

Heavy Weapons Authorizations

Presented here is a guideline for marshals conducting authorizations, particularly for first time authorizations. I strongly recommend doing a mock authorization with fighters in your area to address any deficiencies before they get to the event. Marshals should also go through the various items themselves with a current copy of the Trimarian Marshal's Handbook to make sure their knowledge is current and accurate. If you are unclear on any item, ask for guidance, it's your job to be able to answer these questions. Remember also that any minor who is authorizing **MUST** have a parent/guardian present **AND** the Earl Marshal or designee.

Armor/weapon inspection:

No authorization should proceed until armor inspection is passed. Here are some common problem areas for new fighters:

- Helm fit, chin strap, padding - make sure the fighter's helm isn't too large that there are uncovered gaps, or too small that there isn't enough room for proper padding or give. There should be sufficient space between the fighter's face and bargrill. The chinstrap should be secure and cup the chin, not under it. Inspect the inside of the helm for dangerous protrusions, unsafe construction, and proper 1/2" min. padding. Pull up on the bargrill to make sure the helmet does not easily come off or the chinstrap slip off.
- Gorget / camail – Check for min. 1/4" padding in non-rigid gorgets. Make sure a camail worn without a gorget is long and stiff enough to stop a hard forward thrust and meets requirements for rigidity and padding in back at the neck vertebrae.
- Groin protection – **always** ask both sexes if they are wearing approved protection.
- Elbows / knees – check for proper 1/4" minimum padding. A single layer quilted gambeson is not equivalent to 1/4" closed cell foam. 'Floating' elbows and knees must still be padded. Also, most street hockey armor is not rigid nor covers enough to pass without additions to cover points and/or for rigidity.
- Body armor – Leather kidney belts are commonly either too thin, too soft, or not padded (1/4" min.) where required. Make sure they also cover the floating ribs. Make sure armor covering the kidneys actually covers the kidneys.
- Weapons – primary single-handed weapons must have a lanyard or other means of securing. Check thrusting tips for proper construction and give. Check for weight and length where appropriate. Check construction and give on weapons with heads.
- Demis / gauntlets & wrist coverage - Check coverage of wrist, thumb, and back of hand in cuphilts. Leather demis frequently do not cup and/or are not rigid and require 1/4" to 1/2" padding.
- Behind shield – check for elbow / forearm protection and min. 4" hand spacing from any edge – less requires use of additional hand protection.

- Shield edging / bolts – shield edging must be securely attached and in good repair. No bolts or ties may protrude more than 3/8”, and exposed bolts that could easily contact opponents or the fighter should be covered.
- Condition and appearance – check that the armor is in good repair; broken straps, cracked welds, and sharp/rough metal edges should be repaired before taking the field. All modern-looking plastic, logos, shoes, or other obvious mundanity must be covered. Shields made from street signs must be painted over.

Basic questions:

- “How long have you been training, and who has been primarily responsible for your training?”
There is no wrong answer here, but fighters who give answers like ‘a couple weeks’ or ‘this is my third time in armor’ should be tested very carefully. Remember too that young fighters may be forgetting to include their experience as youth fighters.
- Acceptable target areas (if they don’t know the answer to this question by the time they come to authorize, they should be failed).
An inch above the wrist and up, an inch above the knee and up. All other areas are legal, though deliberate shots to the groin or neck are discouraged.
- How to call hits to torso/groin/hip/shoulder - mass weapons vs. single handed bladed weapons.
Swords that hit below the hip socket down count as a leg blow; on or above the hip socket and the fighter must fight from their knees sitting back and cannot rise up on their knees or move around. Mass weapons whether single or two handed that hit below the hip socket are taken as legs, blows above the hip socket are fatal. Thrusts from any weapon on the hip or below are a leg blow. Sword blows to the shoulder are the loss of the arm; mass weapon blows above the socket are fatal unless somehow travelling away from the body.
- Face thrusts vs. body thrusts (& top/back/sides of head).
Directed thrusts to the face only require a touch. Body thrusts must be sharp and hard, not a push. No thrusts to the top/back/sides of the helm will be counted.
- Cuts to the face vs. cuts to the body.
Cuts striking the face without hitting other parts of the helmet only require half power or better to be counted.
- What to do when an arm or leg is struck.
When an arm is struck it must be put behind the fighter as best as possible. Fighters losing a leg must fight from their knees.
- Strikes that hit an already dead limb.
A second blow to the same arm is considered to be fatal. If the same leg is struck again or the other leg struck, the fighter should remain sitting back and cannot rise up or move around.

- What you can and can't do with your shield.
Shields can be used to displace an opponent's weapon or shield, or placed against the body or a limb to impede movement. Striking with the shield is prohibited.
- Single engagement and line engagement (if they don't know what engagement is by the time they come to authorize, they should be failed).
Engagement happens when: you are in the front 180 degrees of your opponent; your opponent acknowledges your presence through words or actions; if eye contact is made within the longest weapon's range. Line engagement happens when engagement is established between any one person in a line/unit and any other person in another line/unit.
- What you can do without engagement.
You may foul an opponent's weapon or shield; you may impede their movement or vision; you may slowly push; you may not grapple, strike, or shove.
- Rule #6, what it is and its application, particularly during engagement.
'Don't be a jerk'. Don't do something to someone else that would upset or anger you if done to you, endanger them, or take advantage of their courtesy or safety consciousness. Ex.: having line engagement and striking a hard blow to an opponent unaware of you when a light blow would suffice.
- What to do if an opponent trips or falls
In a tourney, the opponent must be allowed to right themselves. In melee, you may strike as long as the opponent is not prone or helpless to defend themselves. (Ex.: A fighter falls on their face vs. stumbles and lands on their knees.)
- How to call missile hits (arrows/javelins/siege weapons).
Thrown or propelled missiles must hit a legal target area and hit squarely; glancing blows need not be counted. A good way to tell is if the missile dropped somewhere in front of you or traveled past. Siege ammunition is fatal if it hits your shield or ANYWHERE on your person. Hits to your weapon destroy the weapon unless it was held in front of you and blocked the siege ammo from striking you.
- Corkscrewing.
Moving so an opponent on their knees is continuously forced to turn to face you is corkscrewing. Passing them once as you throw a blow is not. Corkscrewing is considered unchivalrous but NOT illegal to do however, and is used in some kingdoms. It is acceptable in melee as long as Rule #6 is observed.

Demonstration:

- Attack only – look for aggression, power and follow-through, proper blade orientation, proper use and control of thrusting tip (particularly with mass weapons), not striking with shield/proper active use of shield.
- Defend only – look for active defense, no cowering or turning back/fleeing, calls shots appropriately, gets to knees quickly when legged.
- Attack/defend normally (have your experienced fighter throw some light blows to see if the authorizing fighter can tell the difference).
- Defending while legged.

- Attacking legged opponent – watch for corkscrewing, pushing the opponent over, and illegal use of the lower legs.
- Dying defensively.
- Aggressively pressed by opponent – at some point during the authorization, the experienced fighter should aggressively attack and press the authorizing fighter to see how they respond. Look for freezing up, cowering or fleeing.
- If possible, also observe the authorizing fighter in melee combat.

Once all steps have been completed, the knights/marshals should talk privately about any issues that they saw that might affect the outcome of the authorization, and come to a consensus whether the individual should pass or fail. Inform the fighter about any areas where they are weak, and give specific directions on how to fix the noted deficiencies if they failed.

Combat archery and Siege weapon authorizations **MUST** be conducted during a melee scenario and will have some different questions and demonstration requirements. CA and Siege authorizations require marshals with specialized training in these areas.

All first time authorizations **MUST** take place at an event. Additional weapon style authorizations and combat archery authorizations may take place at any SCA sanctioned activity (event, demo, official group practice).

Authorizations require, at a minimum, either two knights or one knight and an authorizing marshal, and an experienced fighter.