



Medieval Combat Society

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ARCHERY SAFETY POLICY

1) Purpose and Scope of the Archery Safety Policy

- a) Archery 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 Archery Safety Policy consists of a set of rules which The Society will follow with regard to the safety and conduct of archery activities.

2) General Archery Rules

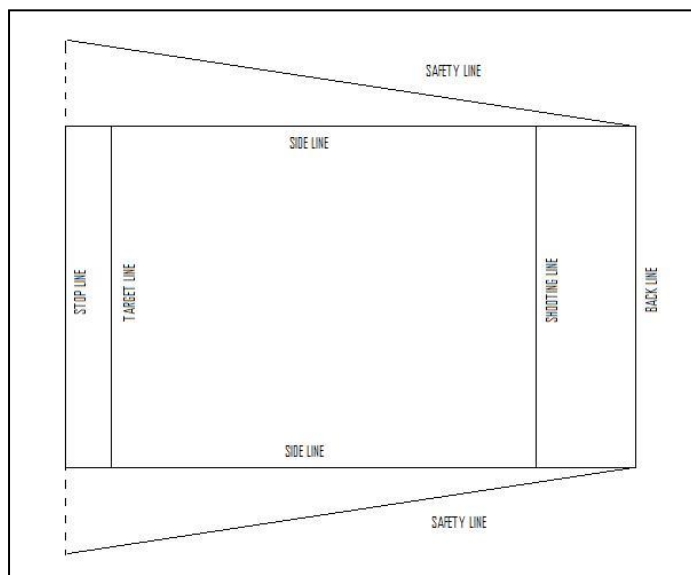
- a) Members of The Society may take part in archery activities as follows
 - i) Junior members aged 4 or over may take part in archery training where the public is not present
 - ii) Junior members aged 6 or over may take part in archery training where the public is present
 - iii) Junior members aged 8 or over may take part in archery training and displays
 - iv) All non-junior members may take part in any archery activity including combat archery and battles.
 - v) All participants must receive permission to take part from The Society's Archery Master.
- b) In addition to the above requirements to participate in any archery activity where the public is present members must have also demonstrated a basic level of skill by completing The Societies Archery Safety Test. To pass this test the member must demonstrate the ability to shoot 6 arrows, from a range of at least 15' (10' for junior members), all of which must hit within the diameter of a standard 60cm target face, in under one minute while using safe technique and showing due awareness. The Society's Archery Master may request any member repeat this test at any time as a demonstration of continued competence.
- c) Archers wishing to take part in an event as a Skirmisher (an archer who will also fight hand to hand) must also obtain the permission of The Societies Combat Master and observe all rules related to combat as well as to archery.
- d) Archers should only use weapons with which they have trained with and are fully familiar with.
- e) All arrows will be checked on a regular basis; any found with defects will be discarded and if beyond repair broken to avoid accidental use. This check must include the condition and presence of nocks, points and fletching.
- f) All bows will be checked on a regular basis for cracking or twisting and that nocks and grips (if present) are sound. If a bow is found to be defective it must be repaired or retired. If in any doubt have it checked by the Archery Master before any further use.
- g) All bowstrings are to be checked before use any found to be defective or frayed must be replaced.
- h) Bows must not be drawn back further than the draw length for which they were constructed. Overdrawing can break the bow and injure the shooter in the process.
- i) Bows must not be drawn unless there is an arrow on them, and bowstrings must not be released without an arrow on them; this is known as dry shooting and can result in bow damage.
- j) Members must not shoot in costumes that could cause a danger when shooting. Particular examples of

this are the wearing of helms with restrictive vision and costumes with tippets or liripipes which could tangle in a bowstring.

- k) Hair which is long enough to be tied back must be, or otherwise contained within an appropriate head covering, when shooting to ensure that it cannot become tangled / trapped by the bowstring.
- l) Although no evidence exists for the use of bracers, shooting gloves or tabs in the 14th Century these items *may* be used if required in the interests of safety. Members are advised that a shooting glove is considered more appropriate than a tab as these are shown in 15th Century art.
- m) Sharp and Blunt arrows must not be stored or carried together. Blunt arrows should never be used for target shooting due to the danger from rebounds. It goes without saying that sharp arrows should never be used for combat.
- n) Society equipment including bows, arrows, nets, targets and target stands should be inspected for damage before and after use. Any defects must be reported to the Archery Master.

3) Range Layout

- a) The range for archery displays and practice shall be laid out as follows.
- b) A target line upon which the bosses are placed. The width of this line must allow a gap of at least 2 yards to exist between the side line (qv) and the edge of the boss nearest to that line on each side of the range and a gap of at least 1 yard to exist between each boss.
- c) A shooting line a minimum of 15 yards in front of the target line. This line must have a minimum width of 1½ yards *per archer in the front rank* plus 3 yards or the width of the target line whichever is greater.
- d) A back line a minimum of 5 yards behind the shooting line as wide as the shooting line or target line whichever is greater.
- e) A stop line 1½ yards behind the target line as wide as the shooting line or target line whichever is greater.
- f) Two side lines perpendicular to and between the back line and the stop line. As these lines mark the side of the range they must be at least as wide apart as the width of shooting line or target line whichever is greater.
- g) Two safety lines extending from the ends of the back line towards the stop line at an angle of 30° outwards from the side lines.



NB. In archery terms “forward of” and “behind” any line is taken relative to the centre of the range, hence the target line is forward of the shooting line and the shooting line is forward of the target line. The stop line is behind the target line and the back line is behind the shooting line.

- h) Behind the stop line at least one of the following must exist.
 - i) A solid object (wall, earth bank etc.) at least 10' high
 - ii) An archery catch net at least 10' high and an overshoot area of at least ½ the distance from the target line to the shooting line.
 - iii) An overshoot area of at least 3 times the distance from the target line to the shooting line.
- i) Any overshoot area must be clearly marked as a “no access” area. When members of the public are present the overshoot must be double roped.
- j) If practicable, archery catch nets should be placed along the side lines from the stop line to the target line.
- k) All targets will be set up to ensure that no person can be accidentally hit by a stray arrow or is at risk of being hit by a rebound.
- l) When members of public are present the safety lines and back line must be double roped. Spectators may stand behind these lines only. (Never behind the stop line).

4) Conduct of Archery Activities

- a) The final decision as to the suitability of any person to take part in archery activities and the suitability of a location for archery activities to take place rests with The Society’s Archery Master.
- b) All archery activities must take place under the direct supervision of the Archery Master or a Line Captain appointed by him.
- c) During an archery activity, The Archery Master or Line Captain on the fields word is law on all matters relating to combat and must be obeyed without question at all times.
- d) Shooting must take place from the shooting line only.
- e) Archers must remain between the shooting line and back line at all times when shooting is taking place. Never shoot an arrow unless you are positive that no one is in front of you or behind the target. Never stand in front of a bow whilst it is being shot even if you are to one side of the shooter.
- f) If it is necessary for archers to shoot at different ranges the targets should be brought forward of the target line. Archers should not be moved forward of the shooting line.
- g) Arrows must only be nocked when at the shooting line and with the bow facing the target line.
- h) Commands used on a MCS range or battle shoot shall be as follows.
 - i) “FAST” – Hold fast, stop shooting, no further shooting is allowed until a further command is given. Under no circumstances must an arrow be loosed after the FAST command is given. If you have an arrow on your bow do not shoot and allow the bow to come down.
 - j) “ARCHERS READY” – Check that the range is clear and prepare to shoot. Never move forward of the shooting line once this command has been given.
 - k) “COME DOWN” – Under control, reduce tension on the bow string without releasing any nocked arrow. Lower the bow to point towards the ground and then allow any nocked arrow to fall from the bow.
 - l) “NOCK” – Place an arrow on the string, select a target and prepare to shoot. Do not draw your bow on the command to NOCK as on a battlefield there will probably be arrows landing around you while the NOCK command is given. Some archery captains use the command MARK in place of NOCK.
 - m) “DRAW” – Draw your bow and take aim. Do not release the arrow until the command LOOSE.
 - n) “LOOSE” – Take your shot and release the arrow. If you are not ready to shoot when the LOOSE command is given allow the bow to come down and wait for the next set of commands. Do not release the arrow late.
 - o) “COLLECT SHAFTS” – Move down the range to the target line and recover your arrows. Never move forward of the shooting line until this command is given.
 - p) “WARE ARROWS” – A battlefield command to indicate that arrows are approaching. Lower your eyes

and brace yourself in case you are hit. Under no circumstances look up to watch the arrows.

- q) Only the Archery Master or Line Captain should issue commands with the exception of “FAST” or “WARE ARROWS” which should be used by any person at any time if a potential danger is perceived.
- r) At a cry of “FAST” issued by any person for any reason all archery activities must be stopped immediately, even if the reason for the cry is not apparent.
- s) Arrows which fall from the bow or are otherwise miss-shot which land in front of the shooting line must not be recovered while shooting is taken place and should be considered as shot.
- t) When collecting arrows do not run towards the targets, always walk. Remember that arrows are sticking out of the target and possibly the ground and can cause injury.
- u) When pulling arrows out of the target archers must stand to one side of the target and insure no one is directly in front of the target. Arrows can be as dangerous coming out of the boss as they were going in.
- v) Arrow points detached in a target should be recovered immediately using a pile pusher. If this is not possible the impact point should be marked and the point recovered as soon as is realistically possible. Points left in a boss create a rebound hazard.

5) Safe Technique and Attitude to Archery Activities

- a) Archers must at all times be fully aware of their actions and the environment in which they are shooting.
- b) Never point a bow with a nocked sharp arrow at another person. It is only acceptable to shoot at a person for display purposes if the target is suitably armoured and then only using suitable equipment including blunt, slow fletched arrows.
- c) An arrow must never be shot straight up into the air. As what goes up must come down, you risk hitting yourself or another person on the shooting line.
- d) Never shoot an arrow off into the distance if you cannot see where it will land, again there is the possibility of hitting another person.
- e) Bows should be drawn upwards using the V-draw technique. The T-draw is acceptable on the grounds of safety but is not appropriate for historical longbow shooting. The kyudo draw is specifically prohibited due to the danger of a bad loose releasing an arrow upwards.
- f) Archers should only use the Mediterranean (3 finger split) release. Flemish (2 finger) and Mongolian (Thumb) draws are not suitable due to their inherent lack of control.
- g) When drawing a bow an archer must take no action or use any technique which could cause an arrow, if accidentally released, to travel beyond the stop line or side lines.
- h) In order to maintain control a smooth draw must be used at all times. Even when speed shooting “snap” or “snatch” draws should not be used.
- i) Care must be taken not to allow an arrow to be drawn “inside” of the bow to prevent the possibility of the arrow point contacting the archers bow hand (causing injury) or the bow (causing severe equipment damage *and* injury).
- j) It is considered that every participant in any activity should attempt to make that activity as enjoyable as possible, both for themselves and all other participants without taking any action that would prejudice their safety.

6) Have-A-Go Archery

- a) Members of the public may not enter the range or shoot except at a specifically arranged have-a-go archery session.
- b) No member shall assist with a have-a-go archery session without the express permission of the Archery Master.
- c) Members must complete a specific Society training session on have-a-go archery before they may be

considered to assist with such a session. The Society's Archery Master may request any member to repeat this training at any time as required for continued competence.

- d) During have-a-go sessions appropriate safety equipment (tabs, bracers and hair bands) should be available for use by the public if required.
- e) Only approved training bows may be used for have-a-go archery. Under no circumstances should members' personal equipment be used by members of the public.