

Lethbridge Medieval Club (LMC) Rules for Martial Activity

Approved by the LMC board of directors, March 10th, 2019

The following rules are intended to provide maximum flexibility and safety for all who are present during LMC martial activities. Safety is the responsibility of everyone, and these rules are not intended to remove the need for personal responsibility in ensuring the safety of yourself and others in any way. Anyone who witnesses an unsafe situation during an LMC event should immediately take appropriate action to remedy that situation.

Instructors:

Instructors are appointed or removed as necessary by the board of directors (“the board”), with appointments or removals recorded in LMC minutes. The board should typically consult with current and/or former instructors to determine suitable instructor appointments or removals.

Instructors may temporarily suspend any participant from any LMC martial activity at their discretion, if they believe there is sufficient cause to do so (i.e. If someone is not following these rules, the LMC code of conduct, or other relevant policies). Participants may be reinstated by that instructor's decision, by a consensus of all other instructors present, or by majority vote of the board.

Instructors also have the final say on the suitability of any piece of equipment for use, and may allow or forbid the use of equipment. Instructors make these decisions with both safety and historical accuracy in mind.

See the instructor job description for more details regarding instructors.

Participants:

Any LMC member (including instructors) who is present during martial activity is in some way a participant. Fighters and instructors participate directly; spectators participate indirectly. This does not apply to the general public; only to LMC members.

Direct participants are expected to be familiar with, and follow, these principles:

Calling “HOLD”:

At any time, anyone may call, in a loud and clear voice, “HOLD”. This signals a situation which is dangerous, or potentially dangerous. Upon hearing “HOLD”, all participants shall immediately stop what they are doing, act to ensure their own safety, and then work together to resolve the reason for calling the hold.

Keep your actions under control at all times.

Each combatant must be able to stop or re-direct their actions instantly, should anything untoward happen. No-one should perform any action which violates this principle. During any given activity, anyone may misjudge, make mistakes, or fail to see things. Keeping your own actions under control will allow you to avoid hurting your fellow participant(s) when this happens. This may mean fighting at a slower speed, or with less force than might be possible under “normal” fighting conditions – so be it. *Participants are expected to act mindfully regarding each other's safety. The constant, vigilant exercise of good judgement by participants must be always be a priority.*

Use appropriate force for the activity at hand.

Overpowered blows are a ready source of bruises and potentially, more serious injury. Every type of martial activity is going to be different in nature, but all participants are expected to use no more force than is strictly necessary, for whatever they are doing.

Never direct violence (or a weapon) at anyone who is not prepared.

“Prepared” is more mental than physical; all participants need to know what is going on and be ready before any action takes place. This requires clear and ongoing communication between participants during any martial activity.

Be comfortable with what you are doing.

If at any time you are uncomfortable with the situation you are in, call “hold” and remedy the situation. This may mean taking a break, or not engaging in martial activities with a specific partner, or even not engaging in an activity at all until you are comfortable with it. Nobody should ever feel pressured into taking part in any LMC martial activity.

Use equipment appropriate for what you are doing.

Basic equipment includes practice weapon, comfortable clothing, and sensible footwear. This is suitable for very controlled, non-contact activities – such as learning basic drills or movements. Any activity beyond this will require, at least, basic groin and hand protection (athletic protector and gloves). There are too many different possibilities to list all possible appropriate equipment options; as a basic rule, the level of safety provided by the equipment must be appropriate for the activity being undertaken. See appendices A and B (below) for guidelines.

All martial activities combine two variables in some fashion: Planning and Momentum. Planning involves knowledge (or lack thereof) of what is happening or about to happen, while Momentum encompasses speed and power. Each of these variables exists on a continuum. For example:

Planning

- Perfect planning: All participants involved know exactly what is about to happen.
- Asymmetric: One or more participants know less than others about what might happen.
- No planning: No participant knows what is about to happen (other than “martial activity”).

Momentum

- Low: Slow, non-contact.
- Medium: high speed, but non- or light-contact.
- High: Fast, full-contact.

It is the responsibility of all who participate in LMC martial activities to choose equipment appropriate to the level of planning and momentum associated with the specific activity being undertaken. This may range from no special equipment at all (for basic exercises), to being fully armoured to a specific standard (for full-contact, full-speed competitive bouts in various tournament organizations), and anything in-between. Appendix A provides a list of possible examples to serve as a guide when choosing equipment.

Only weapons and weapon simulators specifically constructed with safety in mind (rattan, hardwood or padded wasters, rebated steel or aluminum swords, vulcanized rubber simulators, etc.) may be used for LMC martial activities. Even so, weapons and simulators should always be treated as if they were the “real thing”, fully sharpened and ready to use.

All equipment must be kept serviceable and in good repair.

Participants are expected to keep their own equipment maintained before each use. Protective equipment must fit properly so that it does not shift or fall off during martial activities. Weapons must be checked for nicks, burrs, sharp edges, splinters, etc, that could cause injury. Equipment owned by the LMC shall be maintained by the person keeping that equipment with them.

Appendix A: Examples for equipment selection

This list is by no means exhaustive, but covers many common LMC activities:

- Non-contact drills, physical exercises: No specific equipment necessary.
- Slow drills with partner: Training weapon required, fencing mask at the participant's discretion.
- Fast drills with a partner: Training weapon, fencing mask and groin protection required, gloves at the participant's discretion.
- Fast, unchoreographed bouts with light contact: Training weapon, Mask, groin protection, and gloves. Arming coat or other light protective gear highly recommended.
- Fast, unchoreographed bouts with full contact: Training weapon and appropriate armour.

Appendix B: Guidelines for New Fighters

There are many aspects to medieval martial activity worldwide, with many different standards and organizations that manage them. It is impossible to cover these organizations comprehensively. LMC members may decide for themselves how they wish to practice and/or compete. The following expectations are intended to provide guidance:

What you will need to start fighting (anything beyond drills):

- I. Groin protection (athletic protector): This should be the very first piece of gear you buy. You will not be allowed to participate in any contact drills or sparring without this!
- II. Hand protection: A pair of leather gloves will help to protect your fingers from painful bruising. Leather, steel, or padded gauntlets can all offer varying amounts of protection for your fingers.
- III. Full skin coverage: while a gambeson or a padded jack are preferred, a hoodie or sweatshirt are fine to start. Long, loose pants or athletic tights are both acceptable for the legs.
- IV. Appropriate footwear: These should be suitable for working out in. Low-profile runners or combat boots seem to be most commonly used by club members.

What you are expected to provide for yourself within 6-12 months:

- I. Fencing mask: This way you will not have to share sweat and cooties with your fellow club members! Fencing masks must feature a substantial protective “bib” around the throat.
- II. Gorget: At a minimum, a simple leather neck protector. For heavier combat, a steel gorget, mail collar, or other neck protection.
- III. Your own weapon (and possibly shield): While we have extras for club use, these are purchased and maintained by our instructors. Don't abuse their hospitality!
- IV. Gambeson/padded jack: this is historical medieval padded armor. Sweatpants and hoodies are unacceptable once you move past the beginner stage. It is also a minimum requirement to enter most tournaments with other groups.

And finally, there is no time frame to add the final touches to your gear:

- I. Protective gear/armour appropriate for the style and speed of combat you wish to practice, and the time period you wish to portray. Mixing and matching styles of armour from different time periods or cultures is not advisable; one suit of armour per culture/era!
- II. We recommend starting with the elbows and knees (i.e, the vulnerable joints of the human body), and then armouring the rest of yourself from there.