precedence do not always align! "Rank" in *Lies & Liability* is a combination of hierarchy, social status, and financial situation. Order of Precedence is strictly based in the hierarchy of the Peerage, and the complex alignment of who precedes whom when entering a ballroom, leaving a drawing room, the arrangement of seating at a dinner party,

¹³ For more detail and textual examples, see: <https://www.wattpad.com/602943837-reading-the-regency-forms-of-address-part-2/page/2>

¹⁴ <https://www.susannedietze.com/british-forms-of-address.html> and <http://laura.chinet.com/html/titles12.html>





and other formal situations.¹⁵ It is unlikely to play *too* extensive a role in *Lies & Liability*, as trying to regularly organize participants in any set order is rather like herding dramatic cats. However, if Order of Precedence is something your character might be a stickler about, then by all means study up.

Peers and Their Immediate Families

Rank	Title, Name	Referenced As	Addressed First As	Addressed Thereafter
7	The Duke of Devonshire , Ainslie Heathton-Grey (in his own right)	“His Grace”, “The Duke”, “The Duke of Devonshire”	“Your Grace”	“Your Grace”
7	The Marquess¹⁶ of Chatsworth , Edgar Naismith Rycroft (in his own right)	“Lord Chatsworth”, “The Marquess of Chatsworth”	“Lord Chatsworth”	“My lord”
7	The Countess of Davenport , Elinor Davenport (in her own right)	“Lady Davenport”, “The Countess of Davenport”	“Lady Davenport”	“My lady”
7	The Earl of Glover , Jeremy Glover (in his own right)	“Lord Glover”, “The Earl of Glover”	“Lord Glover”	“My lord”
6	The Comtesse de Lalande , Evelyn Descartes (widow of The Comte de Lalande)	“The Comtesse de Lalande”, “Madame de Lalande”	“Madame de Lalande”	“My lady” or “Madame”

¹⁵ <https://www.heathermollauthor.com/post/precedence>

¹⁶ Pronounced MAR-kwiss, not Mar-KEY





Rank	Title, Name	Referenced As	Addressed First As	Addressed Thereafter
6	The Lord Collin Davenport (by courtesy, future Earl of Davenport)	“[The] Lord Collin Davenport”	“Lord Collin”	“My lord”
6	The Viscountess Priestly , Francesca Priestly (wife of The Viscount Priestly)	“Lady Priestly”, “[The] Viscountess Priestly”	“Lady Priestly”	“My lady”
7	Baron Montague , Nathaniel Montague (in his own right)	“[The] Lord Montague”	“Lord Montague”	“My lord”
6	Baroness von Breckendorff Katarina von Breckendorff (wife of Baron von Breckendorff)	“[The] Lady von Breckendorff”	“Lady von Breckendorff”	“My lady”
5	The Lady Mary Davenport (by courtesy, granddaughter of Lady Davenport and sister to her heir)	“[The] Lady Mary Davenport”	“Lady Mary”	“My lady”
5	Mr. Arthur Pembroke (future Viscount Pembroke)	“Mr. Pembroke”	“Mr. Pembroke”	—
4	Mrs. Philippa “Pippa” Pembroke (wife of Mr. Pembroke)	“Mrs. Pembroke”	“Mrs. Pembroke”	—
4	Mr. Joseph “Jos” Pembroke (younger brother of Mr. Pembroke)	“Mr. Jos Pembroke”	“Mr. Jos Pembroke”	“Mr. Jos” (if Mr. Pembroke is also present), or “Mr. Pembroke” (if Mr. Pembroke is not present)





Baronets, Knights, and Their Immediate Families

Rank	Title, Name	Referenced As	Addressed First As	Addressed Thereafter
4	Sir Rawdon Nash, Bt. (baronet ¹⁷ in his own right)	“Sir Rawdon Nash”	“Sir Rawdon”	“Sir”
5	Lady Nash, Margaret Nash (widow of Sir Grover Nash, Bt.)	“Lady Nash”	“Lady Nash”	“My lady”
5	Sir Miles Cross (knight)	“Sir Miles Cross”	“Sir Miles”	“Sir”
4	Sir Lucian St. John-Smith (knight)	“Sir Lucian St. John-Smith”	“Sir Lucian”	“Sir”
4	Miss Elizabeth Nash (eldest daughter of the late Sir Grover Nash, Bt.)	“Miss Nash”	“Miss Nash”	—
3	Miss Bridget Cross (Sir Miles Cross’ eldest unmarried daughter)	“Miss Cross”	“Miss Cross”	—

¹⁷ Baronets and knights are not peers and are never addressed as “my lord”; however, their wives are called “Lady” prefixed to their surnames only, and can be called “my lady.” A baronetcy passes down from generation to generation within a family, like a peerage, but a knighthood does not. <http://laura.chinet.com/html/titles02.html#baronetcy>





Gentlemen and Their Immediate Families

At this point, the Order of Precedence starts getting muddy, so the list of characters after the chart is more to give the flavor of what order these characters would be announced in, rather than any hard and fast rule of social hierarchy.

This is a generic chart with forms of address for all gentlemen, their wives, or their legitimate children, as they all follow the same rules. For men in the military, “Mr.” is replaced by their military rank when being referenced and addressed.

Familial Role	Referenced As	Addressed First As	Addressed Thereafter
Head of Household	“Mr [Surname]”	“Mr. [Surname]”	—
His wife	“Mrs. [Surname]”	“Mrs. [Surname]”	—
His eldest son	“Mr. [Full Name]”	“Mr. [Full Name]” (father present) “Mr. [Surname]” (father not present)	—
His younger sons	“Mr. [Full Name]”	“Mr. [Full Name]”	“Mr [First Name]” (father or elder brother present) “Mr [Surname]” (father and elder brother not present)
His eldest unmarried daughter	“Miss [Surname]”	“Miss [Surname]”	—
His younger unmarried daughters	“Miss [Full Name]”	“Miss [Full Name]”	“Miss [First Name]” (elder sister present) “Miss [Surname]” (elder sister not present)





In rough Order of Precedence (Rank in parenthesis):

- ❖ Mr. Bruce Willoughby (5), Colonel Charles Montgomery (5)
- ❖ Mrs. Edwina Murray (5), Miss Cassandra Willoughby (4), Miss Amelia Murray (4)
- ❖ Mr. John Radcliffe Esq. (5)
- ❖ Mr. Robert Middleton (3), Mr. Timothy Harrington (3)
- ❖ Captain Montgomery “Monty” Swift (3)
- ❖ Major Lawrence “Laurie” Radcliffe (4), Major James Osbourne (4)
- ❖ Lt. David Spencer (4), Lt. Jack Foxsmith (3)¹⁸
- ❖ Mrs. Whitney Radcliffe (4), Mrs. Camille Grey (3), Miss Rebecca Radcliffe (4)
- ❖ Miss Violet Carroway (3), Miss Gwendolin Spencer (4), Miss Eliza Harrington (3), Mrs. Ruth Middleton (3)
- ❖ Captain Barnabas Thompson (5)
- ❖ Miss Georgiana Thompson (4)
- ❖ Reverend Robert Lewis (3), Mr. Martin Cavill (2)
- ❖ Mrs. Esther Lewis (3), Miss Laura Middleton (2), Miss Victoria Middleton (2), Miss Anne Middleton (2), Miss Alice Middleton (2), Miss Phoebe Middleton (2)
- ❖ Miss Julia Waldock (2), Miss Charlotte Waldock (2), Miss Emma Waldock (2), Miss Patience Crane (2)
- ❖ Miss Hester Sharpe (3), Miss Adrienne Sharp (4)
- ❖ **Trades, M:** Dr. Hugh Wentworth (3), Midshipman William Hastings (2), Mr. Alexander Hale (1)

¹⁸ Pronounced “lef-TEN-ant” not “loo-TEN-ant”





- ❖ **Trades, F:** Miss Fanny Clark (1), Miss Catherine Hastings (1), Miss Penelope Malet (2), Miss Rosaline Paciello (2), Miss Caroline Bennington (3), Miss Frederica Windermere (1), Miss Isabella Wickham (1)

Dandies and Bastards of Insufficient Reputation

Children born to unwed mothers were said to be “of no name” and addressed by their first name, even though in practice they were baptized under their mother’s maiden name and could gain the use of their surname in address by reputation (e.g. Mr. Cavill).

To distinguish illegitimate children from dandies, who also go by first name alone, we’ve instituted a convention for *Lies & Liability* of using “Mr. [First Name]” or “Miss [First Name]” rather than first name alone for bastards (with similar exceptions for childhood associates). Bastards who have gained sufficient reputation (or have married into legitimacy) may be addressed as “Mr. [Surname]” or “Mrs. [Surname]”.

Status	Referenced As	Addressed As
Dandies Hartford (1), Peregrine (2), Knightley (1), and Kestrel (2)	First Name	First Name
Bastards Mr. Tournelle Lancaster (1), Mr. Sheridan Lancaster (1), and Miss Sophia Steele (1)	“Mr. [First Name]”, “Miss [First Name]”	“Mr. [First Name]”, “Miss [First Name]”





Sources

- [Susanne Dietze - British Forms of Address](#)
- [Reading the Regency: Forms of Address - Part 1](#)
- [Reading the Regency: Forms of Address - Part 2](#)
- [laura.chinet.com - Correct Forms of Address](#)
- [Heather Moller "What does Precedence even mean?"](#)

