

Skjaldborg

Combat Handbook

First Edition ver. 2.0

2024

This Handbook is designed to give all combatants knowledge of how the Skjaldborg Combat System functions. This is for existing members, members in training, as well as other combat groups attending any Skjaldborg sanctioned event. It is separated into 3 sections: Basic Rulings, Weapons & Armour, and Combat. While most information will be covered within this document, something is sure to have been overlooked or inadvertently omitted, or may have a questionable description. Please contact your local Battle Captain, or Skjaldborg contact, with questions regarding this.

The Ravensborg Combat: Skjaldborg Rule Modifications addendum immediately follows this document.

Basic Rulings

All fighters and combat will abide by the rules and guides laid out below.

All fighters must wear a minimum of gloves and helmets while in combat!

All weaponry must have passed a safety inspection by a Battle Captain, or approved Marshall, prior to use in combat for the day; or at any time of their choosing.

Fighters will not use any weaponry that they have not been fully trained in the use of. Their local Battle Captain or Group Leader is the deciding factor, and is ultimately responsible for training approval.

All combat will be conducted in approved spaces, so as not to endanger members of the public, other reenactors, or property. Event Organizers or Battle Captains will determine this space at the start of an event.

No weapon will ever be directed toward members of the public, or reenactors not participating in combat.

No fighter can be a part of combat if under the influence of alcohol or drugs.

All combat will be observed by Battle Captains and/or approved Marshalls. They have the authority to warn, or remove, a fighter from combat for infringing on the ruleset, or for being unsafe. Any disagreements with them will not be voiced upon the combat field, but will be discussed calmly after combat has ceased.

Battle Captains have the authority to refuse allowance of any weapon or armour upon the combat field.

Fully trained fighters will be aged 18+. Anyone 17 and younger can participate in training, but not in full combat. Additionally, anyone 17 and younger need explicit permission from parents/guardians in order to participate, as well as approval by 2 or more Battle Captains.

Marshalls are any trained fighter, approved by a Battle Captain, who has the duty of overseeing combat. This is a temporary position, its' length to be determined by the Battle Captain (generally lasting for that day's combat).

Battle Captains are trained members of Skjaldborg that have experience on the field of combat, and have been approved for the position. Every branch of Skjaldborg will include a minimum of one Battle Captain to oversee all combat. Any questions or concerns can be addressed to any of the Battle Captains.

Current Battle Captains

Nebraska: Philip Ryan, Ryan Carlson, Eric Singas

Iowa: Derek Bowman, Montana McCabe, Joe Harkness, Shaun Thomas

Illinois: Derek Bowman

Wisconsin: Christian Pearson

Missouri: Nate Skaldhjarta

Weapons & Armour

Melee Weaponry

- Weaponry will be based/modeled upon Viking Age finds (sword, seax, axe, mace, spear)
- Edges will be a minimum of 2.5 mm thick edges, and rebated, which means rounded in profile (not square edged)
- Tips will be a minimum diameter of a quarter (25mm or appx 1 inch)
- Edges/Tips will be free of any burrs/chips that can cause cuts to flesh (minor dings are unavoidable and acceptable)
- Construction will be that of functional weaponry designed for sparring/ training/ combat
- Examples of unacceptable design include, but are not limited to: rat tail tangs, sharps, aluminum/titanium/stainless steel stage weaponry, jagged edges, and weaponry with a notable history of breaking under combat stress.
- Long spears will have the spear socket riveted to the shaft, and the shaft length will be no greater than 8' 6"
- Long axes will have handles no greater than the distance from the ground to the wielder's chin.

Ranged Weaponry

- All Melee Weaponry rules also apply to Ranged Weaponry
- Weaponry will be based/modeled upon Viking Age finds (bow, javelin, thrown axe)
- Bows will be maximum 35 lb. draw
- Arrows will be tipped with rubber bird/ small game hunting blunt tips
- Fletching can be of either 3 or 4 feather fletching (no vinyl), or of the flu flu style

Shields

- Shields will be based/modeled upon Viking Age finds (round, kite/ teardrop)
- Construction will be that of functional shields designed for sparring/ training/ combat
- Shields will be made of wood (plywood or planked), and will be rimmed with rawhide or leather. Facing with leather or linen is optional (but greatly increases the shield's durability)
- Shields are used primarily as a defensive tool. They can also be used offensively to control your opponent's weapon, or to bind or shove. Shields will never be used to strike your opponent directly.

Armour

- **Armour will be based/modeled upon Viking Age finds. Anything not, will not be allowed for public combat demonstrations.**
- Leather:
 - not a documented armour material
 - can still be used as a tunic for light protection, or layered under metallic armours
 - can be used in construction of akheton, vápntréyja, or similar padded garment
- Maille / Brynja:
 - The most common style of Viking Age armour
 - Rings will be constructed per historical evidence: either completely riveted, or alternating rows of solid/riveted rings butted rings are not allowed
 - Shape and size dependent on time period and region
 - Will be constructed of iron or steel (aluminum, stainless, titanium, etc. is not allowed)
- Lamellar:
 - Rare type of armour, limited to Eastern Kits (i.e. Rus, Varangian, Italo-Norman)
 - Will be constructed of iron, steel, or bronze (leather, bone, aluminum, stainless, titanium, etc. is not allowed)
- Helmets
 - While a rare find, all combatants are required to wear a helm while in combat
 - Helmets will be constructed of iron or steel (bronze/brass trim acceptable), and will be 18 gauge or thicker metal
- Gloves / Mitts
 - While a nonexistent find, all combatants are required to wear gloves / mitts on both hands while in combat (even on the hand behind a shield)
 - Will be constructed of leather, can be padded, reinforced with thick / hardened leather, covered in maille or lamellar, or a combination of these
 - Try to avoid use of oversized welding gloves, or anything that appears modern
- Fore Arm & Lower Leg Protection
 - While not historically documented for most kits, this is accepted for additional protection of the lower limbs, but will be hidden under clothing (unless documented proof is available showing it being visibly worn in the Viking Age)
 - Visible armour will be made of leather, iron/steel splints, or a combination (plate metal construction is not allowed), and in-line with worn historical kit
 - Fore Arm protection can be of either simple “below the elbow”, or “bauzeband” styled construction
 - Lower Leg protection can be of either simple “below the knee”, “Eastern” construction, or maille chausses
- Modern Protection
 - Modern padded and plastic sport styled protection is allowed, BUT ONLY if it is completely concealed beneath clothing and armour
 - Cups to protect the groin are also recommended, but not required
- Any other material or construction not listed here is subject to approval by Battle Captains and Authenticity before use, and must be in-line with worn kit

Combat

Standard Combat (Western)

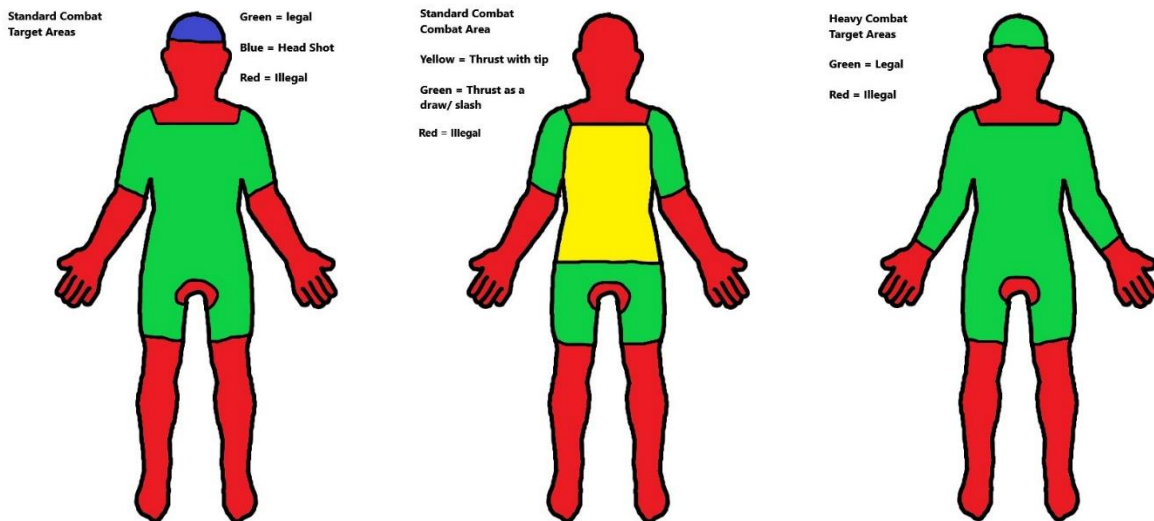
- This is our common style of combat. It uses a combination of 5 basic attacks to the target areas of the body, in conjunction with the “pulled blow” form of strike.
- One solid Hit to a target area constitutes a Death. Additionally, a Hit to an upper limb results in the target stopping any defense, and subsequently taking another Hit to the torso, resulting in Death
- Armoured fighters only accept Hits that would “realistically” penetrate their worn armour, and ignore other hits (i.e. if wearing maille, you ignore slashes, but take thrusts from weapons as a Hit)
- Only metal armours offer this Hit protection, leather does not offer protection from Hits (only protects the wearer from the actual force of the strike)
- Armour only protects the part of the body it covers (i.e. a slash to an unarmoured inner thigh counts as a Hit, even though you are wearing knee length maille). This is to promote accuracy of strikes (aiming for a vulnerable area), as well as to give benefits of wearing armour
- No armour is required (aside from helmet and gloves)

Strikes

- “Pulled blow” means that the force of the strike is lessened before contact with the target area, minimizing the amount of force and reducing the risk of injury. This being said, you are being hit by a large piece of steel, and injuries can and will sometimes occur.
- Strikes using excessive force can cause injury, and can result in removal from combat to undergo additional training
- Strikes should be delivered in such a way, and with enough force, that they represent “real strikes”. Light taps do not count as a Hit.
- The weapon will never move in front of, or across, the opponent’s face. This is to prevent accidental contact with the opponent’s face/illegal target area.
- Thrusts to a shield will be at a downward angle (never horizontal or angled upwards), and below the shield boss. This is to prevent accidental deflection into the opponent’s face/ illegal target area.
- Length weapons will not be blindly thrust under the opponent’s shield. The target area must be seen by the attacker.
- When striking with a length weapon, hands will be a minimum of shoulder length apart at the time of contact with the opponent (no pool cueing). This is to ensure control over the weapon. Attacks may NOT be made with both hands together at the end of the shaft.
- Shield kicks and shield shoves are allowed as long as they are used to put distance between you and your opponent.
- Unarmed strikes to any part of your opponent (i.e. punching, chopping, kicking, kneeing, etc.) can only be made against your opponent’s shield. This is only used as an effort to create distance between yourselves, or to create an opening for a follow-up attack with a weapon.
- Making unarmed strikes (again...i.e. punching, chopping, kicking, kneeing, etc.) directly to your opponent is not allowed. We are training in Viking Age weapon combat...NOT brawling.
- Grappling (i.e. glima, wrestling, hip throws, trying to subdue your opponent to the ground, etc.) is not permitted. If you and your opponent come into a weapon bind that lasts over 3 seconds, you will break apart and take a few steps away from each other, then re-engage in weapon combat.

TARGET AREAS

- **Slashes:**
 - Target areas for slashes are the torso below the collar bone, shoulder muscle, upper arms, upper legs (including inner arm and inner thigh).
 - A slash is an attack with the edge of the weapon, either with a chopping/hacking motion, or a drawing/sliding motion
- **Thrusts:**
 - Target areas for thrusts are the torso below the collar bone to above the groin. A thrust is an attack with the point of a weapon. Special emphasis is put on using only light pressure with the tip of the weapon to avoid inadvertent serious injury.
 - Thrusts to the upper arms and legs are made by thrusting past the body, and then drawing the edge of the blade across the target area in a slashing motion.
- **Illegal target areas** are the head, neck, collarbone area, elbows to fingers, knees to toes, immediate groin area, and across the spine.



Head Shots

- Advanced fighters have the option to also receive head shots as a Hit. If the fighter chooses to accept these, they must state so before the battle begins. They can also state, to a Battle Captain, that it is a “standing rule” for any time they are in combat (it will remain so throughout that demo/event).
- Strikes to the head will only come down as a vertical strike to the top of the head, or a 45° angled strike to the upper sides of the head.
- Strikes to the head are NEVER horizontal to the side of the head, and thrusts are NEVER allowed to the head

Hooking

- Hooking weapons or shields, with an axe or lugged spear for example, can easily happen. If it happens, do not engage in a tugging contest! Both fighters can gently tug a couple times and/or try to disengage. But if no one can disengage the weapons, one or both fighters will drop the hooked weapons, and draw a backup weapon. If the weapon is hooked on a shield or strap, then the fighter with the hooked weapon will drop the weapon if they are unable to disengage.
- Hooking the body is allowed by experienced fighters only. This type of hook typically happens with a long axe. The fighter must be sure to use very little pulling power on the other fighter. This is typically used for show to pull the opponent over, or pull a leg from under them.

Death / Defeat

- When training, and you receive a killing Hit, you must call out your Death to your opponent (i.e. Kill, Dead, You got me, Aaarg, etc.)
- When at a public demo, we tend to “ham” things up a bit for entertainment purposes. When you receive a killing Hit at these events, act out the death a bit, and fall over “dead” (maybe even let your opponent get a strong “killing blow” in before you fall over)
- Most importantly, Hits and Deaths are on an honor based system. You are responsible for taking your own Hits. Do not call out Hits to your opponent, or confront them in the midst of combat with what you thought was a Hit to them. The problem could be that your strike was too light, or that your opponent didn’t feel it while in the heat of combat, or they were armoured, or they deemed it was a glancing blow. Instead, continue to fight (maybe focusing on more precise hits, or a stronger/harder strike), and discuss it with them after combat is finished.
- If a fighter consistently ignores hits, bring it to a Marshall or Battle Captain after combat, so they can handle it. Do not engage in open confrontation on the combat field.

Ranged Attacks

- Arrows
 - The target area remains the same
 - Head shots are NEVER allowed
 - Shooting directly towards the general public, or reenactors not in combat, is NEVER allowed
 - 1 Hit by an arrow, to any target area, constitutes a Death
- Javelins/ Thrown Axes
 - These are only thrown at shields, NEVER at a body
 - Eye to eye contact between both opponents is required BEFORE it is thrown
 - Thrown weapons are strictly for show, in shield wall formation or one vs. one combat, NEVER in a mixed melee.
 - Strikes are not considered a Hit, as they should never make actual contact with a body. However, if they do (bounce off the ground into a leg, penetrate a shield to contact the body, etc.), it is up to the fighter receiving the attack to take it as a Hit

Heavy Combat (Eastern)

- This is our advanced style of combat limited to trained fighters with full armour. All rules are the same as Standard Combat (Western), with the following changes:
- Full armour / protection is required
 - Torso, upper arms, upper legs
 - Helmet with aventail , or an extended padded arming hood, to protect the neck, jaw, collar bone area
 - Fore arm, including elbow protection
- Helmets will be 14 gauge or thicker metal, preferably of tempered steel
- Strikes
 - Strikes are considerably stronger/harder, while still retaining something of the “pulled blow” form
- Target Areas
 - Include lower arm and head

Combat Rule Violation Reprimand Process

1st Offense: Verbal warning and constructive criticism

2nd Offense: Written warning, mandatory training refresher with two or more Captains

3rd Offense: Final written warning, benched from group combat for a minimum of one event, limited to 1v1 combat with Captains only, mandatory final training refresher with two or more Captains.

4th and Final Offense: Complete and total permanent ban from all combat within Skjaldborg (includes all trainers and events).

As with any combat training or martial art, mistakes can and will be made, and accidents can and will happen. Any combat rule violation incident will be documented clearly and concisely, and in a timely manner, with a Captain.

If a singular incident cannot be resolved between the involved parties, then it falls upon the Captains to make an ultimate decision or judgement call.

Do note that certain circumstances can warrant more severe or immediate consequences. These incidents will be decided by the Captains.