

Empire of Medieval Pursuits

Rules for Fencing Combat

October 2014

Introduction:

These rules are meant to establish a minimum set of standards for basic steel Combat within the Empire of Medieval Pursuits. While these rules are set to help promote safe steel combat, they do not take away from common sense, judgment and individual concern for the safety of the participants involved in this activity. It should be standard practice to always be aware of one's personal safety and never commit to an action that will knowingly compromise the safety of one's opponent. Further these rules are designed to augment foundational theories of fence. The Empire encourages practitioners to study the manuals, period sources, and from knowledgeable citizens, to help rediscover western martial traditions.

Minimum Armor Standards:

- A standard three weapons mask, its equivalent, or better must be worn. The face mask must be capable of passing a 12 Kg pressure test administered by a standard 12K mask tester without deforming, spreading apart or significantly flexing. The face must be covered by either 12 Kg mesh (standard three weapons mask mesh), its equivalent or better. Perforated metal may also be used. Openings in mesh shall be no larger than 1/8" or 3mm wide. Perforated metal shall have a minimum offset of 3/16" or 5mm. All masks or helmets must be in good repair with no significant rust, dents, mesh that has been stressed apart, or broken weld points, etc.
- A heavy leather gorget, its equivalent or better must be worn. The gorget shall at a minimum be constructed from untreated heavy leather at least ¼ inch thick, the equivalent, or superior materials such as ABS plastic, Kydex plastic, aluminum, or steel.
- Men must wear a rigid male groin protector and women must wear a form of female groin protection.
- The torso must be covered by a gambeson or fencing jacket with padding equivalent of 3/8 inch closed cell foam, quilted material of enough bulk to provide protection from the impact of EMP legal steel weapons.

- Hands must be covered by a minimum of leather dueling gloves that extend at least 2in beyond the wrist.

Weapon Standards:

- All weapons shall be free of rust without any sharp edges or points. Any blade tip smaller than 1/3rd inch shall have their ends blunted with heavy leather, plastic fencing blunts, or rubber rabbit blunts. Blunts shall be held onto the blade with several wrappings of electrical or equivalent tape. They shall have no sharp edges and the weapons shall be free of deep gouges or burrs; these may be sanded or filed off in order to return a weapon to an allowed safe condition so long as it does not thin or reduce the profile of the sword.
- A sharp sword or dagger blade may not have the edges ground off in an attempt to create a blunt sword for use in steel combat. All blades must be forged as blunted training to be legal in EMP Steel combat.
- Blades shall not be modified in any manner that changes their temper such as heating them up and re-forging them. Tangs may be modified and welded so long as care is taken to not alter the temper of the blade. Blades shall not be cut down because of the dangers of changing the temper or flexibility of the blades.
- Examples of acceptable blades include Practical Hanwei series, Tinker blunted lines, and Del Tin blunted lines.
- Capes or cloaks used for parrying shall be in good repair with no un-mended rips or holes. Hard or soft weights, such as steel, lead or sand, may not be used to increase the weight or spread of a cape or cloak. Light items such as rope, tennis or racket balls, or other non rigid material may be used in the hem so long as it does not dangerously increase the weight and turning the cloak or cape into a flail.
- Bucklers, shields, targes or targets may be made from wood, aluminum, steel, heavy plastic, leather and equivalent or superior materials.

- Rigid parrying only devices such as sword sheathes, pewter mugs, rubber chickens, etc. may also be used as parry only devices.

- Foils, Epees, and sport saber blades and other sport fencing blades are not allowed in EMP steel combat due to the higher demand on the weapons in historical fencing environment compared to the sport fencing environment.

- Any weapon or weapon combination may fence against any other weapon or weapon combination of the same style. For example, it is fine for single sword to go up against sword and dagger, duel swords, sword and buckler, etc. Different realms of Fencing should not however cross (longsword vs rapier for example).

Duelist Decorum:

- Be excellent to each other.

- Cordial behavior shall be maintained at all times. Displays of temper are highly frowned upon.

- Control means you do not injure your opponent's with wild or overly hard thrusts and cuts. Your opponent should be able to feel a good thrust or cut, but they should not be hard enough to injure your opponent. Maintain control of your weapon attacks at all times.

- The acknowledgement of blows shall be based upon the honor system. If you have been properly struck with a thrust or a cut you are honor bound to make it known. It is up to the individuals fencing to correctly judge and acknowledge all blows given and received unless otherwise agreed upon.

- Upon hearing the call of "HOLD" all fighting shall IMMEDIATELY stop. A combatant may call "HOLD" for any reason (ie: personal armor failure, perceived danger), but in doing so places himself at the mercy of his opponent. By stopping the combat he is in effect yielding and it is up to the discretion of his opponent to choose whether or not to resume the contest.

- A fighter shall not enter the lists or participate in any form of EMP steel combat while impaired by alcohol or drugs (including, but not limited to: drugs prescribed by a licensed health care provider, over the counter medications, and illegal controlled substances.)

- A fighter shall not strike a helpless opponent beyond a touch.

Attacks, thrusts, strikes, and blows:

- Thrusts may be executed with or without a lunge and may be done with or without a step. The recipient must call any thrust that they feel and is within measure.

- Cuts shall be delivered with enough force to be felt, but not enough to injure. The recipient must call any cut that they feel. True cuts that are percussive strikes may be delivered with the front or back edge of the blade but shall be done with control. Cuts may come from above, below or from either side. Full force hacks that would require armor to protect you from injury are a forbidden form of attack.

- Tip cuts are an acknowledged attack, especially to the head.

- Draw cuts are also an allowed form of attack if they use at least one third of the length of the blade.

- You must be in control of yourself and your weapon at all times. While accidents do happen, everyone should fence in a manner that is safe for themselves and their opponent.

- Attacks may be parried or redirected with a weapon, a parrying device such as a shield or a cloak, or you're offhand.

- Disarms are allowed and do not stop the action of a fight. If your opponent drops his sword or you take it from him by grasping the blade or the hilt of your opponent's sword you may continue to attack them. If grappling rule is in effect, this will usually start a wrestling match.

- All thrusts and strikes are to be acknowledged as if one is completely unarmored and wearing period clothes. Armor does not count as armor worn unless agreed upon by tournament rules or individual agreement.
- Valid target areas shall be the whole body.
- The art of “fence” is to defend oneself, thus a victory occurs when you pass your opponents defense and score 3 blow’s.

Rules for Rapier Fencing:

- The rapier is primarily a thrusting weapon. Upon contact with the opponent, the blade must make hard enough contact to bend the blade, but not so hard that you injure your opponent.
- Tips cuts will be an allowed form of attack, as will draw cuts. Hacks or chops may be executed, but they must be controlled and land with no more force than that of a good thrust.
- Strikes with the basket, cross guard or pommel of the sword, or other areas or items not specifically intended for safe striking are not allowed.
- The dagger may be used to thrust, or cut in the same manner as the rapier.
- Bucklers, shields, targes or targets may be used to press an opponent’s weapons or body parts. Quickly placing your shield on your opponent’s body is not considered a punch so long as the energy of your motion is not transferred to your opponent’s body. Driving back your opponent with a heavy shield strike is not allowed, but placing the shield and then pushing is.

- Grappling is not allowed under normal rapier conditions, participants may agree to grapple if they wish.

Rules for Small Sword Fencing:

- Double Wide epees and Musketeer blades are acceptable for smallsword fencing. The length of the blades shall be from 29 inches to 35 inches in length with a standard length of 32 inches. The weapon weighs an average of one to one and a half pounds. The grip length is about three and a half to four inches long, or about the same length as the average width of your hand. The guard generally consists of a small plate style cup or shell. A guard usually has either one or two shells with a figure 8 style shell being very common. The most common guards will have a cup and two short arms or cross that may or may not have two small finger rings in-between the shell and may or may not have a D-style knuckle guard. Any guard that is similar to or based off an historical example will be allowed.
- The only attacks allowed are the thrust. No percussive, tip or draw cuts are allowed.
- Blade grabbing and grappling are not allowed.
- No off hand parrying devices are allowed. Defense shall only be done with the sword. Parrying with the offhand is allowed, though discouraged. If the offhand is used to parry an attack and the hand gets stabbed or the blade slides at least one third of the length of the blade, then it is considered a first blood wound that ends the match.
- Guards must not allow sword points to pass through holes or complex hilts where they may be trapped and broken.

Rules for Side and Arming Sword Fencing:

- Arming sword blades when held at a rest position, tips should rest near the ankle of the wielder. They should be at least an inch wide and have their edges sufficiently blunted. A rubber tip is recommended but not required if the tips are wider than a 1/3rd of an inch. Army swords should also have proper cross guard and be a single handed sword.
- Rigid chest protection must be worn when fencing with Side and Arming swords, these blades are rigid and do not flex like a Rapier would. Acceptable protection includes but is not limited to, chain hauberk's, rigid plastic fencing armor worn under jacket, and cuirass of leather or metal.
- Bucklers, shields, targes or targets may be used to strike the opponent's mask/helm and count as a blow towards the tell.
- Rigid hand protection is required for using an Arming Sword or Side Swords, unless the hilt system includes coverage for the length of the grip. There must be a minimum bar from cross to pommel, in which cases a dueling glove is sufficient,
- Grappling is allowed for this style of fencing unless agreed otherwise by participants or tournament rules.
- Knee and elbow protection is advised but not required.

Rules for Long Sword Fencing:

- Longswords when held tip down at the wielders feet, should have their pommels rest between their sternum and their chin. Longswords should be handled comfortably in two hands, but able to be used with one.
- Rigid chest protection must be worn when fencing with long swords, these blades are rigid and do not flex like a Rapier would. Acceptable protection includes but is not limited to, chain hauberk's, rigid plastic fencing armor worn under jacket, and cuirass of leather or metal.
- Hands, knees, and elbows must be covered and protected by rigid material.
- Grappling is allowed for this style of fencing unless agreed otherwise by participants or tournament rules. Pommel and guards trikes to the helm will count towards the tell

- Halfswording is allowed in minimal use, a fight may not begin with halfswording. A grapple or initiated grapple maneuver are the only permissible halfswording techniques in Long Sword fencing.

- Federschwert style blades are allowed in Long Sword fencing but may only be used against other Federschwert blades

Grappling:

- For safety, grappling must be limited in its nature. Not all forms of grappling can be done safely such as full throws that take an opponent completely off his feet and slam him to the ground may not be performed. Any action that has the potential to harm or destroy someone's joints, such as a counter joint attack may not be employed. No full throws or joint locks may be used.

- Grabbing the blade of your opponent is allowed whether grappling is in effect or not. If the blade slips through your hand in a manner that would allow for a cut then it shall be counted as a blow.

- Unarmed striking, such as punching, chopping, palm strikes, kicking, head butting, elbowing or kneeing an opponent are disallowed.

- Trips and sweeps that do not attack an opponent's knees or other joints may be used. Any take downs or throws must be done with control. If you use a throw or a takedown, it must be executed so you can control the fall all the way to the ground. Do not bounce your opponent's head off the ground or execute a throw that will land him on his head or his neck. Do not use take downs on rocky ground or hard surfaces such as cement.

- A grappling match ends when one opponent has been taken to the ground or yields by either verbally or physically tapping out.