

A Guide for HEMA Gear (by Arseniy and Gilad)

This is a guide for what **protective gear** to buy and where to do it in Europe. This mostly pertains to LONGSWORD, with sabre requiring different gloves (and that's it, basically – all the rest is about the same). For rapier, you can use lighter gear – leather gloves are enough. Ask your sabre and rapier instructors.

Foreword: every piece of gear you use at our club, from fencing mask to jackets and swords, is owned by another member. They have spent their own money on it and are also putting in a lot of time to maintain this gear, ESPECIALLY if it's routinely used by new members.

Therefore, you **MUST** buy your own stuff – we share our things with love, so you can enjoy this wonderful activity, but there's an obvious limit.

Some of the most common gear-related questions:

When do you need to buy the gear?

After you have been to a couple of practices and have understood that you want to do this beautiful martial art/sport. At most, **a month (4-8 practices) should be enough to decide if HEMA is for you.**

Can I do HEMA with only a mask and foam swords?

NO. Foam swords are good for getting a feeling of what we are doing in HEMA and to practice with light gear (when it's very hot or when we want to avoid injuries, like before a tournament), but they are in no way or capacity what HEMA is about. **You should be aiming for STEEL sparring!**

How much does it cost?

I have divided the gear into two categories: Critical Importance and secondary importance.

Critical Importance is around 950\$

Secondary Importance is around 300\$

Taxes and shipping are around 300-350\$

If you want to customize your gear it is a bit more expensive.

The total is around 1600\$ (or about 5,000 NIS).

I know it is not cheap but relatively to other adult hobbies it is not a lot of money – and good gear will last you a while, if you care for it.

You can order together with other club members to reduce the overall costs. Don't do it in groups of more than 3-4 people because such an amount of gear is going to create problems with customs.

ALWAYS ask for advice from Gilad, Arseniy or Tolik before ordering. You can also try on some gear, with permission and guidance.

I don't have that kind of money, but I am highly motivated to do HEMA. What should I do?

I understand this situation; there is a way to get gear cheaper, which is to buy second-hand gear from other club members in Israel. Save money to buy normal gear one day.

And again, ask your veteran club members before buying, so you don't waste your money.

I see cheaper options with lower Newton rating, maybe I can buy that instead?

In Russia we had a saying "Cheapskate pays twice". Sadly, you don't really save money this way. If you have already decided that HEMA is for you, then you will want to participate in tournaments one day. Most of the tournaments require these Newton gradings, so you don't really save money if you have to buy a separate tournament set of gear.

Reason behind buying gear from European / Russian / American suppliers - they don't only produce HEMA gear, they also do HEMA themselves, so they understand the importance of quality and durability of the equipment.

Attached links are for the reference (these are examples – there are other types of masks\gorgets\jackets etc, so again – ask before buying).

Critical importance (total cost is around 930\$):

- Fencing Mask 1600 Newtons – 130\$
<https://hf-armory.com/en/shop/protectors/head-protection/hema-tournament-1600n-mask/>

There are other manufacturers, like AllStar\Uhlmann, Absolute Force.

- Back of head protection – 65\$
<https://hf-armory.com/en/shop/protectors/head-protection/buy-hema-mask-protector-hf-armory/>

Something similar can also be found on SPES:

<https://histfenc.eu/en/179-overlays>

- Gorget – 25\$
<https://www.thehemashop.com/red-dragon-throat-protector>
These can also be sometimes found on Amazon. There are other designs, too, but this one seems to be popular and comfortable for most.
- Plastic chest protection – 30\$
https://www.woodenswords.com/Absolute_Force_Chest_Protector_p/af.chest.htm

This can also be ordered from Israeli stores (like <https://ilfencing.co.il/shop/>)
They are standard for Olympic fencing.

<https://ilfencing.co.il/product-category/uniforms/%d7%a6%d7%99%d7%95%d7%93-%d7%94%d7%92%d7%a0%d7%aa%d7%99%d7%9e%d7%92%d7%9f-%d7%97%d7%96%d7%94/>

- HEMA jacket 800 Newtons – 300\$
<https://histfenc.eu/en/men/45-7921-ap-hema-jacket-800n-5903745159918.html#/1,main-color,black/4,size,xs/12,hand,right-handed>

Another option is this:

<https://histfenc.eu/en/home/52-7861-ap-light-hema-jacket-800n-5908222601300.html#/1,main-color,black/4,size,xs/12,hand,right-handed>

And other designs, too. Just make sure they have ARMING POINTS, loops to attach plastic protectors.

Jackets should be 800N!

You can create awesome custom jackets designs and make them to your exact measurements.

- Forearm and Elbow Overlays – 70\$

<https://histfenc.eu/en/men/91-vectir-forearm-and-elbow-overlays-5900162169131.html>

There are other designs from many other manufacturers, some of which may suit you better. They shouldn't be too expensive, but they should fit you well and protect you.

- Shoulders and upper arms Overlays – 40\$

<https://histfenc.eu/en/men/97-pro-set-shoulders-and-upper-arms-5909378287547.html>

Shoulder protectors are highly recommended, upper arms are nice but not necessary.

- HEMA gloves – 250\$

<https://hf-armory.com/en/shop/protectors/hand-protection/fencing-gloves-black-knight/>

Please don't buy "five finger" gloves for longsword, most of the models on the market are new and not tested by time. In any case your first gloves should be a "mitten" model.

- Groin protection – 20 \$

SPES:

<https://histfenc.eu/en/men/76-5984-groin-overlay-5902328741298.html#/1,main-color,black/5,size,s>

It is better to buy from Israel as there are a lot of places to buy from, make sure it is made of hard plastic. This piece of gear isn't HEMA-specific.

<https://www.decathlon.co.il/p/165811-26041-%D7%9E%D7%92%D7%9F-%D7%9E%D7%A4%D7%A9%D7%A2%D7%94-%D7%9C%D7%92%D7%91%D7%A8%D7%99%D7%9D-slipee-100-%D7%9C%D7%91%D7%9F.html>

Secondary importance (total cost 265):

- HEMA pants 800 Newtons – 170\$
<https://histfenc.eu/en/men/29-8127-spodnie-do-hema-dragonfly-lvl-2-5907290447100.html#/1,main-color,black/4,size,xs>

You can create awesome custom pants designs and make them to your exact measurements. You can also buy from Red Dragon and other manufacturers. Fencing pants allow you to attach plastic knee protectors and sometimes shin protectors as well, and some have padding on the thighs.

Pants should be 800N!

- Knee protectors – 25\$
<https://histfenc.eu/en/men/88-shell-knee-overlays-5901290007739.html>
- Side wings for knees – 10\$
<https://histfenc.eu/en/speslab/147-side-wings-for-knees-5904978326474.html>
- Calf protectors – 60\$
<https://histfenc.eu/en/men/89-vectir-calf-overlays-5900808730893.html>

There are many styles and materials, but good-quality plastic is usually best.

Good European stores that I trust:

SPES: A great Polish manufacturer, one-stop-shop for a modern fencer. Their standards are high, and they always make tournament compatible gear. Most of our club uses their gear with one exception – gloves. The third generation of their gloves is more fragile than the second. I highly recommend getting HF's "Black Knight" gloves.

They also make custom jackets and pants (measures and designs).

<https://histfenc.eu/en/>

HF Armory: A great Ukrainian manufacturer. I highly recommend getting their "Black Knight" gloves for longsword and their masks are also good.

<https://hf-armory.com/en/>

The HEMA Shop: An English store. I don't have much to say about them. Ask other people for recommendations before buying from them.

<https://www.thehemashop.com/>

Purpleheart Armory: A US-based shop: They are good and reliable, but shipping costs from the USA may be high (or not, depending on what you order).

<https://www.woodenswords.com/>

AS FOR SWORDS:

- 1) A steel sword is the LAST piece of HEMA gear you should be buying – there's no shortage of them at the club, currently, and they are easy to exchange between fighters.
- 2) There are SO MANY manufacturers – Regencyei, Sigi, Kvetun, Black Fencer, HF Armory etc etc. For your first sword, we suggest something simple and reliable, that is mostly standard (for a feder, a 100cm blade with a 32-35cm handle, with a 11-15kg flex and a total weight of 1300-1550g). You can try many types of swords at our club and see which ones you like.
- 3) A feder\sabre would cost about 200-300 euros, and upwards of 500 euros for the fancy ones. A rapier is about 300 euros. HF Armory has cheaper options which are very simple in design but well-balanced.