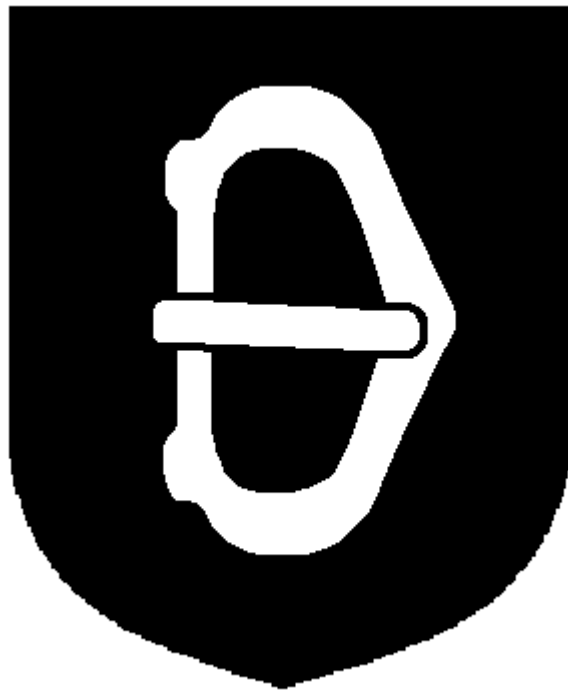


**Medieval
Living History
(New Zealand) Inc**



Fighters Handbook

13 September 2005

Medieval Living History

(New Zealand) Inc

Fighters Handbook

This is the handbook for combatants in Medieval Living History (NZ). It incorporates the rules and conventions, and the armour and weapons standards of MLH. These rules represent the minimum requirements for equipment and conduct allowable for participation in MLH combat within New Zealand.

Changes to these rules and standards will only be made using the following procedure:

- (a) Discuss the proposed changes with a Sergeant
- (b) The Sergeants will discuss the proposed changes.
- (c) If the idea has some merit, documented experimentation, and testing will be undertaken and reported to the Sergeants.
- (d) If the Sergeants agree to the proposed changes, they will seek approval from the Council.
- (e) If approval is granted by the Council, changes to the standards or conventions will be distributed to all Sergeants and Marshals, and the Combat Handbooks shall be updated to include the approved changes.

This is the official Medieval Living History (NZ) Fighters Handbook. This is an official publication of Medieval Living History, and delineates MLH policy on combat activities.

***Acknowledgement:** We'd like to thank the Society for Creative Anachronism Inc's Board of Directors for granting us permission to use the wording of so many of their rules within our own fighters handbook. The SCA rules, both in content and structure were logical, and comprehensively covered many areas we thought important to the safety and enjoyment of our participants. We'd also like to thank Margie Henley for allowing us to use her wording from the Kingdom of Lochac Combat Handbook. Thank you all for producing such well-written rules.*

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1. Combat authorisation requirements

1.1. General

1. All persons who wish to participate in MLH combat activities must authorise under MLH authorisation procedures. Combat activities include but are not limited to combat and marshalling. It does not include target archery. Those who wish to train in combat arts may do so under the supervision of a Sergeant.
2. Combat authorisation procedures will verify that the candidate is familiar with the following:
 - (a) The rules of conduct
 - (b) The armour and weapons standards
 - (c) The conventions of combat
3. In addition to the above requirements, the candidate must demonstrate that he/she is able to function on the field in a manner that is safe to both him/herself and his/her opponents.
4. Two Sergeants (one of whom is not the candidate's usual trainer) are required to conduct the authorisation. The Sergeants must witness the authorisation and execute the appropriate paperwork to ensure the authorisation is registered with the Registrar.
5. Authorisations shall be registered with and kept on file by the Registrar. This office shall be responsible for keeping properly completed waivers (if required) and issuing authorisation cards. In addition to maintaining registrations of authorisations, this office shall provide the Sergeant General with a list of all current authorisation cards upon request.
6. Combat authorisations may be issued for a period up to, but not exceeding 2 years. If an authorised person's membership lapses during that time, the authorisation will be rendered invalid. Authorisations will not be issued to persons who are not members of MLH.
7. MLH Sergeants may define such additional types of authorisation requirements, such as weapons forms, Marshals and First Aid Officers, as they deem necessary. There are separate authorisations for:
 - Grappling
 - Dagger
 - Single-handed sword and shield
 - Two-handed sword (including bastard/long sword)

- Falchion
 - Single-handed mass weapon (including axe, mace and hammer)
 - Two-handed mass weapon (including axe and hammer)
 - Mass weapon with back-spike
 - Pole weapon
 - Single-handed spear
 - Two-handed spear
 - Marshal
 - First Aid Officer
8. Sergeants may revoke the authorisation of any combatant for just and stated cause.

1.2. Minor participation and authorisation

1. No person below the age of sixteen (16) may be authorised for, or participate in any combat activity (including combat, training and marshalling). This does not include target archery.
2. No person below the age of eighteen (18) may authorise as a Marshal.
3. Minors (aged 16 and 17) may authorise and participate with these additional requirements:
 - (a) The parent(s) or guardian(s) of the minor must witness MLH combat, discuss with a Sergeant how it relates to the participation of their child, and execute a form indicating informed consent for their child to participate in combat activities. The witnessing Sergeants must countersign the waiver.
 - (b) In accordance with MLH rules for minors, the parent or guardian must attend the event with their child and witness the combat activity in which their child is participating.

2. Rules of the Field

- 2.1.** Each combatant, recognising the possibilities of physical injury to him/herself in such combat, shall assume unto him/herself all risk and liability for harm suffered by means of such combat. No combatant shall engage in combat unless he/she is satisfied that the field is suitable for combat. Other participants (Marshals, First Aid Officers, and other support personnel) shall likewise recognise the risk involved on or near the field of combat, and shall assume unto themselves the liabilities thereof.
- 2.2.** No person shall take part in any combat activities (including combat and marshalling) outside of formal training sessions unless he/she has been authorised under MLH procedures. Any combatant who cannot present their authorisation card upon request may not participate in combat activities until they can present their authorisation card.
- 2.3.** Combatants may only use in combat the weapons in which they are authorised.
- 2.4.** All combatants shall adhere to MLH costume, armour and weapons standards. Each combatant shall accept full responsibility for the condition of his/her own equipment. Each combatant has the obligation to his/herself, the Marshals, and all opponents to see that his/her equipment meets MLH standards. The Marshals may inspect combat equipment whenever they deem it appropriate.
- 2.5.** Marshals may bar any weapon, armour, animal, or other equipment from use on the field of combat. Marshals may also bar any combatant from the field of combat for just and stated cause.
- 2.6.** A combatant may not participate in any form of combat activity while impaired by alcohol or drugs (including but not limited to: drugs prescribed by a licensed healthcare provider, over-the-counter medication, and illegal or controlled substances), or when not physically, mentally or emotionally fit for combat. Each combatant shall maintain control over his/her temper at all times.
- 2.7.** All combatants will take part with honesty and integrity, and fight according to the conventions of combat. Engaging in any combat activity with the deliberate intent to inflict bodily harm to an opponent or damage equipment is strictly prohibited.
- 2.8.** All combatants shall obey the commands of the Marshals and Sergeants on the field, or shall be removed from the field subject to disciplinary action. Disagreements with the Marshals and Sergeants shall be resolved off the field through MLH grievance and appeal procedures.
- 2.9.** No one may be required to participate in combat-related activities, should he/she prefer not to. Any combatant may, without dishonour or penalty,

reject any challenge without specifying a reason. It is the combatant's responsibility to remove his/herself from the situation.

- 2.10.** Fighting with live (sharp) weapons, whether fast or slow, is strictly forbidden at MLH events. In addition, no one may wear any live (sharp) weapon or tool on the field while participating in combat, or present during combat.
- 2.11.** All grievances must be resolved off of the field according to MLH grievance and appeal procedures.

3. Conventions of combat

3.1. Striking an opponent

1. Combatants will not strike an opponent if it is unsafe to do so.
2. Combatants must not strike with excessive force. All blows must be pulled to sufficiently reduce the risk of injury.
3. Combatants shall only strike at visible targets. No “fishing” behind shields or blind strikes.
4. Combatants shall not strike an opponent who has withdrawn from combat (surrendered, “died”, etc).
5. A valid blow is one that is delivered from behind the ear, is unimpeded, and lands solidly and squarely on the target. No flicks, whips, or flat-of-the-blade blows are acceptable.
6. It is up to the opponent (person being hit) to determine if a blow is valid.
7. Combatants receiving valid blows which inadvertently strike illegal targets should accept them. If a combatant believes a strike to an illegal target was deliberate then normal grievance procedures should be followed after the combat.
 - (a) The sides and back of the head, and the face are not to be targeted. The only acceptable blow to the head is a vertical strike to the crown of the helmet.
 - (b) The neck and collarbone must not be targeted.
 - (c) Hands and elbows must not be targeted.
 - (d) The spine and kidneys must not be targeted. Blows across the backs of the shoulders are acceptable.
 - (e) The feet and knees must not be targeted.
 - (f) The groin must not be targeted.
8. Only weapons approved for thrusting may be used for that purpose.
9. All thrusts from behind are prohibited.
10. Thrusting with any weapon while running is prohibited.
11. Back-spikes may not be used in an offensive strike.
12. Spears may not target the head or the torso above the solar plexus. This does not include the shoulders, which are still an acceptable target.

3.2. Other combat engagements

1. Anyone deliberately striking another person's equipment with the intent to damage it will be removed from the field subject to disciplinary action.
2. Bracing pole weapons or spears against the ground or immovable objects is prohibited.
3. Charges are permitted. However, jumping onto opponents is prohibited. A combatant must hold his/her weapon behind his/herself while charging and making contact.
4. Wrestling an opponent to the ground is not allowed unless expressly permitted during the scenario by the Marshal.

3.3. "Death"

1. Combatants shall be considered "dead" according to the rules of the combat scenario.
2. "Dead" combatants must hold their weapon in a non-threatening manner to indicate their status, and leave the field of combat, unless the scenario dictates otherwise. Some scenarios may require "dead" combatants to fall to the ground and remain prone if it is safe to do so.
3. "Dead" combatants must not remove their helmets until they are outside of the designated field of combat.
4. Any combatant whose helmet or chinstrap fails in combat will be considered "dead" and should remove him/herself from the field of combat as soon as it is safe to do so.

3.4. Discontinuations of combat = Stops

1. Stops may be called by ANYONE for any of the following reasons:
 - (a) Broken weapons
 - (b) Broken armour
 - (c) Broken people (i.e. injuries)
 - (d) Broken tempers
 - (e) Broken ground (i.e. hazardous terrain)

- (f) Broken boundaries (i.e. someone/thing coming onto the field that should not be there, or combatants inadvertently leaving the field of combat and continuing to fight endangering bystanders)

It may not be necessary to call a stop in all cases if the situation can be dealt with safely without a stop.

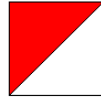
2. Upon hearing the call of “STOP!” all fighting shall IMMEDIATELY cease. Every combatant shall then:
 - (a) Repeat the call of “Stop!”
 - (b) Check whether they are in danger, or causing the danger
 - (c) Lower weapons and remain stationary unless in danger or advised to do otherwise
 - (d) Continue to call “Stop!” until all action ceases.
3. Helms must remain on, unless a Marshal advises otherwise. If a Marshal has called for a “helms off” during a stop, then the Marshal shall ensure that all helms are back on before resuming the combat.
4. A stop, once called, can only be lifted by a Marshal. The Marshal shall warn the combatants to prepare to continue before resuming the combat.
5. At the end of the battle all combatants must leave their helms on until instructed by the Marshal that it is safe to remove them with a call of “helms off” or something equivalent.

3.5. Scenarios

1. Battle scenarios, including victory conditions, “death” conditions, boundaries and terrain will be described before each battle or set of battles.

3.6. Identification of Sergeants, Marshals and First Aid Officers

1. Marshals overseeing combat will be identified by a red and white square divided diagonally (per bend gules and argent).



2. All Marshals overseeing combat will carry a hardwood staff. A pennant of the MLH arms (sable, an arming-buckle tongued fesswise argent) and the Marshals' colours will be attached to one end of the staff (see example below).



3. All Sergeants taking part in combat will be identified by the MLH arms (sable, an arming-buckle tongued fesswise argent).



4. First Aid Officers will be identified by a green square with a white cross (vert, a cross argent)



4. Armour standards

1. Armour must meet the authenticity standards of MLH. Where authenticity leads to less than the minimum standard of equipment required for safety this requirement may be relaxed.
2. In addition to the minimum required armour, each combatant is responsible for determining which other parts of his/her body are exposed to an unacceptable level of risk by combat activities, and for obtaining and wearing in combat armour sufficient to reduce this risk to an acceptable level. This may require a change in chosen time period to remain authentic.
3. All skin (apart from the face) must be covered by sturdy fabric.
4. All armour shall be fastened in a way that prevents it from being dislodged during use.
5. All armour should be suitably durable.
6. All armour shall be free of sharp edges. Points on armour must be rounded to at least a 5mm radius (10mm diameter).

4.1. Helms

1. All combatants must wear a helm that protects the head, neck and face during combat.
2. Open-faced helms must have a rigid nasal guard or brim, and be accompanied by an appropriate chain drape (coif, aventail, camaille, etc) covering the neck, cheeks and mouth.
3. Helms must be constructed of at least 1.6mm (16 gauge) steel.
4. All helms constructed after 13 August 2005 must be constructed of at least 2mm (14 gauge) steel.
5. All helms must be equipped with a chin strap or other means of preventing the helm from being dislodged during combat. An equivalent might be a strap from the helm to the breastplate, or a chin cup suspension system. A snug fit is NOT an equivalent. The chin strap should not be placed in the helm in a manner that could strangle the wearer.
6. All helms must be sufficiently padded, either built in to the helm or a padded arming cap.

4.2. Gambesons

1. All combatants must wear a gambeson (a padded jacket) during combat, regardless of the time period recreated.
2. The gambeson must cover the torso and hips, and extend to cover the elbow joints.
3. It is recommended that extra padding is worn on the shoulders and shoulder points.
4. It is highly recommended that the gambeson has a high collar, or that throat protection is worn.

4.3. Shin protection

1. All combatants must wear shin protection. If shin protection is not appropriate to the combatant's chosen time period, it should be hidden beneath clothing. Modern plastic sports guards are permitted if hidden.

4.4. Hand and wrist protection

1. A minimum of sturdy leather gloves must be worn (i.e. leather welding gloves). These must cover the back and side of the hand, fingers, and the wrist bones, and be reinforced with heavy leather or better, or padded across the back of the hand.

4.5. Footwear

1. A minimum of sturdy period-appropriate footwear must be worn. If the ankles are not protected by the shin armour, then the footwear must protect the bones of the ankle.

4.6. Mouth protection

1. It is recommended that all combatants (especially those without rigid face protection) wear a mouthguard. Modern mouthguards may be worn even if they are visible.

4.7. Throat protection

1. It is recommended that all gambesons have a high collar or that throat protection is worn. It is strongly recommended that all combatants wearing rigid breastplates wear more significant throat protection.

4.8. Eyewear

1. The lenses of all eyewear shall be shatterproof industrial safety glass or plastic. Ordinary glass lenses are prohibited. The wearing of contact lenses or “sports glasses” is strongly recommended.

4.9. Groin Protection

1. It is strongly recommended that all combatants wear some form of groin protection. Commercial martial arts groin protectors provide the best protection and may be hidden under clothing.

4.10. Elbow and knee protection

1. Although gambesons must extend to cover the elbows, it is recommended that combatants wear additional padding or better to further protect the elbow joint. Modern elbow pads may be worn if hidden by clothing.
2. Modern knee pads may be worn if hidden by clothing

4.11. Breast protection

1. It is strongly recommended that all female combatants wear rigid breast protection. Modern breast protectors should be hidden under clothing.

4.12. Shields

1. Shields must be constructed of materials equivalent or superior to 9mm plywood.
2. Shields must be edged with rawhide or leather.
3. Steel banding is prohibited.
4. All bolt and rivet shanks must be trimmed flat and sufficiently rounded.

5. Bucklers constructed of steel must have rolled edges. Edges must not be burred.

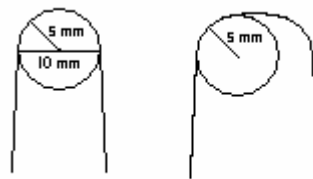
5. Weapons standards

5.1. General

1. All combatants bear final responsibility for the condition and safety of their own equipment.
2. Weapons must be licensed where required by law.
3. Flails are expressly forbidden.
4. Weapons must not have loose fittings.
5. Weapons must not have any sharp edges or be burred.

5.2. Swords and falchions

1. All swords and falchions must be constructed of medium to high carbon steel. Mild steel is not acceptable.
2. Fixtures (crossguards and pommels etc) must be sufficiently rounded.
3. Edges must be at least 1.5mm thick and sufficiently rounded.
4. Tips must be rounded to at least a 5mm radius (10mm diameter). Diagram not to scale.



5.3. Mass weapons (axes, maces and hammers)

1. General

- (a) Single-handed mass weapons must not weigh more than 1000 grams (1 kg)

- (b) Two-handed mass weapons must not weigh more than 2000 grams (2 kg)
- (c) Mass weapons longer than 1500mm (1.5m) are also classed as pole weapons and must also meet pole weapon standards.
- (d) Caps on weapon shafts must be permanently attached (i.e. riveted) and sufficiently rounded.
- (e) Back-spikes
 - Edges of back-spikes must be at least 1.5mm thick and sufficiently rounded.
 - Tips of back-spikes must be at least 3mm thick and rounded to at least a 7.5mm radius (15mm diameter).
 - Back-spikes may not be used in an offensive strike.
- (f) Top-spikes
 - Edges of top-spikes on single-handed weapons must be at least 1.5mm thick and sufficiently rounded.
 - Tips of top-spikes on single-handed weapons must be at least 3mm thick and rounded to at least a 7.5mm radius (15mm diameter).
 - Edges of top-spikes on two-handed weapons must be at least 3mm thick and sufficiently rounded.
 - Tips of top-spikes on two-handed weapons must be at least 5mm thick and rounded to at least a 12.5mm radius (25mm diameter).

2. **Axes**

- (a) Single-handed
 - Edges must be at least 1.5mm thick and sufficiently rounded.
 - Tips must be rounded to at least a 5mm radius (10mm diameter).
- (b) Two-handed
 - Edges must be at least 3mm thick and sufficiently rounded.
 - Tips must be rounded to at least a 7.5mm radius (15mm diameter).

3. **Maces**

- (a) Maces must have at least 7 evenly-spaced flanges.
- (b) Edges of flanges must be at least 3mm thick and sufficiently rounded.
- (c) Corners of flanges should be rounded to at least a 5mm radius (10mm diameter).
- (d) Mace heads may also be made from aluminium or high-impact rubber to reduce weight.

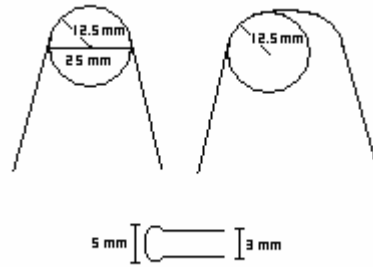
4. **Hammers**

- (a) Hammer faces should be flat with sufficiently rounded edges and be no less than a 15mm radius (30mm diameter).
- (b) Hammer heads may also be made from aluminium or high-impact rubber to reduce weight.

5.4. **Pole weapons**

- 1. A pole weapon, (an alteration of the Middle English “poll” meaning head, combined with modern English “pole” meaning shaft) is a metal head on a long haft of more than 1500mm (1.5m). This includes: spears, halberds, poleaxes, etc)
- 2. Weapon hafts must be at least 28mm in diameter, and be of hardwood.
- 3. Pole weapons shall not be excessively flexible or whippy.
- 4. Heads must be permanently attached to the haft (i.e. riveted).
- 5. Caps on weapon hafts must be permanently attached (i.e. riveted) and sufficiently rounded.
- 6. Edges of pole weapon heads must be at least 3mm thick and sufficiently rounded.

7. All primary thrusting tips must be at least 5mm thick and rounded to at least a 12.5mm radius (25mm diameter). Diagram not to scale.



8. All other tips (hooks, back-spikes etc) must be rounded to at least a 7.5mm (15mm diameter).
9. Spears may not have lugs.

6. Grievance procedures

If a combatant has a combat-related grievance they will follow the following procedure:

1. Talk politely to the person with whom they have a grievance
2. Talk to a Marshal
3. Request mediation from a Sergeant
4. Talk to the Sergeant General
5. Talk to the Council

If a grievance is shared politely, it is common for it to be resolved at the first step of the procedure, if not the second.