

Ann Arbor Sword Club Safety Policy

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The policy is in the interest of protecting our members, guests, and spectators, and of maintaining our good insurance standing, while at the same time allowing freedom of study.

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Purpose

The Safety Policy of the Ann Arbor Sword Club (AASC) is for the protection of the members, students and guests while attending any regularly scheduled, approved or sanctioned activity or event.

The Safety Policy is not a limitation on the choices that members of the AASC can make in their pursuit of HEMA. It's only a limitation on which activities, and associated equipment, can be defined as Official Activities of the AASC, and thus covered by AASC insurance.

The Safety Policy is not designed to provide specifics for every conceivable situation. The policy is a base-guideline which AASC activities are to use, and will alter when needed to meet the needs of the membership.

The AASC reserves the right to update this policy at any time, with or without notice. The edition of the Safety Policy that is available at <https://annarborsword.com/Resources.htm> supersedes all previous Safety Policies, effective from the time of upload until the next revision is published.

Definitions

- **Activity:** A particular pursuit that occurs within events such as drilling, sparring, wrestling, cutting, etc.

- **Cutting:** A solo activity using sharp weapons to cut non-living targets, or non-sharp (blunt practice) weapons to cut soft items such as clay.
- **Drills:** Activities where the sword is used to perform non-competitive actions. These can be solo, or done in groups.
- **Opposed Drilling:** Activities where the swords are used to perform prescribed actions with a partner and contact is expected.
- **Event:** A tournament, club-practice, demo or other organized time and place to participate in activities.
- **Sparring:** Sparring can be classified as free-form fighting for competition or for practice, including slow-play, free-play, and earnest.
 - **Slow-Play:** Sparring done at slow-speeds as a form of practice rather than as a form of competition.
 - **Free-Play:** Sparring done as a form of practice rather than as a form of competition. Faster than slow-play, but not at earnest speeds.
 - **Competitive/Earnest Sparring:** Sparring whose purpose is non-compliant and outcome-oriented, tending to be more intense than free-play.
- **Liability Insurance:** Limited protection from lawsuit costs and damages, provided for AASC regularly scheduled, approved or sanctioned activity or event.
- **Official Activity:** An activity run by the AASC or affiliate.
- **Secondary Insurance:** Medical Insurance that supplements an individual's medical insurance. All individuals benefiting from the AASC insurance policy (members or otherwise) are expected to be responsible for any medical and related bills they may incur as a result of any injury they may sustain while participating in an AASC activities. If an injury claim is filed by the AASC, it is expected to be secondary and will apply if the claim is approved by the insurance company.
 - Primary medical care will only be verified in the event of a claim.
- **Reasonable:** The standard that will be used in the case of an investigation by the AASC and its insurance provider is that the organizer should be ready to explain why they believe their claimant was reasonably protected during the time of the injury.
 - 'Reasonably protected' is if the claimant's/organizer's interpretation of the safety policy was considered to be a reasonable, sincere attempt at following the policy.
- **Sharps:** Weapons that are sharp or have sharpened points.
- **Tournament:** An event that is competitive, judged, and follows a standard set of rules.
- **Training Weapon:** A simulator for a weapon, such as a steel, aluminum, synthetic, foam or wooden sword.
- **Requirement/required:** A statement in the policy that must be followed in order to be considered covered by the AASC Insurance policy, both liability and secondary medical.

- **Recommendation:** A statement in the policy that *does not* need to be followed to be considered covered. Its purpose is to provide additional guidance to those who might wish to supplement beyond our existing policy.
 - Recommendations are stated as such in an explicit fashion - unless otherwise noted as a recommendation, assume a statement is required policy.

Responsibilities

- AASC requires members to be ultimately responsible for the execution and compliance of the safety policy at any event or activity.
- Senior Members, Instructors and Administrators can and should intervene for anything they consider risky or non-compliant with safety standards
- Industry standard gear, such as commonly used masks and gloves, is deemed to be automatically in compliance if it is in good apparent condition and does not have obvious repairs that need to be inspected for compliance.
 - For additional information on activity specific gear, please see the Gear Requirements section below.
 - For gear recommendations, refer to the following [document](#).

Membership Status and expectations.

New members will be onboarded differently depending on martial art experience, previous background and demeanor. All individuals participating in club activities must have signed an AASC liability waiver. The following are definitions and not applicable to all activities, but serve as guidance for individual expectations.

- **Novices** are considered to have limited or no recent experience in martial arts, or tangential skill(s), such as stage combat. These individuals are expected to complete lessons with an instructor to ensure competency and adherence with AASC safety expectations before fencing any other member. A list of competencies can be found here [here](#)
- **Members/Guests** are considered to be anyone who regularly attends and has been either vetted by the above policy or in good standing with another known entity. Ostensibly, members are assumed to have a waiver on file and also pay dues.
- **Senior** status expects individuals to have current/ongoing experience of at least 3 years and be in good standing with the Administrative and Instructor staff. These members are encouraged to work with new and novice students.
- **Admins** are those individuals who are at least members and consistently involved in club growth

Activities Outside the Policy

Activities performed outside of AASC-sanctioned events do not fall under our insurance purview. You have agency and responsibility when acting outside of AASC events, meetings of sponsored events.

AASC Sponsored Activities

- All Club sponsored activities will be explicitly stated and bear AASC approval, including

- Recurring regularly scheduled practices
- Tournaments and other public events
- Participants, spectators, and organizers must have a verbal signal to halt any action for safety reasons. “Hold!” “Safety!” or “Halt!” are examples. This applies to all activities.
- In order for a particular individual within an official activity to be covered by insurance, there must be a waiver on file.
- ‘On file’ can include electronic versions of the signed waiver. AASC members, for example, agree to the safety policy when registering with the AASC.
- A basic first aid kit will be available to attendees at any sponsored activity.

Club Practice and Regular Meetings

For any regular meeting, the membership should strive to adhere to the following practices.

- Practice can include drills, all forms of sparring, and much more. The type of activity will determine the safety requirements. Key definitions are:
 - **Solo Drilling:** No specific requirements.
 - **Slow play:** If thrusting is allowed, eye protection (masks) and gloves must be worn.
 - **Opposed Drilling and Free play:** Masks must be worn, and padded gloves of any type (ex. Oil rig gloves, rapier gloves, etc) should be worn and weapons must be from recognized fencing/HEMA equipment manufactures.
- Demonstrations, and introductory instruction, are not considered practice, but must still comply with the safety policy as follows:
 - **Any thrust-related activities must have masks worn.**
 - Earnest sparring during the above type of events would be considered ‘practice’ from an equipment standpoint.
 - Choreographed sparring is not considered practice, and is not bound by its equipment guidelines. However, eye protection is required
 - It’s recommended that participants wear gear for slow or free play.
- The AASC wishes to preserve freedom of study for its members. For activities not listed in this document, organizers should use the equipment they think is sufficient for the practice activity.

Cutting Activities

The AASC insurance does not cover the use of sharp swords for any purpose. That does not mean they cannot be used, only that any resulting liability or medical claims will not be covered by insurance.

The AASC insurance does cover the use of blunt training swords to cut soft targets such as clay. All care must be taken to ensure the safety of bystanders, just as with any other activity involving blunt training swords.

Who is Responsible for Safety Policy Adherence?

When it comes to tournaments & other high-intensity events (sparring camps, high-speed demonstrations, etc), adherence to the safety policy is critical not just to maintain safety standards, but to make certain that the community understands the guidelines and makes a best effort at adhering to them. This means that the safety policy is a matter of culture, not just of qualification.

Because of this, tournament organizers and other people working the event, specifically judges & directors, are responsible for adherence to the safety policy. This includes making sure the rules are aligned with the safety policy, and are suitably enforced.

All members, especially seniors and admins, have a responsibility to maintain a culture of safety. If, as a member, you are uncomfortable with saying something, please let a senior, admin and event organizer know.

Activities not covered by AASC insurance

The AASC wishes to allow its members the most freedom possible, but some activities are not and cannot be covered by our insurance provider. There may be alternative insurance providers or coverage policies available to Affiliate clubs, and we recommend getting personal coverage if you want to participate in the following activities:

- Jousting or mounted combat on live animals, or any other involvement of horses or other equine animals.
- Archery of any kind.
- Boxing, pugilism, and other body striking-based arts.
- The use of sharp swords for any purpose.

Other Disapproved Activities

The AASC wishes to allow its members the most freedom possible, but some activities are so dangerous as to be explicitly listed as disapproved. Participating in any of the following activities is not covered by AASC insurance, and may result in AASC membership or affiliate termination. The AASC in no way endorses the following:

- Sparring or opposed drilling with sharps.
- The use of weapons, sharps especially, on live animals.
- Earnest sparring or drilling without proper eye, hand, or head protection.
- Intoxication of any kind by active participants and working staff. This is a requirement from our insurance provider. Willfully allowing participants/working staff to ingest intoxicating substances can and will be considered not enforcing the safety policy (See “Who is responsible for safety policy adherence?”)

- “Voluntarily taking any drug or narcotic unless the drug or narcotic is prescribed by a Physician. Injury caused by, contributed to or resulting from the Covered Person’s use of alcohol, illegal drugs or medicines that are not taken in the dosage or for the purpose as prescribed by the Covered Person’s Physician.”

If you are a AASC member and wish to publicly have a discussion / share content surrounding the disapproved activities above, you **must** also include a disclaimer that said activity is not covered or endorsed by the AASC. This is for insurance compliance purposes, and cannot be posted to any official AASC social media.

Claim Submission and Working with Insurance

Our insurance waiver states that each participant in club activities will be solely responsible for any and all medical and related bills that they incur because of any injury, as well as costs related to loss or damage to their property, that they may sustain as a result of my participation in the AASC activities.

However, should a member be required to submit a claim on the AASC policy with FL Dean, please contact a director, either David, Terry or Moe who will facilitate forms and contact. A copy can be found [here](#).

Equipment Requirements

Sparing per-weapon breakdown follows below:

- All Weapons: Appropriate groin and chest protection and the weapons themselves must be from recognized fencing/HEMA equipment manufactures
- Longsword and Sabers (foam)
 - Mask
 - Gorget (recommended)
 - Gloves
- Longsword, Sabres, Messers, Arming Swords, etc. (synthetic)
 - Mask
 - Back of the Head Protection recommended
 - Gorget
 - Gloves (lacrosse, hockey, or Heavy HEMA specific gloves)
 - Outside of lessons, solo and slow sparing, Modern Fencing Gloves are disallowed
 - Elbow protection
 - Knee protection
 - Required for earnest sparing

- Recommended for other activities
 - Fencing Jacket - pending intensity
 - Shin protection not required- as club culture, this targeting area is not encouraged.
- Longsword, Sabers, Messers, Arming Swords, Any Polearm etc (steel)
 - Mask
 - Back of the Head Protection Required
 - Gorget
 - Gloves (Heavy HEMA gloves)
 - Medium gloves are applicable for sabers with larger, bell guards
 - Elbow protection
 - Knee protection
 - Shin protection not required- as club culture, this targeting area is not encouraged.
- Rapier and Smallsword
 - Mask
 - Gorget
 - Gloves (light gloves are fine, or you can go heavy depending on your personal comfort level). Discretion should be exercised depending on the protection offered by the guard.
 - Jacket (a modern jacket is allowed, but it is encouraged you have a chest protector underneath if you choose to go this route)
 - Elbows, chest protector and knees are recommended

Insufficiently Repaired Gear

Gear must be repaired to provide an acceptable level of protection, matching the commonly accepted standards of gear of that type. Tape, string, stitching, or other such repairs are acceptable, as long as they do not compromise the protective qualities of the equipment (e.g. strong tape can be used to connect rigid plates, but not to replace them).

- Damage that is not material to the protection of the gear is not bound by this rule.
- Gear damaged **during** a tournament should be reviewed by the tournament director to determine if it can be repaired temporarily, or if the gear should be disallowed going forward.

- Breakages during club activities should be addressed as soon as possible. If you require any materials, inquire with members for rudimentary supplies.

These lists and the entire safety policy is not exhaustive of any and all possible activities. Explicitly prohibited activities are subject to change. As stated previously: You can do what you want, but the AASC will not insure everything that you do.