

FAQ - NEW AC-RATTAN HANDBOOK (updated 10/28/2025)

This FAQ can also be found at: https://society-rules.fullmesh.co.nz/index.php/Main_Page

- Part 1 – FAQ on new handbook process and updates.
- Part 2 – FAQ on Rules we received feedback on, changes and/or explanations.

Part 2 – FAQ ON RULES WE RECEIVED FEEDBACK ON, CHANGES AND/OR EXPLANATIONS

Thank you to everyone who provided feedback, either directly or through your KEM. Each person who sent in questions/comments/concerns about specific rules received a reply to their specific questions or concerns. Several people wrote in with similar or same questions. The following are a compilation of the most common questions and concern, and replies sent.

NOTE – for existing rules that we received feedback on, I also provided a reference to which version of the handbooks they were first found, or if they have been in the handbooks since before the 2000 edition.

We understand that just because it is an existing rule in the old handbook, or has been around for decades, that it doesn't make it a good rule (or good enough). We try to be very careful before changing a rule that has been around for a while and seems to be working. There are also rules we intentionally leave a bit vague, or use the broad "or equivalent," and rely on our marshals' discretion. Making it specific could result in trying to document dozens of different variants that the rule would cover, or could inadvertently limit perfectly acceptable methods.

1) Issues with "Any weapons or equipment that have visible blood on them must be cleaned before they can be used again". This could eliminate armor or clothes with stains.

Answer: This has been removed. It was originally part of the rapier injury protocols, and was included when we created the global process.

2) Issues with Engagement – Saying "Fighter! I am engaging you!" This is extremely problematic or impossible in large melees, and eliminates our ability to gain attention through other means. Also, engagement is defined in a circular manner without ever making it clear what engagement actually is.

Answer: This has been changed to *"engagement is obtained when your opponent becomes aware of you (e.g. moving into their line of sight, 'tapping' them with your weapon, shouting, being part of a unit, or other means).*

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We also agree the definition was circular definition. This has been changed to: *"To be 'engaged' with an opponent means that you and your opponent are aware of each other's presence and should expect to be struck."*

3) Question: Why was the definition of face, and engagement to the face changed?

Answer: No functional changes to the definition or engagement conventions. The wording in the new handbook is basically the same as the old handbooks (*rule is in Nov 2000 edition and prior*). The reference to a light chain mail drape was removed, but the function of resisting cuts by a mere touch was retained.

- i. (Old Handbook III.C.2) - "Face: the area between the chin and the middle of the forehead and between the ear openings."
- ii. (New Handbook 10.1) - "Face: The area between the chin and the middle of the forehead and between the ear openings."
- iii. (Old Handbook V.B.1.a) - "Under this standard, an acceptable cutting blow to the face would be lighter than to other portions of the head or body. The helm may be presumed by kingdom convention to include a very light chain mail drape, permitting vision and resisting cuts by the mere touch of a bladed weapon."
- iv. (New Handbook 11.1.2.c) - "Under this standard, an acceptable cutting blow to the face is lighter than to other portions of the head or body, but more than a mere touch of a bladed weapon."
- v. (Old Handbook V.B.1.b) - "The minimum effective thrusting blow to the face shall be a directed touch and the maximum shall be substantially lighter than to other parts of the body."
- vi. (New Handbook 11.1.2.d) - "The minimum effective thrusting blow to the face is a directed touch, and the maximum must be substantially lighter than to other parts of the body."

4) Question - Why is there a new rule on "chin straps need to be 1/2" wide"? This seems arbitrary and over-litigated. Some designs are perfectly strong and acceptable and not 1/2in wide. There are numerous ways of securing a helmet to the head that are effective that do not even incorporate chin straps. How a chin strap functions is far more important than how it is designed.

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Answer: Not a new rule. This existing rule (*rule is in Nov 2000 edition and prior*) was copied over from the old handbook with only minor tweaks in the wording. As has been done in the past, it is up to the marshal's judgement if your system is adequate to keep your helm from coming off in combat or strangling you.

- a. (Old handbook VI.B.9) - "All helms shall be equipped with a chin strap or equivalent means to prevent the helm from being dislodged or metal contacting the wearer's face during combat. An equivalent might be, for example, a bevor or a chin-cup suspension system. A "snug fit" is NOT an equivalent. The chin strap shall be, at a minimum, .5 inch (12.7 mm) in width and shall not be placed in the helm in a manner that could strangle the wearer.
- b. (New Handbook 12.3.10) - "Your helm needs to have a chin strap or other means of preventing your helm from being dislodged and prevent metal from contacting your face during combat. An equivalent might be, for example, a strap from the helm to breast plate, a bevor, or a chin cup suspension system. A "snug fit" is not an equivalent.
 - i. "If your helm has a chin strap, it must be at least 1/2 inch (12.7 mm) in width and must not be placed in a way that could strangle you."

5) Question – Why are wrist straps/lanyards no longer required in some melees? Also, the explanation for which melees do and do not require weapon restraints is vague.

Answer: Not a new rule. This rule (*added in June 2022 edition*) has the same wording as the old handbook with minor tweaks. There are legitimate reasons for not having a lanyard in a melee. For example, injuries caused by a weapon being pulled but the fighter is trapped. This is left to the marshal's judgement, as the variation in weapons and melee fields is vast.

- i. (Old Handbook VII.A.2) – "Primary weapons used single-handed shall have a wrist strap (or equivalent restraint) which will keep the weapon from leaving the immediate area of the user if released during any part of a bout or combat. Restraints are not required on hafted weapons used single-handed, or on single-handed back-up weapons. This requirement may be waived during Melee combat if deemed safe to do so."
- ii. (New Handbook 13.3.2) - "Single-handed weapons must have a wrist strap (lanyard or equivalent restraint) when used as the primary weapon. This will keep the weapon from leaving the immediate area if you let go during any part of a bout or combat."
 - a. "This requirement can be waived during melee combat if it is safe to do so."
 - b. "Restraints are not required single handed back-up weapons."

6) Question: Why was the rule on maces and polearms changed, so that they can no longer be made of turned rattan but must have a formed foam head or padding?

Answer: No change to the rule. (*rule is in Nov 2000 edition and prior*). We are engaged in discussions with those kingdoms who have been using these.

- a. (Old Handbook VII.B.3) – “If the weapon has a head, it shall not be constructed of solely rigid materials. The head shall be firmly and securely attached to the haft. The head shall allow at least .5 inch (12.7 mm) of progressive give between the striking surface and the weapon haft.”
- b. (new Handbook 13.2.13) – “If a weapon has a head:
 - i. “The head must not be constructed of only rigid materials.
 - ii. “The head must be firmly and securely attached to the haft.
 - iii. “The head must allow at least 1/2 inch (12.7 mm) of progressive give between the striking surface and the weapon haft.”

7) Comment – I have concerns with a Wiki format. It will make it harder for KEMs to insert kingdom specific rules in-line with the Society rules. Also, a wiki is too easy to update and will cause huge version control issues.

Answer: Kingdoms will still be able to insert their specific rules, and version control is done through official pdf versions and limited editing access.

Note - The handbooks utilize a wiki-formatting engine, which provides multiple benefits such as automatic formatting and number updating, global content capabilities, color/highlighting and tagging. It is not what people traditionally think of as a wiki, where lots of people have unfettered access to add or edit.

Official versions – these are still the pdf copies, located on SCA.org. All changes are tracked in the Change Logs. For online control, only 2 people had edit access to the public facing version. A separate draft version (non-public) enables us to let multiple people (deputies, KEMs, etc) to add and view edits – also, the wiki engine tracks all changes and keeps prior versions, so are able to locate who changed what or undo accidental deletions.

Kingdoms specific rules - The handbooks are architected specifically to enable Kingdoms to add their specific rules. We are in the middle of helping Kingdoms get those set up over the next few months. They can add their kingdom specifics in several ways: in-line with the society rules, at the bottom of a page, as an addendum, or some combination of all three.

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Also, Kingdom specific rules will also be a different color and/or highlighted, for ease of identification comparison.

- 8) **Comment – There is no definition of single vs 2 handed weapons. No clarification of using a 2-handed weapon with 1 hand. Also, there is no definition of round. (in reference to “Edges of weapons need to be rounded.”)**

Answer: The section on two-handed weapons, and the “rounded” rule, were copied over from the old handbook with no functional changes. There were only minor changes to wording (converted to “plain english” style.) The rules do provide some guidelines on 2-handed weapons (“Weapons which can be used with one or two hands”, and some types are listed: two-handed swords, great swords, bastard swords, polearms.)

In the recent September KEM meeting, we discussed this lack of definition. The KEMs felt this can continue to be left to the marshal’s judgement (as it has been in the past) for now.

- 9) **Question – I heard there is a requirement for all fighters to re-authorize by Jan 1st?**

Answer: No, we are not making everyone re-authorize by Jan 1st. There is a new rule that all authorizations expire. The time length is set by the kingdom, but can be no longer than 4 years. It is left up to the kingdoms how they wish to implement this. Some kingdoms are simply adjusting their current expiration dates. Kingdoms that had no expiration date have to adjust their processes and tracking system.

For re-authorizations, there is a simpler process (a “fast lane”) for people who are active - they do not have to go through the longer authorization that is used for new fighters. This will help make sure people are aware of new changes, and also ensure someone has recently seen them participate safely. 4 years was chosen as this is already included in many handbooks and kingdoms, and historically the handbooks are updated about every 3 years on average.