

# *SHDA Combat Standards*

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## Introduction

The standards presented here are designed to encourage the safe recreation of period forms of combat. Only the standards which are presented here are those which apply to training and combat within the SHDA unless some special situation should warrant such a change. Such a situation will be detailed and the results given by a member of the governing council of the SHDA. In all other instances the standards which are presented here have precedence, except in case of common law.

Every member of the SHDA should be attentive to safety and in all instances common sense should override any written rule should the situation deem it to be so. These rules are written to encourage the safe performance of all combat activities within the SHDA and the only way that this is possible is for all members to support the respective Trainers, Marshals and School Head in this endeavour.

These rules form a framework around which training and combat within the SHDA are performed. Each member is expected to familiarise themselves with these standards in order that combat and training can be performed in a manner which encourages safe conduct. Any individual who is unsure about the reading or performance of any standard found in these rules should consult with a Trainer or the School Head. Being proactive about safety in training and combat increases safety overall.

## 1.0 Rules of Combat

Combat is defined as: Any activity where students are actively attempting to strike each other and not in a structured drill situation with a trainer in attendance. There are four levels of combat Training, Free-play, Sparring and Tournament

### 1.1 Four Levels of Combat

There are four levels of combat within the SHDA each with its different approach and requirements. It is important to understand each level of combat in order to understand each level's safety requirements. It will be noted that the higher levels tend to blur into one another but they are still distinct.

1. The first level is Training.
  - a. This is not actually combat, these are drills and controlled elements described by the Trainer for the training of students.
  - b. Supervised at all times by the Trainer
  - c. Light armour is sufficient.
2. The second level is Free-play.
  - a. This is a light form of combat where the speed is not up to its full capacity and the focus is more on the skills presented and demonstrated in a bouting environment rather than any attempt to win the combat. To use a loose term this could be seen to be done at about half the full combat speed.
  - b. Supervised by at least one Marshal at the least, with preference for the presence of a Trainer.
  - c. Light armour is required, but Sparring armour is recommended.

3. The third level is Sparring.
  - a. This is a more intense form of combat than found in the previous level. The idea in this form is to strike without being struck. While there should be a focus on skills during this combat, there is also an increased emphasis on the results of the combat as well. This could be seen loosely as three-quarter speed combat.
  - b. Supervised by a Marshal at the least.
  - c. Sparring armour is required.
4. The fourth level is Tournament.
  - a. This form of combat is official competition level.
  - b. Supervised by at least one Marshal with a preference for two if possible.
  - c. Sparring armour is required and if percussive cuts are to be used, Cut and Thrust armour is required.

## 1.2 Rules of Combat

1. Combat is a dangerous activity. Each participant will recognise this fact and assume unto himself or herself all risk and liability for harm whilst engaged in such activity. All people in or near the field of combat will also recognise the risks and assume the liabilities thereof.
2. Sharp weapons will never be used in a combat activity.
3. No person shall engage in combat unless properly armoured as per the SHDA Armour and Weapon standards below.
4. The School Head, trainer, or combat marshal may ban any weapon or armour at any time if they feel it is unsafe or does not match the SHDA Armour and Weapon standards below. This may be discussed with the School Head at a later time.
5. All combatants will behave at all times in a level-headed and courteous manner.
6. No person shall engage in combat without knowledge of these rules and the General Fencing Standards below.
7. Breaches of these or the following standards will not be tolerated. Those individuals in breach of these standards can expect to be censured and should the breach be severe enough removed from the SHDA. The final authority for such action is the School Head.

## 2.0 General Fencing Standards

These rules set fundamental standards for all types of combat within SHDA. All combatants must be aware of these rules to be able to engage in combat within SHDA.

1. These rules are designed to promote safety. If common sense indicates the General Fencing Standards, for any reason, are unsafe, safety must come first. If in doubt, cease combat and discuss with a nearby Trainer or School Head.
2. This document is subject to change. Each version shall be dated.
3. SHDA seeks to recreate fencing styles from different historical time periods. SHDA encourages students to study fencing manuals and to engage in regular practice to increase their skill.
4. The General Fencing Standards are designed to work with the Rules of Combat, with the Rules of Combat taking precedence.
5. Combatants must obey the directions of the Marshal, the Trainer, or School Head overseeing the training grounds or combat area.
6. Upon hearing the call of 'HOLD', all combatants must cease, check for hazards, and then assume a non-threatening position.
7. Striking to deliberately cause injury, or with excessive force, is forbidden.
8. Combat may only begin when the Marshal and both combatants have indicated they are ready. Such indication should be physical at the least and both vocal and physical as a preference.
9. All issues must be resolved on the field or referred to the Marshal as according to the Grievance Procedure.
10. No combatant may enter combat if in a mentally impaired state, including drugs and alcohol, concussion, or anything else that may mentally impair a combatant.
11. If an injury is taken, all combat must immediately cease until the injury is examined, first aid applied if necessary, and the injured combatant will decide whether he is fit to fight, with the Marshall able to overrule this decision to cease the combat.
  - a. Any injury which requires professional medical attention must be brought to the attention of the School Head and also documented.

## 2.1 Acknowledgement of Blows

1. The combatant who is hit must call out the blows that he feels are good, and must call out blows that he feels were not good. Combat need not cease except for a “killing” blow.
2. Combatants are presumed to be wearing a doublet, shirt, breeches and hose. The touch of an edge alone is not enough to penetrate or disable the opponent. Pressure on the body must be felt for the blow to be considered to be good. In the case of a cut some sort of movement on the edge is also necessary.
3. Any strike to these areas defines a killing blow – face, throat, body, pelvis, underarms. The diagonal seam on the shoulder is a good indicator to divide shoulder and body. A killing blow will stop the combat instantly.
  - a. In addition in cut-and-thrust weapon forms a lethal blow is also valid for a strike to the inside of the upper leg.
4. Any strike to the hand disables the hand, but not the arm.
5. Any strike to the arm disables the arm, which cannot be used to attack or defend.
6. Any strike to the leg disables the leg, which must have the weight taken from it. If both legs are disabled, the person who has both legs disabled must admit defeat. This is except for people unable to stand unaided, such as people in a wheelchair or requiring other modern assistance. These people may fight in whichever position they deem comfortable. Leg strikes to such a combatant are deemed to be non-effective.
7. A limb which is struck a second time is considered to be no more damaged or impeded than it was from the first strike. Repeated attacks against disabled limbs are unacceptable, though incidental contact is accepted as a consequence of combat. Such disabled limbs are considered “off target” for the remainder of the bout.

## 2.2 Use of Weapons

1. Swords may strike with a thrust, cut, pommel strike or hilt strike. Swords defined as rapiers will require any cuts to be placed against the opponent and then pushed or pulled with noticeable pressure across the opponent. Swords may also cut with the tip by placing the tip and then sliding it across the opponent. Unless deemed by the construction of the sword, both edges are able to deliver cuts.
  - a. A sword is considered to have two edges unless it is deemed otherwise by its construction such weapons include katana and some sabres.
  - b. A combatant may declare what the weapon is and its capabilities but should there be any confusion the final word will be made by a Trainer or the School Head.

2. The quillon strike and pommel strike are only valid if the strike is clean and delivered to the head, and only when students are deemed to have enough experience to use this blow safely.
  - a. The performance of pommel and quillon strikes will be to place such implement in place and call "Check" in order to demonstrate the action against an opponent. Such actions shall be restricted to such experienced students as deemed by the Trainers or School Head.
  - b. Such actions are only permissible in Training and Free-play situations.
3. Cuts must be clean and unimpeded to be deemed as valid.
4. Thrusts are valid if the tip is placed with noticeable pressure against the opponent.

### **2.3 Unarmed Actions**

1. No unarmed strikes may be used, though the hand may be used to parry, grab, push or pull the opponent, this must be used without intent to injure.
2. If grappled, a grappled opponent may loudly call 'Good!' to indicate his opponent has won. As soon as this is done, the opponent must safely and without pain release his opponent, attempting to lessen any fall if required.
3. Grappling is an optional activity, and may be refused before combat.
  - a. Grappling should be conducted in such a way that concerns of safety override any other concerns.
4. If grappled and 'Hold!' is called, regardless of who has the advantage, combat must immediately cease with the safety of the combatants paramount.

### **2.4 Use of Other Devices**

1. Parrying devices including the hand may be used to trap, immobilise or disarm the opponent's weapon, so long as it is safe to do so.
2. A cloak may be thrown over the opponent including the face, to tangle or blind the opponent. A 'Hold!' should not be called unless there is an unsafe situation.
3. No item other than cloaks may be thrown.
  - a. Such a cloak will have no hard parts in its construction.
4. If a parrying gauntlet is used, it is deemed to protect only the areas which the actual gauntlet protects. The parrying gauntlet makes those areas immune to cuts.
5. A draped cloak will stop a thrust so long as it is further than 20 cm from the body.

### 3.0 Armour and Weapon Standards

There are 3 types of armour for different scenarios.

1. Light armour, defined as - Long pants, long sleeved shirt, groin protection (for males), fencing mask, gloves. This is suitable for drills.
2. Sparring armour, defined as - Padded long sleeve jacket, long pants, mask, gorget, groin or chest protection as required, fencing mask, and coif. No skin showing. This armour is suitable for combat with rapiers.
  - a. The padded jacket and coif will conform to standards for penetration resistant material being material which is unlikely to be penetrated by a flat broken blade. That is, equivalent to a 550N fencing jacket.
  - b. The mask, gorget and groin protection will conform to standard for rigid protection being a material which is unlikely to deform under the pressure of a thrust made from an authorised weapon. That is, equivalent to 18 gauge mild steel.
3. Cut and Thrust Armour, defined as above, plus hardened hand protection such as steel gauntlets and forearm and elbow protection such as leather vambraces. The back of the fencing mask must have some form of hard protection, such as hardened leather. This level of armour is suitable for all approved weapons.
  - a. The hardened items being hand, forearm, elbow and back of head protection should conform as close to the rigid standard as possible as indicated above.
4. Weapons designed for combat must have no sharp edges or parts.
5. All swords must have a leather or rubber tip firmly attached, and highly unlikely to be removed in combat. The tip should also be coloured with contrasting tape to make its presence or absence easily recognisable.
6. All blades must be reasonably flexible. To determine this, the School Head may test all blades and has the final say. As a general rule, this test may be applied –

Hold weapon parallel to the ground, supporting handle against table or bench if necessary. Hang a 3 ounce weight (85 grams) just behind the tip. If the blade flexes visibly (More than 0.25 inch (6mm) for blades of less than 18" in length or more than 0.5 inch (12mm) for longer blades) then the blade is sufficiently flexible.
7. A weapon should not have undue heft which will affect the safe use and control of the weapon.
8. Any combatant may wear additional armour which they deem to be necessary so long as it does not impede the correct calibration of blows.

## 4.0 Roles and Responsibilities.

1. There are four positions within the SHDA. School Head, Trainer, Marshal and Student.
2. The School Head oversees the entire training area as well as trains where appropriate. He is the head and final authority of SHDA.
3. The Trainers are responsible for their own classes and for general safety.
4. The Marshals are those students who have experience enough to gain the position of Marshal, as judged by the School Head and Trainers. Marshals oversee individual combats as well as keep an eye on general safety.
5. The Students keep an eye on general safety, their own and others.

## 5.0 Grievance Procedure

1. If there is an issue on or off the field, the two individuals must raise this issue with each other with the Marshal as an independent arbiter first and attempt to resolve the issue in a mature way.
2. If this is not successful, and the issue is ongoing, the two individuals and the school head will have a sit down meeting to resolve the issue.
3. If this continues to be an issue, the school head may remove one or both members from SHDA.