

# Club Mass Melee Tournament Rules

## Purpose

There is a concept that defenders have a 3:1 advantage over attackers, that is you need three times as many people to successfully attack something versus defend it. We want to put that to the test. Using an all new mini-castle, teams will take turns attacking and defending to see if this ratio has any truth.

Also new this year, instead of a prize to the team that wins the most, the prize will go to the team voted by everyone else as the “most fun” fight. There will also be a staff decided “team spirit” award like last year. This format is experimental, so it doesn’t make sense to select a traditional winner.

## 2025 Major Changes

There is a castle. Teams will take turns attacking and defending. Attackers have 3 lives, defenders have 1. The standard bearer may also now start with a one-handed sword. Archers cannot be eliminated by proximity rules if there is a barrier (castle wall, fence) in the way. No changes were made to gear or weapon requirements.

## General Event and Melee Combatant Rules

### Objective

Attackers:

Successfully replace the defender’s banner with your own within the time limit

Defenders:

Defend your banner for the time limit or cause the attacker’s banner to hit the ground three times.

Ties:

Ties are not expected, as the defenders win if the attacker’s objective is not met. However, in case of a double with the last two remaining fencers, they will refight until a single clean hit. This is not an expected outcome.

Most Fun Fight:

This award will go to the team voted by other teams as the most fun to fight. The criteria for this is intentionally vague, but following the rules, accepting hits and being safe are great ways to earn it.

Team Spirit:

This award is voted on by the staff and goes to the team we feel best embraced the goals of this event. This may be due to solid teamwork, good coordination, or something which otherwise we enjoyed. Note that your team will likely not win this if we must constantly remind you of the rules.

Lives

Attackers will have 3 lives. Defenders will have one. Respawn/dead points will be clearly designated. Attackers must enter the respawn zone, count to 5, then they may return. These zones will also serve as the location where all dead fighters must go to clear the field.

## Team Size

Your team should generally consist of members of your club. Minimum team size is 10. Maximum is 20. There will be no adjustment for undersized teams. If you are 10 vs. 20, better hope you can take 2-3 for every 1 of yours. You may recruit from clubs too small to field their own team. There is no limit to how many teams a club brings, but no single team can exceed 20.

## Recruitment:

You may cajole, persuade otherwise work to convince fencers to your team, up to a total of 20. Bribes in the form of money, alcohol or equipment are not permitted, however historical.

## Colors

Also referred to as “banner” or “standard.” Your colors shall be between 4’ and 8’ tall, or otherwise visible above most of your team. The colors themselves (that is the flag, banner, streamers or whatever else you choose) should match your club and be large enough they can be seen in a melee. Remember, the colors represent your club’s honor, they should look the part.

The pole may be wood or plastic. Metal poles, due to risk of damage to swords if struck, are not permitted. Brittle materials, such as glass, are also not permitted, for those of you who like to find holes in rules. The judges reserve the right to deny a pole for being unsafe. Also prohibited are sticking flags on metal fencing weapons, but use of a spear or polearm is acceptable. You may not fight with it, however.

All teams, regardless of being a single club or 20 random attendees, must have colors.

## Equipment

### Protective Equipment:

Full longsword tournament kit is required. This includes, but is not limited to, shin guards, knee protection, puncture-resistant thigh covering, athletic protector, chest protector, jacket, gorget, mask, back of head, elbow protection, forearm protection (either standalone or sufficiently long cuffs) and *longsword-rated* gloves. Steel armor counts as unarmored unless otherwise stated at the time of the event.

### Melee Weapons

All swords shall have steel blades. Modern Olympic Fencing (MOF) blades, as are seen on some rapiers and many smallswords, are prohibited. All weapons up to and including longsword are permitted, provided that the weapon can be held with a longsword rated glove. This is true even in baskets. While this rule may seem excessive, understand that you may have to hold your banner aloft. No one wants to remember they had a soft glove on with a broken finger. Greatswords are not permitted. The line between “longsword” and “greatsword” is blurry, therefore all swords shall be under 5’ long and weigh less than 4lbs. All weapons must be carried and cannot be worn on a belt, even if in a good retention system.

Impact weapons are not permitted. That includes, but is not limited to, maces, flails, axes and non-spear polearms.

Spears of up to 8’ are allowed. The 8’ includes the spearhead itself. The spearhead shall be rubber or similarly flexible material. Spears, regardless of having either a traditional spearhead or something roughly spear like (glaive, partisan) may only be used in a thrust. The haft or butt may not be used in striking. Polearms with clear striking heads, such as poleaxe trainers, are not permitted.

Back up daggers made from rubber or plastic (typically cold steel rondels and bowies) are permitted and may be sheathed or carried on the body.

### Shields

Shields must lay flat in a 36 in x 36 in square. Shields may be wood, plastic or steel. Wood or thin plastic shields should be edged in a durable material to avoid splintering. If you are not sure if your plastic shield requires an edge, edge it. Aluminum, as is popular in the SCA, is not permitted. Shields are for defense only, and may not be used to strike.

Heavy gloves must be used with all shields. Attacks may come from weird angles, meaning hands that are typically protected in one-on-one combat may not be. Even if the hand is inside a basket, a heavy glove is still required.

### The Fight

#### Valid hits

For the purposes of this event, any hit struck such that it is felt is valid. If you're not sure, take it. The next hit may be harder. The only quality requirement is you felt a sufficient impact to realize you were hit. To this point, you do not need to swing like a homerun derby. Out-of-control, excessive or otherwise unsafe strikes are ground for ejection.

#### Striking from behind

If you are behind someone, you may not strike them except by using a flat against their side or arm, delivered with a slide such that the action is felt.

#### When you are hit

If you are hit, call out dead and place your weapon on your head. Back out of the fight and go to your respawn or dead zone. Do not turn your back until well clear of the melee. You may exit the bounds of the arena to get to your respawn/dead zone. You may duck through the support fences, but mind your head.

#### Back of the head hits

If someone is struck on the back of the head, fault will be assigned and the offending fencer ejected. Note the definition of fault: While in most cases, the fault will be assigned to the striking fencer, in some cases the fault may also be assigned to the fencer hit. In rare cases, all fault may be assigned to the fencer hit. This is to cover cases where a fencer turned at a time when a blow could not be halted, and they had reasonable reason to expect to be hit.

#### Striking a judge

Don't. Regardless of root cause, you will be ejected. However, any further penalties will be assessed against the specific situation. A judge may be deemed at fault due to their own lack of situational awareness. If so, no further penalties will be assessed.

#### Standard Bearer

The standard bearer may change through the fight. One will be designated at the start, but if they are struck they must drop the banner immediately. If the banner hits the ground (either dropped or while carried) it counts as a life for the banner.

The first standard bearer is allowed a one-handed sword to defend themselves as well as the banner. They may not strike with the banner.

The first standard bearer is not permitted a shield. If, and only if, the original standard bearer dies and the standard is caught by a fencer carrying a shield, they may continue to use the shield. The original standard bearer may also pick up different weapons or a shield at the respawn/dead zone after handing the banner off. They may do this even if they are not struck, but this will count as a life for both the standard bearer and the banner itself. .

### Dropped Items

If the colors hit the ground, a safety hold will be called to allow them to be picked back up.

If a weapon or shield hits the ground, they are “dead” and may not be picked up at the end of the round or during a safety hold.

If a person hits the ground, they are considered “dead” and a safety hold will be called to allow the person to leave. Action will continue once they are clear.

### Time

Fights will last 5 minutes. At the end of 5 minutes, halt will be called.

### Preparation

One person will be designated standard-bearer at the start. Attackers will line up in their respawn area. Defenders will take up position in the castle and place their banner in the stand. When the signal is given, fighting will commence. Neither team may cross the halfway point of the field prior to start.

### Signals

A whistle blow will indicate start. A megaphone or whistle will be used to indicate hold. “Hold” will be used to indicate stopping.

A single steady whistle blow will signal start, hold and end. If you hear a whistle, stop immediately. A call of “hold” or “halt” will also signal a stop, but due the size of the event, whistles are preferred. If everyone suddenly stops, it’s best you do too. This also means that line commands by participants shall not include the words “hold” or “halt.”

Two short puffs of a whistle will indicate “attention.” Please stop talking and listen to staff at this time.

If a fencer notices a safety issue not caught by staff, they may call halt. Staff will blow the whistle to indicate halt once noticed, but all fencers are expected to stop and wait if they hear halt until this happens.

### Prohibited Actions (not otherwise covered)

Grappling is not permitted. Punches, kicks, and any other striking actions are not permitted. Attacks delivered with a leap, charge or similar is not permitted. Exercise common sense, if you’re brain goes “this is probably a bad idea” then... don’t do it.

Note that “charging” in this case means running into an opponent to knock them over. Running at, or into, a line isn’t a problem. But if you’re shield bashing or trying to knock people over, that is.

### Blind Attacking

One must have line of sight with their target. Attacking blindly around corners or down over the wall is prohibited.

Similarly, one may not attack around the outside of the castle walls over the boundary line.

### Melee TL:DR

- Teams are 10-20 people, and should generally be from the same club
- You may recruit mercenaries, but may not pay them
- Attackers have 3 lives, defenders have 1
- All weapons up to and including longsword, plus spears 8' and under are permitted provided they are wielded with a longsword-rated glove
- When behind, deliver a slice with the flat to an opponent's side or arm to eliminate them
- Do not hit a judge
- Do not hit the back of the head
- Again, do not hit a judge
- No grappling or dumb actions

*Archery begins on next page*

## Archery

All ammunition and bows will be checked prior to the event. If possible, get your bow cleared prior to the start of the melee at the archery range for draw weight and suitability.

**Note: Due the experimental nature of archery, archers are strongly encouraged to bring longsword gloves and alternate weapons as back-up, as event organizers reserve the right to remove archery from the field at any time if it becomes unsafe. Don't make us do this, please be respectful.**

### Archery Equipment

Bows and crossbows are permitted. Thrown weapons of any manner or size are not permitted. Ranged weapons that do not meet the layman's interpretation of "bow" or "crossbow" are also not permitted. Edge cases must be cleared in advance of the event. Bow-on-a-[weapon], e.g. spear, are not permitted. Bows and crossbows may not be used to strike (no bayonets).

Bows and crossbows shall be passably historical (e.g. no compound or scifi bows). More modern additions, such as arrow shelves, will be overlooked.

### Bows

Bows shall measure 35 lbs or less at a draw of 28 inches, with a recommended target of 30 lbs. The cut off of 35 is hard. 35.1 lbs will fail. Note that bows less than 20 lbs lack enough power to be reliably felt through HEMA kit, in addition to limited range. While there is no official minimum, 20 lbs is the recommended low end.

Even if your draw is shorter than 28 inches, the weight will be tested at 28 inches, unless impossible for the bow to be drawn to that distance.

### Crossbows

Crossbows shall measure 600 in-lbs or less. This is calculated by multiplying the poundage of the bow by the distance from neutral to the lock (where the string rests when cocked). For example, 60 lbs at a 10 inches draw is acceptable ( $60 \times 10 = 600$ ) but 55 at 11 inches is not ( $55 \times 11 = 605$ ).

### Ammunition

Both SCA-grade homemade ammunition, hereafter referred to as "make" and store bought/LARP ammunition, hereafter referred to as "buy" ammunition, is permitted.

### Make Ammunition

#### Metal

Metal shall not be used in the construction of ammunition, with the exception of threaded inserts or screw on blunts. Metal heads are strictly prohibited.

#### Shafts

Shafts shall be fiberglass, plastic or carbon fiber. Metal, wood, or some material not listed is prohibited. Shafts shall be straight and free of obvious signs of damage.

If shafts are fiberglass, they shall be:

- Solid pultruded fiberglass between .250 inch and .375 inch in diameter

- Of good quality, defined as “significant bending pressure as applied by a judge shall not cause the shaft to break.” Do not bring floppy shafts. You may snicker at this
- The shaft must be covered from behind the blunt, to the front of the fletchings or fletching-equivalent device, in a sturdy, tear resistant tape such as strapping, electrical or duct tape

If shafts are plastic, they must be within the same weight range as fiberglass or carbon fiber and are expected to be designed for archery tag.

### Blunts

Blunts shall be SCA or LARP specific foam, rubber, or similar soft material. SCA “star” or “lu-shan” blunts, as well as a variety of LARP-rated blunts, are all acceptable. A 1” diameter striking surface is recommended, but may be waved for softer heads. Ask prior to the event if you are not sure if your blunts are acceptable.

### Buy Ammunition

Buy Ammunition shall not violate the requirements given previously. Ammunition from a reputable, known source is recommended.

### Ammunition Marking

All ammunition shall be marked with club name. There aren’t a lot of color differences between clubs, so distinct color alone is not enough. Ammunition that cannot be easily assigned an owner will become IGX property after the event.

### Archer Protective Equipment

Archers are required full longsword equipment, except gloves. Gloves may be lighter than one would use with a sword, but must still be worn. It is recommended that one wears the heaviest gloves that still allows manipulation of the bow or crossbow. Removal of finger tips only to manipulate the string is allowed.

Archers are not permitted a backup weapon. Should an archer attempt to catch a standard, note that your gloves will not likely be rated to take a longsword hit. You are not prohibited from catching a standard, but you assume the risk that comes with it. This is considered still safe as archers will be eliminated by proximity, see “Archer Elimination,” thus it is not expected that an archer will catch a standard while under melee threat.

### Archers and Shields

Archers may carry a shield. They may not plant a shield (e.g. a pavise) to use as cover.

### Archer Fight Rules

Archers are allowed to move anywhere in the field. They are not restricted to certain zones.

### Archer Limits

There is a limit of five (5) archers per team. Archers count towards the 20 person limit.

### Back Up Weapons

Archers are not permitted back up weapons. However, even if out of ammunition archers count as “alive” for the purposes of scoring. This is true regardless of what gloves you wear.

### Ammunition Limits

There are no ammunition limits. One may carry as many arrows as physical possible. Additional ammunition may be stored in the respawn/dead zone but these containers cannot leave this area. Note that when an archer dies, they may not hand their remaining arrows to team mates except in the respawn/dead zones.

### Archer Elimination

Archers are considered “dead” if they are within 10 feet (think “in longsword measure”) of any opponent who makes direct eye contact, provided there is no obstacle between the archer and the opponent, in this case a castle wall or fence. Archers struck through cover by a weapon will be treated as eliminated, though this is strongly discouraged.

It is recommended that fencers point their sword or otherwise make obvious eye contact with archers. Saying “Archer, Kill” loudly may also help. For safety reasons, archers should be generous in calling themselves out.

If an arrow is loosed at roughly the same time a fencer gets into the 10’ zone, this shall be considered a simultaneous kill and both are eliminated.

Should a fencer cross in front of an archer with their back turned, the archer may use an arrow like a dagger to eliminate that combatant. However, this is only expected in cases where a combatant has lost situational awareness and the archer otherwise would need to make a pointblank shot (see “safe range.”) Archers may not chase with the arrow as a rondel, and should the combatant turn, the archer will be treated as “eliminated.”

Archers who end up carrying the standard during the fight are still eliminated by the same rules. Archers will be given a specific color to indicate they are not to be struck.

### Indicating “Dead” as an Archer

Archers will be provided a flag to hold up when eliminated. This is due to the fact that various drawing methods or rest positions can be interpreted as the archer was eliminated. Archers should still rest their bow against their mask, as is done with melee weapons, to indicate they are out. This flag is additional.

### Safe Range

Archers are not permitted to loose at targets within 10 feet, as measured from the point of release, with a goal of not closer than 15 feet. However, given that a melee combatant may run down a target, there is the risk that an arrow will be loosed within this range. No penalty will be assessed should this happen. However, archers may be penalized for repeatedly loosing at very close range. Note that due to the close proximity of fencers within the castle gate, archers are recommended to reduce their draw distance as properly holding and judging this range is difficult.

### Shots From Behind

Archers are expected to aim low (lower back to flank) when a target is not facing them. Back of head protection is, naturally required, in the chance a shot goes wrong. However, either intentional (as assessed by a judge) or repeated back of head hits will be subject to penalty. In this case, intentional is defined as hitting a target in the back of the head while they are not facing you, whereas accidental would be should they turn or step into the line of fire.



### Striking an Archer

Striking an archer with a melee weapon when a fencer has an unobstructed line of sight may be subject to penalty. While this is actively discouraged, archers struck through cover will be treated as eliminated. Archers are recommended to keep their distance from windows to avoid this. Archers may still be eliminated from behind as anyone else. If the archer turns and realizes a fencer is within the 10' limitation, this counts as elimination.

### Spent Ammunition

Spent ammunition may not be picked up and shot again. *Between Rounds*

Ammunition must be inspected between rounds for damage. This is an expected duty of all team mates. Ammunition that is obviously broken shall be removed from play; all participants are allowed to make this call. Ammunition that is suspect shall be cleared by a safety marshal.

### Spectators

Spectators are encouraged to keep distance. However, know that you will be at risk of a stray shot and should be paying attention. We cannot hold the melee in a glass room.

### Shooting a Spectator

Don't. Doing so will be subject to penalty. Doing so obviously, or repeatedly, will result in ejection. And the spectator (or delegate) will be allowed to shoot you back.

### Archery TL;DR

- 35 lb at 28 inch draw limit to bows, 600 in-lbs to crossbows
- LARP or SCA ammunition only
- Archers die if a fencer gets within 10 feet without an obstacle in the way
- Archers may not carry a backup weapon
- Archers must have full longsword kit, minus gloves. They still need gloves
- Ammunition is spent if loosed until re-inspection
- Don't shoot spectators
- Don't shoot judges
- Aim low if behind someone
- Reduce draw distance if unsure of range to target

## Errata

Due to questions, asks, “but what if” and other edge cases, this section is intended to clearly allow or ban certain items, along with explanations of why.

- Can I carry my arrows out in a wheeled/dragged/not-on-my-person container?
  - Yes, provided it remains in the respawn/dead zone.
- Why can't I just hand off my quiver if I die?
  - The dead must clear the field ASAP and handing off ammunition prevents this. Each fight tends to be 2-3 minutes, so even 15 seconds is, relatively speaking, a long time.
- Can we have anti-arrow nets, fortifications, etc.?
  - No, between time to set up and risk of tripping, entrapment or other issues, such items and anything that falls into that category are prohibited. Defenders you do have a castle to use.
- Can we mount shields on our crossbows?
  - Yes, and on your bows too if you can figure out how. Shield size rules still apply.
- Why can't I strike with my crossbow/bow/etc or just stab with an arrow?
  - Risk of loosing an arrow at very close range and risk of damage to bows. Note, if you are close enough to stab them you count as “dead.” Therefore, the rules don't actually allow for melee from archers. This rule will not be changed.
- Why can't I enter into melee if I have longsword gloves and a bow?
  - Risk of damage to the bow, which may not be noticed until too late. No one wants a bow exploding in their face. Also, there is a prohibition on sheathed sidearms, meaning one would either have to carry the sword while manipulating the bow, or leave on the sideline, where it is out of play. This rule applies to everyone equally, it is simply called out again in archery to make it obvious
- Can we use hooking, pulling, or other person-manipulation weapons?
  - No. This was asked, for those confused. In the same way grappling is not allowed, pulling someone around with a hook is equally unsafe.
- Can we have distraction, “for-the-lulz,” or meme weapons?
  - While not, strictly speaking, ahistorical, the answer is still no. This opens up too many “what-ifs” that may prevent the event from running well, even if perfectly safe. There is enough happening on the field that we do not want to add shenanigans.
- Can we have elastic-powered bows/crossbows?
  - If referring to a PVC-pipe and bungee cord arrangement, no. If referring to a bow/crossbow which derives its energy from elastic cord versus tension in the arms, please clear it with event staff as those will be handled on a case-by-case basis.
- Why is a castle allowed, but not pavises or other static shields?
  - The castle's stability is known and understood. However, we cannot guarantee the same of pavises. To simplify registration, we do not have to have to judge every pavise design. This rule may change in the future.

