

# Sir! Yes Sir!

## *Exploring, Developing, Implementing and Enforcing Protocol*

Presented by Lee Harrington – © PassionAndSoul.com

Everyone in the Dominant/submissive and Master/slave community seems to talk about protocol, but what is it exactly? Where does the line between “common sense” and “etiquette” stop, and protocol begin? We will look at what Protocol is in a D/s context, delve into terminology, and then examine formats of commonly recognized protocol systems and how these things develop in individual relationships and group dynamics. How does protocol change from public interactions to existing 24-7 in private dynamics? Once we have examined what protocol can be, we will look into how to further develop our chosen dynamics, implement them consistently, and then discuss the difference between enforcing protocol and punishment techniques. These concepts do NOT just apply to M/s and D/s dynamics- from active listening to self sabotage, this class will touch on communication and lifestyle skills for all types of relationships.

### **What is Protocol in a D/s context?**

By definition dictionary is “The strict adherence to proper etiquette” or “a system of rules that explain the correct conduct and procedures to be followed in formal situations”

In the BDSM community, **Etiquette**: common sense/what you should know.

**Protocol**: a formalization or formation of interaction systems for 2 or more individuals;  
**Algorithm** of what to do in different given situations.

The styles vary from person to person and group to group, but often tie into the idea of honoring and respecting the Dominant partner or the relationship through adherence to the systems prescribed by the relationship. AKA “how stuff is done here.”

The myth of the universal protocol system

*“Common sense ain’t all that common.”  
-attributed to Mark Twain*

### **WHY PROTOCOLS**

#### **What do you get out of Protocol?**

- Dominant psychology, submissive psychology      - Fun/silly      - Fantasy
- Bringing honor/joy      - Connection Building      - Strictness      - Lifestyle
- Formality      - Extension of the Dominant (you represent me)
- Dynamic establishment (professional, sexual, not sexual, service)
- Non-formal protocol concepts

**What is the Relationship?** Protocol does exist in many forms of relationship; everyone has certain social protocols for example:

- Relationship defining the Protocol, or Protocol defining the Relationship?
- If the protocol fails, does the relationship need to fail?

### **Styles of development:**

- Contracts, negotiation, setting down the law, mutual discussion, going with the flow, guess and check
- Evaluation processes set in. If a protocol does not work, does not mean all protocol cannot work.
- The flaws of formality- the search for loopholes
- Spirit of the law, letter of the law, or instilling a “what would they want in this situation” in the serving partner
- ...and don't design it if you don't care at all about it!

### Family/Group Protocol

Monogamy, Polyamory, Open, and other relationships

Household rules (this is how it is done around here)

Different protocols for different slaves?

Should there be all one set, or many?

What should \*your\* protocols include?

Styles of systems- are you hands on, hands off? Expect job done, or want it done the exact way you said?

### **Rules vs. Protocols**

- Have to/have not to vs. Systems of how to
- Personal rules for a submissive
- What behaviors are we trying to encourage?
- What behaviors are we trying to discourage?
- Behavior categories, or specific directives/protocols?

### **Whose rules are these anyway? Who do they really serve?**

### **Enforcement, Discipline, Punishment, Atonement, Absolution –**

**Enforce** a rule or protocol

**Discipline** to develop training

**Punish** for a behavior to show consequences

**Atone** to wipe your own slate clean

**Absolved** by another to have them wipe your slate clean, often offering restitution

- What does it serve? are you developing a cowering puppy or someone who fears sharing issues? Is no protocol being enforced?
- Defining consequences
- Discipline is not related directly to prior behaviors
- Object lessons: carrying and caring for a set of objects as a way of tying a partner into protocol or relationship
- What is their Love Language? Yours? Who are you really punishing?
- Pain training vs. physical punishment
- Verbal, mental and social punishments can be far more intense than physical

- Enforcement as “no, This way” or “good boy/girl, that is Exactly what I wanted.” Gives cues as to whether a person is doing it right, and correcting it as soon as possible - punishing or enforcing a week later, people may not remember what they did. End of day, especially if in public, is often appropriate (do you remember when you did this)
- Physical punishment for a particular thing (ie one stroke of the cane for each letter of the swear word. every time, regardless)
- Rubber band training, penny jar

### **The issues/perceptions behind dominants forgetting protocols**

- Did they matter in the first place?
- Do you care about the protocols?
- Do you care about the relationship?
- Keeping the protocols straight
- Set lists, or adding as acclimated?

Do your protocols get in the way of living the life of your dreams?

Who do these systems serve?

Why did you want protocols in the first place?

### **Styles of Protocol** (and in some cases, also styles of relationship)

- “Old Guard”
- New Guard
- Unguarded
- Master or Mistress/slave
- 24-7
- Military
- Edwardian/Victorian/Governess
- Organic (osmosis or slow mutual discovery, often not discussed formally)
- Teacher/student
- Leather
- West Coast Casual
- Swinger
- Pimp/whore
- ...and of course, so many others

**Public vs. private styles-** what is appropriate, in your life, where and around whom?

- In scene vs. day to day styles
- Protocol applies to the Dominant as well, if you don't respect and use the protocol, how can you expect it of others?
- When protocol gets in the way of doing what needs DONE
- Levels of protocol, or all one level?
- Protocols, Rules and complex lives (kids, jobs, and more)

### **Formal protocol concepts:**

- Sir, yes Sir- military formats of call and response
- Where to walk, how to walk (Edwardian etc style two steps back, one step to the side, leather style half step back and one step to the left)
- Where to stand, how to stand (king and I style, never above me, ever)
- Greetings (bows, kneeling, one knee, standing relaxed, chest to floor, curtsie, kisses of ring/hand/boot, eyes, verbal cues, collar systems)
- Physical Serving (food, task) Styles (concepts of anticipation of needs, one handed vs two handed passing, plate/glass/object kissing, door opening, how do YOU like this to be done Sir?- not assuming you know how your Dominant likes their coffee, boots blacked, rope coiled, etc)
- Partings (bows subtle or overt, kneeling, kissing boots, eye signals, verbal systems, collar systems)
- Address styles/Honorifics, Title, forms of address (Is forcing a slave to use a specific form of address on others consensual to those others?)
- Asking Permission to do things (what things, how is it asked at distance, what is reasonable and does NOT set people up to fail, better to ask forgiveness as modern logic to work around/retrain)
- Touch- people, objects, self
- Talking style- 3rd person only (slaves), ownership of name
- Props, power objects and signifiers (hankies, keys, leather bracelets, hats, leather, collars, body modifications, wardrobe, earned gear)
- Verbal Communication systems
- Silent Communication systems (hand signals- forces attentiveness even in crowds, eye contact)
- Dominants hands empty and available whenever possible
- More experienced lead conversations, seniority rules; if all other things equal, Top leads discussions
- If approaching another D/s couple, formal protocol asks that Dominants talk to Dominants before talking to submissives, and submissives talk to submissives before talking to Dominants (though this second seems to have morphed in the last decade, and many submissives talk to Dominants without knowing them)
- Automatic dismissal or wait to be dismissed
- Is furniture an option?
- The art of being on time

*“To me, those sets of rules read like transcripts of Miss Manners and a contract lawyer having phone sex. I'm guessing the inventors spend way too much time in fetish chat rooms W/where E/everyone T/types L/like T/this, because "protocol says" you have to address dominants in uppercase, and submissives in lowercase. I/i T/think T/these P/people N/need T/to G/get A/a L/life.”*

*– Mistress Matisse*

### **Non-formal?/Distance? Protocol concepts:**

- Daily check-ins
- Journals

- Dress, appearance (always clean, groomed, unless otherwise stated)
- Objects of trust/desire/connection: collars, shirts, hankies... what do they mean, are they "earned", concepts of rank
- Apologies (can a slave apologize if it infers free will?)
- Substance use and other habits
- Open times to talk
- Speech restrictions and any moment enforcement of silence; swearing, focused speech only

Does protocol come before or after "personal matters"?

Are there personal matters?

**Key concepts for communication in any relationship:**

- Active listening
- Active sharing
- Clarifying if need be and not jumping to conclusions
- Avoidance of passive-aggressive behavior/language
- Concepts of co-dependency
- Relationship sabotage
- Setting up self or others for failure
- Promotion of personal growth
- Stagnancy and evolution of relationship
- Lack of assumption

*"Blessed is that slave whom his MASTER will find at work when HE arrives"!  
Matt. 24:46*

Links I find interesting

<http://www.leathernroses.com/generalbdsm/missyoldguard.htm>

<http://www.leatherlords.com/protocol.htm>

Can I cry?: <http://www.angelfire.com/fl4/thecastle/resume.html>

<http://www.westom.com/leather/protocol.htm>

<http://www.tdl.com/~thawley/oldgd.html>

<http://www.domsufriends.com/cgi->

[local/wwwdir/db.cgi?db=res&uid=default&category=OLD+GUARD&view\\_records=View+Records](http://www.dir/db.cgi?db=res&uid=default&category=OLD+GUARD&view_records=View+Records)

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