

INTRODUCTION

The aim is to set out rules and standards for harnischfechten. The intention of harnischfechten is to reproduce historically accurate fighting in historically accurate armour in a way that is safe for modern participant.

This document aims to give a better understanding and outline information of intergroup Harnischfechten rules.

Context of examples given below do not limit the scope of the rules. It is simply provided to give a better understanding. Ideally all involved should all know what is acceptable of them and what is not.

Should anyone not understand, then they should not be taking part in any intergroup combat events until they understand the requirement for the event, they are about to partake in.

While the primary focus is points based combat, the rules will work equally for larger scale events.

This document has been compiled from input from various other documents and from reference materials from other groups and historical sources. Specific sources will be listed at the end of the document. We thank all these who put these documents out and we offer full credit for all that we have taken on board, even though it may not be directly referenced. Yes, we copied and pasted.

EQUIPMENT

In all cases the fighter will present armour befitting the time period they are representing.

In all cases safety will be placed above accuracy. The balance between these two ideals will be at the sole discretions of the Group Marshal.

Combatants will have armour that fits well, functions properly and safely for the wearer, and is well maintained. Rusty steel is not well-maintained and does not fit the ideal of suitable display.

The regulations for a deed's armour and weapons, will be announced in advance.

Historically consistent armour will most likely be treated as such. Safety equipment, not being

consistent with historical armour, will generally not count as armour with respect to fair blows.

- Helmet grills.
- Hidden additional plates.

In every case, the final decision about suitability of armour for safety and authenticity is that of the marshal.

Ideally your harness should be historically located between 1375 and 1500. Harness outside of that time is allowed, but development in armour protection can make such harnesses unbalances in our combat simulation. Harness should also be geographically coherent and from an approximately 20 year time frame.

Armour Categories

Unprotected

This is anything (including required modern equipment that protects gaps in a combatant's armour) that does not fall into the other armour categories and includes soft leather and lightly padded and unpadded cloth. It also specifically includes perforated steel plate (such as used in a "Tindall hat" fencing mask). Any blow struck against an unprotected target is a fair blow.

Light Armor

This is mail (which, being the default exemplar, is often used as a shorthand term for the category), properly hardened leather, properly constructed padded garments and other armours. Unless otherwise specified, Light Armor is proof against cuts but vulnerable to thrusts.

Heavy Armor

This is steel or iron plate, whether hardened or not. Armor of small plates, properly overlapped, can also count as Heavy (ie brigandines). Unless otherwise specified, Heavy Armor is proof against most blows. See fair blows.

Armour Requirements

Head and Face

Face plates should fully enclose the face so as not to allow the minimum weapons edge through. A 10mm maximum opening is required.

- Helmets must be 2mm mild steel or equivalent.
- Helmets must have the minimum of 10mm close cell foam padding or historical equivalent padding.
- Multipart helmet such as Sallet or Kettles with bevor must be fitted so as not to allow penetration between the join.
- Mesh grills used here will be allowed for safety purposes but will count as unprotected for Fair Blows. The grill must be securely fixed to the helmet. Note a 'colander' style visor is a form of historical visor and NOT considered mesh.

Throat and Neck

To ensure the protection of the throat and neck a combatant must have one or a combination of the following:

- Stiff leather or plate gorget with padding.
- Mail standard (with rigid throat plate) or hidden solid plate throat protection.
- Padded mail aventail.
- Fully enclosed neck and helmet. Examples such as a Great Helm, Great Bascinet.

Body/Torso

A combatant will have an arming doublet with enclosed armscyres with one or a combination of the following:

- A breastplate covering the front of the torso.
- A cuirass covering the front and back of the torso.
- A cote-of-plates or brigandine of historical materials.
- A mail shirt or voiders and skirt of mail are strongly recommended.
- Testicles must be protected to a standard equivalent to that provided by an athletic cup, secured by straps, or worn in a supporter or fighting garment designed to hold the protection in place.

Hands, Arms and Legs

- The hands must be covered by steel gantlets of appropriate historical style. 'clamshell' gauntlets are recommended.
- Elbows must be covered by a steel couer.
- Arms should be covered by appropriate lower cannons.
- Shoulders and upper arms will be covered by either/combination of mail and/or appropriate spaulders/pauldrons.
- Knees shall be covered by a steel poleyn.
- An appropriate cuisse will be worn. Greaves or schynbalds will also be worn.
- Sabatons are recommended.
- Historical style shoes should be worn. For training purposes, modern footwear is acceptable.

Weapon Requirements

In bouts, participants must only use approved weapons. Whilst historical accuracy is a priority. In regards to weapons it is where the most leeway is granted. All weapons should strive to be safe first and in accordance with requirements below. After that is achieved improvements to appearance or accuracy can be made so far as it does not compromise the safety.

Poleaxe

The poleaxe must use an appropriately sized shaft (around 6 feet) as well as having safety tips at both ends and an approved croix. The Purpleheart 'rubber head polehammer' is the default and approved pollaxe head. Other types of head may be used at the marshal and combatants agreement. A rattan haft is recommended.

Spear

A spear must be a timber or rattan dowel no less than 25mm in diameter and at least 2 meters in length. Spears/pikes/lances over 3 metres are not allowed. Spears must have a safe tip to represent a spear head.

Longsword

A wooden and synthetic sword is recommended. Steel swords may be used as long as they have sufficient stiffness in the blade to perform common techniques. Regular HEMA training sord ('feders') are not allowed. Any sword point that can enter a 10mm visor must have a rubber or leather safety tip.

Dagger

Wooded dagger simulators are recommended. Steel training daggers may be used with agreement. Any point that can enter a 10mm visor must have a rubber or leather safety tip.

Squires List

The 'Squire's List' is for those beginners that may be less experienced and/or less well-equipped participants wherein the armour requirements are relaxed or even mandated at a lesser level.

In a Squires List, fighters shall have:

- Steel helm that complies with the standard armour requirements.
- Gauntlets. Plastic HEMA gauntlets may be used. Steel gauntlets are recommended.
- Torso and arms must have an arming doublet as minimum. HEMA Jackets are allowed for absolute beginners.
- Torso must also have either a breast plate or cote of plates.
- A mail shirt is recommended.
- Appropriate 'personal' protection is required.
- Rigid elbow and knee protection is recommended.

The purposes of the Squire's List is to provide free-play opportunities for people who are wanting to try out Harnischfechten or are in the process of getting their harness together.

Weapons and their effects are the same as the standard combat conventions.

Armour and weapon requirements can be modified from this list, but the safety of combatants must be the primary consideration. For example, a HEMA fencing mask maybe allowed in a ½ sword only combat.

COMBAT

The rules for combat as given below will be applied to any competitive bout where participants are wearing armour.

Victory Conditions

- First to score the agreed number of fair blows or points.
- Correctly executing a throw or lock fully or to 'Set' as determined before the bout.
- Showing the Gate – being driven out of the field through the gates.
- Being knocked down by a blow (touching the ground with anything except your feet, bracing with a weapon does not count).

Fair Blows

Each event may set a number of blows to be achieved to win a bout. Generally, this will be set to between two (2) and five (5) fair blows

Each blow should have both form and clear intent. The number of 'fair blows' is meant to represent the ability to take some combat damage before being disabled and unable to continue. A 'fair blow' is one which can score against the armour category against which it is targeted. These blows are struck with controlled level of force.

Combatants must be aware of and control the levels of power they are using. A calibration exercise (ie – numbers test) is recommended before extensive free-play is undertaken. It also must be acknowledged that in recreating historical combat, some levels of speed and aggression is required, however, combatants must also constantly demonstrate awareness and control of the combat.

This is the default scoring requirements. It may be varied for specific events.

Weapon	Blow	Armour			Notes
		Unprotected	Light	Heavy	
Dagger	Thrust	Yes	Yes	No	Light requires supported thrust
	Cut	Yes	No	No	
	Thrust	Yes	Yes	No	Light requires supported thrust
Sword	Cut	Yes	No	No	
	Mordschlag	Yes	Yes	Yes	Blow to heavy armour must be to the helm.
Spear/lance	Thrust	Yes	Yes	No	Light requires supported thrust
Pollaxe	Thrust	Yes	Yes	No	Light requires supported thrust
	Strike	Yes	Yes	Yes	Blow to heavy armour must be to the helm.

Thrusts to the Head

Thrusts to the head will not be counted as fair blows and do not stop the fight.

Experiments have demonstrated the extreme difficulty in landing a thrust into a historical eye/face opening and the shape of helmets is designed to make it hard for a thrust to “grab” on the metal. With flatter safety tips a solid thrust can snap a head backwards and pose a high risk of injury to the combatants. The risk versus reward is not worth encouraging and for these two reasons, head thrusts are not counted.

Supported Thrust

To be effective against light armour, a thrust will need to be landed and then ‘pushed’ forward to count. This represents the need to push through any mail protection, a simple thrust is not enough to do real damage through mail.

Dagger Supported Thrust

For a dagger thrust to count against light armour it must be pushed with both hands or landed in such a way as to be able to have significant mass behind the thrust. A dagger does not have the weight of a spear or poleaxe, and those weapons still require supported thrust to count against light armour.

Strikes to the hand.

A thrust to the unprotected part of the hand or the inside cuff will be counted as a thrust to an unprotected area. However, blows to the hand will not. While there is some historical accounts with hands being damaged by blows from a poleaxe. The risk of breaking hands or dislocating fingers is considered too high to promote.

Harassing Blows

Strikes that are made with a light touch or the non-business end of a weapon. Using the shaft of a spear, striking with a gauntlet, or other harassing blows used to push, displace, or harass your opponent are allowed. However, they will not count as any kind of scoring blow and do not stop the bout.

Wrestling

Wrestling is the most dangerous part of bouting. It is easy to get carried away and slam someone’s head into the ground hard enough to cause permanent damage. Joint locks are easy to do and also can cause serious damage. Just grappling together can cause your armour to lock with someone else’s in such a way that when they fall, you do with them.

One the other hand wrestling is an essential part of all harnischfechten and if you ignore it you will be creating unrealistic combat.

Because of the inherent danger of wrestling, we have made a compromise with our rules. When someone starts to place a throw or a lock and is about to execute it, they shout ‘SET!’. The opponent then yields the bout without resistance.

Holds and pushes can be done reasonably safely and may be done.

It is true that many people can and do get out of locks and throws, but doing this becomes overly dangerous in armour and in our context.

For the same reasons, fights will generally not be carried to the ground, unless both combatants agree to this beforehand and at the agreement of the marshal.

Calibration Exercise

A scale of force or intensity is used by the school to help regulate force and keep people safe. The scale refers to both how hard one person thinks they are hitting, and how hard the recipient thinks they are being hit. This is allowed to differ and often will. However, once parties establish what their effort is being received at, they should endeavour to not exceed what their opponents has asked for or set a limit on.

Before a bout commences it is highly encouraged to discuss the level of force expected or desired. Often this can be done with a 'calibration exercise'. This the act of the two combatants striking each other's starting with 1 to 2 level and confirming that is how the both feel it was given and received. Then the two can slowly work up the scale until they are at the limit they would like for the bout/day.

Note: what a person wants can change over time or day to day and so calibration exercise should be performed regularly, if not every time two people bout.

Prohibited Actions

- Intentionally targeting the spine or groin.
- Lack of restraint (attacking carelessly with cross guard etc)
- Blows landed with excessive force (above agreed force metrics, typically above 8's).
See Calibration Exercise
- Grappling when not mutually agreed.

While we all accept the fact this is dangerous martial art and accidents do happen that can result in injury to one's self or others, should anyone be found doing such strikes intentionally, repeatedly or even just by being unaware, they are to be brought before the marshal and the marshal determine the level of seriousness and outlay consequences or punishment required. For example, a warning or removal from the event.

While the attacker must take all care and control in landing a strike. All combatants must have suitable protection for the type of combat they are entering. For example – If you have no back armour, make sure it is clear and your opponent knows this.

HOW A COMBAT SHALL BE CONDUCTED

Before bouts in any session are commenced, all participants must attend and acknowledge the below steps and rules.

All new/late participants must be taken through the same process and acknowledge the rules.

Pre-brief Guidelines

The rules for the event must be made available to all combatants prior to registration.

Prior to the event the event marshals must:

- Inspect all weapons to be used (weight, edges and points).
- Inspect every combatants helm (openings, padding, quality and fit).
- A visual inspection of a participant's harness (openings, fit, obvious issues).
- Conduct a group briefing.

The group briefing must address:

- Identifying the Marshals and First Aid Officer
- Run through the combat rules for the event.
- Identify any variations or focus areas.
- Go over the program of events.
- Have combatants raise any concerns or issues, (ie- no back plate if covered by surcoat).
- Welcome and identify new combatants
- Take questions from the combatants.
- Any combatant may, without reproof, request a limitation of targets/blows struck due to lack of or inadequate armour or due to concern for a pre-existing physical condition.

Starting Combat

Bouts are to begin on the call of the Marshal, this is traditionally on the call of "la celle alle" (lah say ahlay). The pole is to be held between combatants and pulled up at the call signalling the beginning of combat.

Calling Hold

All combat is to be ended at the call of the Marshal, this is to be held on the call of **Hold**. This must lead to immediate cessation of combat. If combatants do not end combat the Marshal is authorised to utilise their staff of office to strike the combatant in a manner to gain their attention while calling hold.

A marshal can call hold at any time for any purpose they see fit, failure to comply with the call of hold will result in expulsion from a bout.

A marshal may call a hold to confirm or discuss a hit/strike during the combat. After this the combatants will resume at the marshal's call just out of weapon range.

Knightly Behaviour on the Field

- All combats are done with the mutual consent of all participants. You may refuse any bout or opponent for any reason. However in completions, such refusal will result in a loss being recoded against you.
- You may yield a fight at any time. Call either 'YELD' or 'HOLD' and announce your decision to yield.

- Do not strike an opponent that is unaware of you. So no strikes from behind or out of view. This does not count for an opponent you are in contact with who then may turn way to flee.