



# **Recommended Safe Operating Procedures for Classes & Workshops**

Version 1.4

## 1.0 Preamble

These procedures form the HFA recommended minimum standards for safe training for the purposes of insurance and general safety, and are adapted from martial arts industry best practices.

It is expected that most clubs will already have their own version of these procedures, however clubs may freely adapt this set of procedures to their own specific activities. Any legal information provided on this document is of a general nature only and should not be regarded as a substitute for legal advice and/or reference to the appropriate legislation.

If you have additional suggestions/recommendations for general safe practices, please let us know at [historicalfencingaus@gmail.com](mailto:historicalfencingaus@gmail.com), and we can add them here if appropriate.

## 2.0 Class Supervision

- All formal classes should be provided by an appointed instructor, with assistants/senior students as required.
- When teaching persons under the age of 18 years we recommend at least one other adult person be present at all times.

## 3.0 Waivers/Understanding of Risk

- All participants should sign the appropriate waiver for the event/classes (social fencing presumes all participants are already so signed with their respective clubs)
- An applicant, having identified on his/her application form, a medical or psychiatric condition which may affect training should be advised that they may not commence training until their training has been cleared by an appropriate medical practitioner..
- Test cutting, when performed, may require a different waiver with considerations specific to the risks associated with that activity.
- Clubs operating in Victoria shall include an additional declaration with their waiver specifying that the applicant is not a Prohibited Person as defined by the Control of Weapons Act, 1990.

## 4.0 Hazard Management

Hazard Management is any procedure, policy, rule or action that has as its function the reduction or removal of any risk that may be associated with the conduct of your martial arts class. This would include but not be limited to:

- We recommend that the training area is clear of any dangerous and/or sharp objects that may provide a risk of injury.
- We recommend instructors/fencers have access at all times to first aid equipment.
- Persons must not wear jewelry etc during training which the instructor deems may present a hazard to the student or to others.

### Definitions:

- Technical/Controlled Sparring: is where two or more practitioners engage in very slow paced unscripted motions or semblance of fighting, using any part of the body or a weapon, without the landing of any blows that are risk bodily harm, with the intention of safely training the practitioners in the use of various fighting techniques.
- Free-sparring: is sparring where the use of fighting techniques by one or more of the practitioners is not predetermined or advised. The purpose of free-sparring is to test a practitioner's ability to respond spontaneously and effectively to unforeseen fighting techniques. Free sparring is usually carried out at high speed and so should attract higher safety standards.
- Drilling is any pre-arranged set of movements. Drilling may be performed slowly (ie. tai-chi like speeds) or at speed (moderate to normal speed).
- Cutting is the use of sharp swords to cut specific media such as tatami mats, bottles, clay, or other materials.

### Sparring Restrictions:

- Practitioners should not engage in free sparring without the instructor's consent.
- Sparring at full force should be forbidden, all techniques should be "pulled" and executed at less than full intensity.
- Sparring of any kind for children under 12 should not be allowed with steel

### Sparring Supervision

- We recommend the instructor or a senior student supervise groups of students engaged in free sparring in case of risks to bystanders, or the fencers themselves.

### Protective Equipment

- All participants in free-sparring should wear safety equipment as specified below.

## 5.1 Safe Handling

We recommend that participants be briefed on simple sword safety procedures before drilling. These procedures should include:

- Not waving the sword around in class
- Not walking toward anyone drilling or sparring (in case they are hit)
- Being aware of the point of the weapon while moving in class
- Location of first aid equipment & procedures for its use.

## 5.2 Safety Equipment

### 5.2.1 General Provisions:

- Should be maintained in good working order, preferably to manufacturers standards
- Should be clean with proper attention to hygiene (refer Sports Medicine Australia's Policy on Infections/Diseases).

### 5.2.2 Free Sparring & Full-Intensity Drills

The following safety equipment is the minimum recommended for all participants involved in Free Sparring:

- Fencing jacket (350N+ preferred)
- Mask (350N+)
- Overlay (if appropriate to the weapon)
- Gloves appropriate to weapon (eg. sparring gloves for longsword)
- Additional protection appropriate to weapon & sparring type (eg. throat, forearms & elbows, chest protector, etc)
- Enclosed shoes
- Groin protector (if applicable)
- The following safety equipment is the minimum recommended for all participants involved in

### 5.2.3 Technical/Controlled Sparring & Moderate Intensity Drills

- Mask (350N+)
- Groin protector (if applicable)
- Gloves commensurate with sparring speed (none are required at very slow speeds)

### 5.2.4 Drilling

- Participants must use protective equipment commensurate with the drilling activity.
- Coaches may demonstrate techniques without a mask & hand protection only at slow speed for demonstration purposes (so they can communicate effectively with the class).

- Students may practice drills without a mask & hand protection only when:
  - Moving at slow speed
  - Not using any technique which the instructor deems presents a risk requiring a mask.
- At all other times students should wear a mask while drilling
- At any time the student is moving at high speed in drills they are advised to wear hand protection.
- Any time the student is moving at high speed using thrusts/the point they are required to wear appropriate forearm, torso protection, throat protection as needed by the exercise in addition to gloves mask etc.

#### 5.2.4 Cutting

- Students should only be allowed to perform cutting exercises when they have reached the requisite level of experience as determined by their instructor..
- Sharp weapons shall be secured in a safe area when not in use.
- Cutting shall only take place in an allocated space free of obstructions or other hazards.
- Only a single person shall handle the sharp weapon at any time
- While staff are setting up targets etc. nobody shall be in the cutting area with a sharp weapon.
- The person holding the sword shall not engage in any other activities such as setting up targets without first placing the sword down in a safe area or with another person.
- If using wet targets (water bottles, wet tatami, etc) the fencer shall ensure their hands are dry.
- No persons shall not be allowed in areas where they may be struck by a released sword.
- Junior students should not engage in cutting with sharp swords.

## 6.0 Grappling/Wrestling Considerations

This standard applies to the teaching and practice of any grappling art taught in total or taught as a component of a historical fencing class, including armed techniques which involve grappling, locking, restraining, choking and strangulation techniques.

It is recognized that some components of these arts and their practices are of extremely high risk and so must be approached with caution.

As with all aspects of this Policy and Standards document the safety and well being of the participants is our highest duty.

- We recommend that Throwing/Grappling Mats be used for all activities involving the practice of high speed throws, wrestling, submission holds; including where such activities are included in sparring.
- When teaching, it is recommended that instructors make students aware that a lock or hold should not be applied so as to cause injury i.e. to a point where risk of breakage or dislocation does or could occur. The lock or hold will be applied to minimum pressure. A 'tap out' safety system will be taught before any lock or hold is taught.
- It is VERY highly recommended that a choke or strangulation not be regularly practiced in such a way that it is fully applied i.e. to a point where unconsciousness or 'blackout' does or could occur. A 'tap out' safety system should be taught before any choke or strangulation is taught. It is noted that choke or strangulation techniques can, and has, resulted in brain damage and/or death.

## 7.0 Weapons

General Provisions:

- Instructors can deny the use of a weapon to a student if they deem it unsafe/unfit for purpose.
- The weapon must be in good repair without surface rust, sharp edges, or cracks/burrs.
- Participants with weapons should adhere to local legislation concerning weapon ownership.
- Sharps may not be used under any circumstance for drilling or sparring.
- Sharps may be used for 'Test Cutting' under strict controls.

## 7.1 Ownership & Storage of Weapons & Equipment

### General Provisions:

- When not in use swords and other weapons should be stored somewhere safe and not easily accessible.
- When at training
  - Weapons should be placed in a location under the control of the organisation where members of the public are not able to easily access them.
  - All equipment should be placed out of the way so as not to represent a hazard to participants or spectators.

### Victorian Clubs/Organisations:

- Clubs and their members in Victoria are **required to** familiarise themselves with the Control of Weapons Act (1990) specifying the prohibitions and requirements on weapons in that state.
- Specifically, when not being used for training or competition, swords **must be** stored safely and securely - 'stored safely and securely' means:
  - Stored in a manner calculated to ensure that the sword:
    - is not readily accessible to a person other than the person seeking to rely on the exemption; and
    - is not available for possession, carriage or use by any person who does not belong to a class of exempt persons specified in the above Table or who does not hold an approval issued by the Chief Commissioner of Police; and
  - When being transported between the sword's usual place of storage and places at which the sword is legitimately used in accordance with this Order:
    - stored in a manner calculated to ensure that the sword is not readily accessible to a person other than the person seeking to rely on the exemption; and
    - concealed from plain sight during transportation
- Furthermore clubs operating in Victoria are **required** to keep records of members possessing swords, and issue them with membership cards in accordance with The Act.
- Prohibited persons **shall not** be entitled to possess swords, as specified by the Control of Weapons Act (1990)

## 8.0 Health Risk Minimisation

- Persons should advise the Instructor if suffering from any injury or medical condition, either permanent or temporary, which may be adversely affected by certain types of training. Examples of this may include blood pressure problems and cardiac disorders, neck, knee and back injuries, diabetes and asthma.

- Persons with the above or like conditions are advised to seek medical approval to participate in martial arts classes, where possible, and whether there are any restrictions or conditions applicable.
- Persons are advised not to train if they may be suffering from the flu or other viral infection that may be passed on to other persons, in accordance with Australian health industry recommendations.
- It is recommended that persons should not attend training under the influence of alcohol or illegal drugs.
- Smoking should not be allowed in or around the training area.
- We recommend that persons training give proper attention to personal hygiene and exhibit clean grooming; and ensure that fingernails and toenails are trimmed and clean.
- Persons with a cut or bleeding injury are advised cease training immediately and receive appropriate first aid. Rejoining the training session should not be allowed until the instructor has deemed that is safe to do so. The procedures for dealing with cuts or bleeding injuries are as outlined in the Infections Diseases Policy of Sports Medicine Australia – Attachment ‘3’
- Persons suffering from a concussion, diagnosed or suspected, should refrain from training for a period of time as specified by their health care professional.

## 9.0 Prohibited Activities

We recommend prohibition of the following:

- Uncontrolled Throwing on an unmatted surface
- Use of live blades in any circumstance for drilling or sparring or by minors.
- Exercises that are generally considered dangerous, or any other exercise which is known to be a danger to the student.
- Providing instruction to a student who has not signed a waiver/contract

## 10.0 First Aid Equipment

We recommend that:

- All classes include a First Aid kit containing the required items for the kind of injuries which rarely occur.
- At least one member of the class have received prior first aid training, including CPR etc.
- All students be informed of the location of the first aid kit.
- Any use of the kit include an injury report.



## Appendix A: Version Control

Version	Date	Changes
1.0	13/11/2019	Initial version
1.1	19/2/2019	Public release - clarifications and layout changes.
1.2	19/2/2019	Added clarifications to preamble.
1.3	22/2/2019	Added section 7.1 - storage and ownership of swords and equipment