



Medieval Combat Society

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COMBAT SAFETY POLICY

1) Purpose and Scope of the Combat Safety Policy

- a) Combat represents one of the most dangerous activities undertaken by the Society.
- b) It is therefore desirable to hold a set of safety rules and guidelines which are specific to this activity in addition to The Societies general safety rules.
- c) The Combat Safety Policy consists of a set of rules which The Society will follow with regard to the safety and conduct of combat activities.

2) General Combat Rules

- a) Any non-junior members of The Society may participate in full contact combat or training. Junior members of The Society may take part in non-contact combat training under parental / legal guardian supervision. All participants must receive permission to take part from The Society's Combat Master.
- b) In addition to the above requirements to participate in any combat activity where the public is present members must have also demonstrated a basic level of skill by completing a Safety Test. This test will be set and administered by the Combat Master.

3) Arena Layout

- a) Combat activities where members of the public are present shall take place in an arena area surrounded by a double rope with a horizontal gap of at least 1.8m between the two ropes.
- b) The size of the combat arena area within the inner ropes will be sufficient to contain two fighters engaged in combat and a marshal. It is recommended that the area be at least 25m² but may be less if the Marshal and Combat Master agree.

4) Conduct of Combat Activities

- a) All combat activities must take place under the direct supervision of the Combat Master, the Knights Marshal or another marshal appointed by one of them.
- b) During a combat activity, the word of the Combat Master, Knights Marshall or any other Marshall on the field is law on all matters relating to combat and must be obeyed without question at all times.
- c) Combatants should only use weapons with which they and their opponent have trained with and are fully familiar with.
- d) The attacker must possess the ability to turn the sword to a flat edge in the imminent event of contact with his opponent's body.
- e) Blows should never be delivered to unprotected parts of the body, especially where bones come close to the surface skin, e.g. elbows, knees, collarbones, wrists etc.
- f) Care must be taken not to raise shields or other weapons directly towards the opponent's face.
- g) At a cry of "HOLD" issued by any person for any reason all combat activities must be stopped immediately. Even if the reason for the cry is not apparent.

- h) Members of The Society will not participate in crowd charges at any event for any reason.

5) Chivalry and Attitude to Combat Activities

- a) Fighters must at all times be fully aware of their actions and the environment in which they are fighting.
- b) Anger, lack of consideration, an excessively competitive or aggressive attitude (other than that simulated) or an uncontrollable urge to “win regardless” is to be avoided.
- c) Fights should, where possible be discussed in advance with your opponent, particularly if you are using one of the less common weapons. It is also desirable that after combat a discussion take place to identify where any improvements can be made.
- d) Fighters should be able to recognise their opponent’s limitations and work within them.
- e) Steam rolling a less experienced combatant should be avoided as this provides no real victory and is of no learning value to either participant.
- f) Every participant in an event should set out with the intention of providing their opponent a safe and enjoyable combat.
- g) It is considered that every participant in any activity should attempt to make that activity as enjoyable as and safe as possible, both for themselves, their opponent and the audience.

6) Marshals

- a) Marshals will usually wear light armour, for their own protection while still allowing for mobility although they are not required to do so. In addition, a marshal will carry a staff, or pole, or similar, but usually no other sort of weapon.
- b) Any weapons and armour carried by a Marshal are for their own protection, and they are strictly non-combatant. Attacking a Marshal is a very serious offence unless agreed as part of the show.
- c) The Marshals’ decisions are final, and require mandatory obedience. On the field, they are final arbiter and judge of conduct. Regardless of whether you agree with any decision, accept it. You will have your chance to dispute it later. If you disagree with the decision of a Marshal, do not engage them in a full-scale argument on the field. Contain yourself until after the battle. If you are still aggrieved after the battle find the Combat Master. Discuss the problem with them. Accept that they are responsible for what happens on the field, and that their decision is completely final. Be aware that no one is perfect and educating combatants and marshals alike is an on-going process.
- d) If any Marshal asks for your help, regardless of what you are doing, go to their aid as quickly as possible. If a Marshal appears to be having difficulties, particularly with another combatant, be ready to offer your help. Tread carefully though if there is some sort of disagreement going on. Remember it is not a question of right or wrong, the Marshal’s decision is final.
- e) Marshals are encouraged to be pro-active. We would all like to be left alone to get on with it, but the consequences of ignoring problems, for the sake of a quiet life, are extremely serious. A marshal turning a blind eye will have to answer to their conscience when a preventable injury occurs.
- f) Marshals may handle a situation in a number of ways, ranging from a quiet word, during a lull in fighting, to instructions shouted during a melee, to expelling a persistent offender or dangerous combatant from the field.
- g) The Combat Master will if necessary compile a list of people who adopt habits generally considered to be dangerous or cheating. In addition, a Marshal sending an individual off the field, for behaviour that is persistently dangerous or cheating, will issue the individual with a warning note. If three notes are issued in one year, a one-year ban from the field is imposed.

7) Bladed Weapon Technique: The FAST System (Fast Accurate Safe Technique)

- a) The Society's fighting technique only allows for five recognised blows. All other attacks must be avoided. All blows should land within 5cm of their intended target. These blows are as follows
 - i) A head blow: delivered as a downward stroke onto the helm within 22 degrees either side of an imaginary centreline from the middle of the helm.
 - ii) A blow to the upper arm: delivered as a downward angled stroke at 30 degrees to the bicep.
 - iii) A blow to the upper or lower leg: delivered as a downward angled stroke at 45 degrees to the mid-thigh or the mid-calf.
 - iv) A strike to the back: delivered with the flat of the sword to the point below the shoulder blades and above the kidneys, or to the buttocks / upper thigh or to the upper third of the helm. This blow should not be used on an opponent already engaged in combat with another participant. This blow may not be used without pre-arrangement with the opponent.
 - v) A shield strike: delivered as a direct blow to an opponent's shield or, if fully armoured the opponent's chest.
- b) Weapons should travel at least 1 meter to 'telegraph' the blow before impact. (2 metres is preferable)
- c) Thrusts with bladed weapons are not permitted.

8) Pole Weapon Technique

- a) Use of an over-hand grip is the preferred technique of the Society for the use of pole weapons. In this grip both hands are used to hold the weapon over the shaft, palms down. In this grip the pole cannot easily be knocked up out of the grip, only down. The under-hand grip where the front hand cups the weapon from below should be avoided as only the thumb prevents the pole from being knocked up.
- b) Blows are delivered as per the FAST system however particular care must be taken with regard to the trust that the weapon is kept as low as possible.
- c) During a thrust, or any other movement, both hands must remain firmly gripped on the pole. Sliding the pole through the front hand during a thrust (also called sliding) or at the end of a thrust (sometimes called cueing) must not be used.
- d) The grip on the pole may be changed when the pole is at rest, between a broad defensive grip and shorter attacking grip. However, the grip on the pole must always be at least as wide apart as the user's shoulders. That is to say, the arms should be parallel or 'A' shaped, never 'V' shaped.
- e) Generally, a pole weapon is held pointing diagonally downwards during a block. The front hand should be a little above waist height, back hand at head height. Against thrusts, the best defensive movement, particularly for high blows, keeps the front elbow tucked firmly against the ribs; the back hand then rolls the pole over the head, pivoting around the front elbow. This motion may at first seem awkward, but it protects both the elbow and the face from deflected blows. It also prevents the blow being knocked up into a neighbouring combatants face. Finally, it provides a strong block, which creates better opportunities for a riposte.

9) Other Weapons

- a) Most short blunt force weapons will follow similar techniques to swords, with the caveat that these weapons are not balanced and are therefore much harder to pull, and a corresponding amount of common sense and caution should be used.
- b) Some Zweihanders, Bardisches, long hafted Axes and the like use a combination of techniques, some similar to sword techniques, some similar to pole techniques, some unique to that type of weapon. However, these are weapons for experienced combatants who will have trained to understand which safety guidelines apply to their weapon, and what else constitutes safe technique.