

Immortals Reenactment Group: The Soldier's Handbook

Version 1.1



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INTRODUCTION

Welcome to Immortals! This document is guide for all Immortals members on the safety, expectations, and best practice for training and combat within the group. By reading this, you will become familiar with what minimum kit is needed to safely participate in combat training. You will also learn the broad outlines of what weapons, techniques, and training activities are used in combat for Immortals training and displays.

This document also outlines the expectations and responsibilities of those participating in combat, from the newest to most-experienced members. Whilst we aim for combat to be a fun and engaging experience, safety must be paramount. It should be obvious, that by reading this document alone you will not learn how to fight within Immortals, or be safe within a combat setting. To learn how to fight with different weapons, and get a sense of what it was like to be a soldier in the Achaemenid Empire, you will need to attend - and participate in - training sessions. This document is a record of the practices and safety guidelines you will become familiar with by participating.

Immortals aims for this to be a "living document". We will be consistently reviewing our practices alongside input from our members, and updating this document to reflect this process. Most importantly, reading this is your first step in a fun and fascinating hobby immersing in the warfare of the Achaemenid Empire and it's enemies.



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1 SAFETY REQUIREMENTS AND EQUIPMENT

The primary concern of this document is the safety and conduct of training, as well as the specifications of the equipment used in combat situations. This document is not intended to cover the authenticity guidelines. While safety always takes precedence over authenticity (otherwise we would be using tri-lobed arrows as Persians), members should consult the authenticity guides before purchasing or making equipment.

Equipment used at shows in front of the public must satisfy both safety and authenticity guidelines. Equipment used at training must satisfy safety guidelines, and it is highly encouraged that it also satisfies authenticity guidelines. During training modern clothing and inauthentic safety equipment is permitted as long as it meets the minimum safety guidelines outlined in this document.

1.1 Minimum Safety Equipment

The minimum equipment that is required in order to participate in combat, or be present within an arena (defined space) where combat is taking place, is the following:

- A metal helmet, at least 18 Gauge or 1 mm thick. The helmet must cover the whole top of the head, encompass the temples, reach to just above the brow, and cover the back of the head. There must be no holes or breaks in this helmet to be deemed safe. Helmets must be secure to the head, either by being well-fitted, padded, or include a strap. The helmet should be a good fit and not cause injury to the user.
- Hand protection on both hands. This should cover the backs of the fingers, hands, and back of the wrist. This protection may allow for the fingers to be mobile, as such it is permitted to extend the protection up to the final knuckle as a minimum. This, for example, can be made out of single sheet leather at least 3 mm thick, or multiple layers totalling the same thickness. This can also be made from padding, which must be of a suitable thickness and coverage to cushion blows.
- Shoes of some kind. These must primarily cover the sole of the foot and be secure to the foot. For example, a minimum 1 mm thickness of leather will prevent cuts to the feet in an arena as part of shoes/boots/sandals.

These items must be worn by all members at all times within an area where combat is taking place. A member of the combat sub-committee has the right to veto the use of a piece of safety equipment that they deem unsafe for use. If a member has unsuitable safety kit, they will not be permitted to enter a combat area.

1.2 Risk Assessments and Responsibility

Risk assessments must be completed and submitted to the committee before combat may take place. The risk assessments may be completed by any member, for a given training location, LH event, and/or combat arena. These risk assessments must be in compliance with our insurance policy and renewed yearly, or when a change occurs to the risk/hazard circumstances.

The risk assessment will be made available to all members before an event or training session. The risk assessment must also be available for inspection by local authorities, clients, event organisers etc on-location as a hard-copy. Members are reminded that risk assessments are not a preventative tool, it is up to individual members to be mindful of their conduct and take responsibility for hazards they observe and act if a situation is unsafe.

If a situation becomes unsafe, members should first remove themselves from the hazardous situation, then, once safe, they should report the hazardous situation to the nearest unit commander/committee member/combat sub-committee member. Those in positions of responsibility must to deal decisively and appropriately with situations that are unsafe to members.

Members are responsible for the maintenance and upkeep of their equipment. Personal equipment must be kept free of faults that could cause injury. See sections 1.2.2 and 1.3 outlining details of compliance for equipment.

1.2.1 Monitoring and Competence

In the unlikely event that a member acts in a manner that is unsafe within an arena (training or at a show), steps must be taken by trainers, committee, members, unit/army commanders to act quickly and in the interests of public and member safety. Unsafe behaviour includes (but is not limited to) the use of weapons for which they have not passed the requisite tests (or been trained to use), endangering other

members or the public, and ignoring instructions from trainers and commanders.

In the context of training sessions, should a combatant behave in a manner that causes serious risk of injury or harm to themselves or others, the present trainers should halt the activity immediately and explain why such action had to be taken. The individual should ideally be taken to one side and be given one-to-one guidance and feedback by a trainer. It is incumbent on trainers to log serious incidents in the incident log-book, and report them to the committee if further action is necessary.

If a member is behaving in an unsafe manner, but it is not serious enough to warrant ceasing the activity e.g. weapon handling is poor such that a weapon is repeatedly brought near peoples faces, then trainers and unit commanders should issue a verbal reminder or prompt. If such activity continues, then trainers or commanders may consider temporarily removing the individual from combat and providing more explicit feedback. However, it is encouraged that all members provide mutual feedback to each other with respect to combat, particularly on matters of safety.

In the context of show arena displays, if a combatant is being unsafe, or a situation is unsafe, then unit commanders and experienced members should act rapidly to make a situation safe again. While a combat arena display cannot be halted altogether (unless in the most serious of circumstances), unit commanders can take a number of steps to remedy unsafe situations:

- If an individual is acting unsafe, then orders should be issued to remove that person from the combat situation and brought to the rear of the army. Then a unit commander should give concise feedback and a warning to the combatant.
- Should unsafe behaviour be repeated or serious then a combatant should be ordered out of combat indefinitely for the duration of the display.
- If a situation, rather than an individual, is unsafe, unit commanders should order their units to break contact/cease loosing, fall back, and redress the ranks.

It is up to the individual commanders to consult with each other as and when potentially unsafe situations arise and how best to proceed.

1.2.2 Hand Weapons and Shields

Weapons and equipment used in combat must be made available for inspection by unit commanders/committee members/combat sub-committee members before they are to be used in combat. A member of the committee and/or combat subcommittee has the ability to veto any equipment they deem unsafe.

Bladed weapons must be blunted, with a rounded edge, and at least 2 mm thick on the edge. The tip or point of the blade must be “as round as a 5 p piece” or approximately 15 mm diameter roundness. Blades must be safe to use and kept in a safe condition, free from burs (surface deformation), cracks, severe rust, or other damage that could cause injury. These conditions also apply to maces or any other weapon that has a metal component that is exposed.

Shields must be made of wood and be an average of 10 mm thick. Shields must be well maintained, without exposed rough edges, breaks, or holes. Although wicker/reeds would have been the predominant material among Achaemenid soldiers, their allies, and enemies, this material is not durable or resistant to sustained use. Shields made of the latter materials are very welcome in a living history capacity, however.

While members may learn to use any of the available weapons and shields that can be tested for, members may not use a piece of combat equipment in a public arena display without having a valid test in said piece of equipment.

1.3 Missile Weapons

Bows may have a maximum of 30 lb raw weight, but it is recommended to have an upper limit of 25 lb. The lower limit is motivated by safety, but also by the look of display archery. A lower poundage draw weight allows for a fuller draw that looks

better, but is still safe to use.

Blunts must be used on arrows at all times. Blunts may be red or green, with 3 or 4 straight fletchings, but red blunted arrows should ideally have 4 fletchings. This makes the arrow slower in flight and thus safer to use.

Javelins should be metal tipped only, following the same outlines as bladed weapons for the heads of the javelins. Javelins must only be thrown at shields or deliberately to miss a fellow combatant. Javelins may be lobbed in an arc and over long distance but never over the head of an intervening combatant. Javelins must never be thrown directly at a person's body unless in a scripted event, with the consent of both parties, and preferably with the target wearing body armour.

Sling bullets must have a soft, or malleable, core and have a secure and durable coating to prevent a breach of the contents. For the moment we are at a testing stage for the size and weight of shots, as such this will be reviewed and more detail will be added at a later date.

As with hand weapons, it is the combatant's responsibility to check the safety of their equipment. This includes the ammunition to be used at the event. Not only should the safety guidelines be followed, but the ammunition should be checked so it will not break during combat. The goal is to prevent small shafts from being broken and causing a hazard to other combatants. In the case of arrows, the archer should check them before the arena slot, but should not loose any arrows in the slot that seem to be wrong. They can be checked after the slot for their safety. Infantry should try not to step on arrows, as they may break and cause a hazard to members' feet.

2 TRAINING STANDARDS AND BEST PRACTICE

This section outlines the guidelines for best-practice training within Immortals. This section will be regularly updated and refined, but should not be considered an exhaustive report of all training practices.

2.1 Training Aims

Our main training aims are to prepare and instruct members in a fun and enjoyable way, so they can confidently put on an entertaining show to the public which tries to reflect the fighting styles of the ancient world, whilst making allowances for safety. Training sessions will aim to help members get comfortable with the weapons, and get safe to use them on the field. Training sessions will aim to train members in the skills of all of the weapon types available: archery, thrown missiles, slings, hand weapons, two-handed spears and single-handed spears. Every training session will aim to include at least one missile and one close-combat element. The priority, to emphasise to trainers, will be given to single-handed spear with shield and archery. These areas formed the core of Persian military activity, as such they will be the focus.

Training will aim to instill confidence, competence, and comradery among members in a combat setting. Training will also be a place for experimentation and development. We will openly admit that this group is new, and our combat style and application is up for debate and revision. As such, we will endeavour to regularly review our practices, experiment with combat styles, and trial new practices.

Our combat style in both training and performance can be described as ‘show’ combat. This means the combat is not intended to be competitive, but to demonstrate the historical fighting styles in an entertaining manner. As such, this docu-

ment will refer to show combat throughout.

2.2 Activities and Their Purpose

Training will be approached through a mixture of techniques, emphasising fun and safety for all involved, including but not limited to:

- Repeated motions for specific weapon types.
- Formation drill.
- Show combat between two individual combatants.
- Show combat between two formations.
- Target practice for missiles.
- Battle-scale training to mimic arena displays.
- Team-based games for improving a particular skill and instilling group cohesion.
- Individual-based games for improving a particular skill and encouraging growth.
- Inter-unit training (combining archers, infantry, skirmishers etc).

New activity suggestions are encouraged, and existing ones are open to interpretation. This is to meet the needs of the group and it's members, as well as potential specific needs or requirements of show organisers.

The primary concern should be that any existing or proposed activity should be safe, only then should consideration be given to other factors of merit.

2.3 Trainers and Standards

Trainers will initially be appointed by the Committee; these may be drawn from the body of the membership on the basis of experience (either from Immortals membership or previous reenactment experience), and the confidence of the membership. Obvious candidates for the roles are the combat sub-committee. Trainers will be responsible for running activities for groups and one-on-one instruction in techniques. Trainers are encouraged to defer to one another on matters of inexperience - we do not expect trainers to be masters-of-all. Trainers are subject to higher standards of safety and professional conduct, subject to review by the committee. A full list of trainers will be kept, and updated, by the committee. Trainers should make themselves known to members at the start of training, and should introduce themselves to new members before training starts. This may be reviewed if training sessions become larger.

Trainers are expected to communicate regularly and clearly with one another in order to maintain the consistency of standards and safety at training sessions. Trainers take on the responsibility of the set-up and dismantling of a designated training space, and are expected to commit to attending a significant number of training sessions.

For the time being, the position of a trainer is somewhat informal. This position is likely to be more rigorously standardised and defined once training has begun.

2.4 Weapons

Here we outline the general techniques and conduct with the broad weapon categories used by the group. This section may be updated with entries of new weapon types, should there be new evidence presented in the kit guides.

2.4.1 Spears

Spear techniques are split between single-handed and two-handed styles. Single-handed spears form the basis of most of our close-combat training, as they made up the main equipment of soldiers during the era of the Achaemenid empire.

Spears, like any weapon, should not be directly aimed at the face or neck. However, as phalanxes and large units of spear-armed infantry were ubiquitous in this period, spears can be pointed upwards. One may safely aim a shot or feint well above the head, as well as below. The most important point is that the spear tip does not directly point at the head or neck, and high shots must place the spear head well behind, above, or to the side of the opponent's head/neck

2.4.2 Shields

Shield types include, but are not limited to, dipylon, aspis, oval, pelta, and spara. These shields are diverse enough in usage and shape that they require specific training for each type. The default shield for Persian infantry will be the oval or dipylon (AKA figure-8) shields.

The different shields of this time period very often represented different battlefield roles. The pelta/crescent shield was often used by skirmishers, for example. Emphasis will be placed on these shields being used in the appropriate manner, suited to their battlefield role. For example, shields were not only used for defence but to push an opponent back, usually as part of a formation. Formations in this period could range from close to very loose, we will try to replicate these fighting styles as close as possible, while ensuring safety.

2.4.3 Blades

Bladed weapons include everything from knives, short swords, and axes. These can broadly be split between stabbing-style weapons, and chopping-style weapons (with a few exceptions). All blades in this period are quite short, and thus can be used very

quickly. As such extra care should be taken with these. The main focus on using these should be to gain competence in the stabbing- or chopping-style, alongside killing moves.

Parrying an opponent's blade with one's own will not be encouraged (except in specific circumstances). instead, emphasis will be placed on the offensive use of the blade, while relying on a shield to block incoming blows.

Warm up movements for attack and defence will be built on emphasising the two broadly distinct styles for stabbing and chopping.

2.5 Missiles

All missile troops are expected to wear full safety kit, but should look to have hand protection that allows for the necessary movement/dexterity to use their choice of weapon.

It is expected that every member does some form of archery (and javelin) training at each training session (subject to restrictions at the training site). Archery was largely the dominant weapon in the Persian army, and so members should be trained to be familiar with the equipment, techniques, and safety concerns for archery.

2.5.1 Archery

Archery training will combine target practice for both lob and direct shooting, with loosing at combatants. Both combatants and archers can participate in these training activities as individuals or as part of a formation. Archers should be expected to emphasise the draw of a bow, in order to give the impression of a more powerful draw-weight.

The key safety elements will be based on notch and draw discipline. This is to avoid accidental loosing at a non-combatant or a member of the public. Archers should be mindful of the draw of their bow versus the distance of a target, as well as the placement of a shot. As such, archers will be expected to cultivate good spatial

and battlefield awareness.

Archers must only loose in an area at least 2 metres away from a crowd barrier, and never directly towards an area of non-combatants. Training for archery may only be conducted in a space that has one of the following:

- At least one large physical barrier, such as a wall.
- A sufficiently large space that minimises the risk of arrows leaving the training area.
- An area where the presence of non-combatants and public can be strictly controlled.

Given the widespread use of Archery in the by the Achaemenids and their enemies, it is emphasised to trainers and committee members to make the effort to secure training and arena grounds where archery can take place safely and regularly.

2.5.2 Javelins

Javelin training will be a combination of target practice and skirmishing skills. Target practice training should emphasise good control over the range of a throw and it's placement. The strength of throws should not incur undue risk to combatants or equipment. Skirmisher training should emphasise movement, spatial and battlefield awareness (particularly of fellow skirmishers in the unit), and throwing javelins from a sufficient distance. Skirmishers should expect to train in being able to mix throwing with some close combat when engaging other units.

Javelins should not be thrown closer than 2 metres to a crowd barrier, or thrown directly at a non-combatant. Training with javelins must have an area that satisfies the same needs as those for archery, but with consideration that javelins are much shorter range than arrows.

2.5.3 Slings

The main emphasis on slinging training should be technique. This is a tricky skill to master with limited available expertise. As such, slinging should focus on keeping shots within an arena area or training space, before honing their accuracy.

The role of slingers on a battlefield will be similar to that of archers, mixing direct and lobbed projectiles at opposing formations and combatants. Safety concerns will be similar to that of archery and javelins, as previously described.

3 Testing Structure and Validity

Tests represent a safety and competency examination of a member with a particular set of combat equipment in a combat setting. Tests must be conducted by either:

- Two assessors from the combat sub-committee.
- Or one member of the committee and another individual who has already passed the test a minimum of 6 months prior to assessing someone else for the same test.

Tests will be conducted following the outlines given in the testing handbook. Tests will be a regular occurrence at training, and not at shows.

All members will have a test validity of 24 months, provided they have been a member continuously for that time. If an individual has had a break in membership of 12 months or more, or has been a member for 24 months continuously, they must renew all their tests. Validity dates will be provided on membership documents to individuals alongside their other test information. Test renewal dates are tied to their membership year e.g. if someone joins on 01/03/21, their renewal date is from 02/03/23 to 01/03/24. This gives members a year within which to find the time to renew their tests. This policy is to ensure bad habits do not creep in with older

members, and that younger members see testing as a regular activity, rather than be intimidated by them.

Tests will follow a structure, which will allow for a consistent standard or all members. Many tests will require other tests to have been completed first.

Finally, every test should aim to be conducted in authentic equipment. Members must own the weapon/shield they are being tested for as a minimum, and these must be authentic. The exception is the basic Persian infantry test, which may be conducted with group or borrowed equipment. This policy is to allow for modern shoes or modern clothing layers for poor footing and warmth, if needed.

Test details are covered in the Testing Handbook.

4 Leadership Rankings

In order to organise ourselves, carry out scripts, and react to unplanned situations, we will use a command structure. Members in an arena, reenacting a battle, will be grouped into distinct units that have a common function: Infantry, Skirmishers, and archers/slingers.

Unit commanders will command either an infantry, skirmish, or archery unit. The army commander will have experience of commanding all three of the other unit types, as they will be responsible for the overall organisation of each side in an arena.

Commanders occupy a position of responsibility as well as privilege. There should be trust between commanders and members as well as between commanders themselves. Commanders achieve this rank through passing one or more command tests, to demonstrate their ability to fulfill the role. These tests are outlined in the Testing Handbook.

Commanders also fulfil an acting role. In a battlefield setting members should follow commands and act in a way that demonstrates respect towards the comman-

ders. This position should therefore be administered in a respectful manner. It is expected that commanders have confidence in using Aramaic (and ancient Greek, if necessary) on the battlefield for issuing orders to units.

5 Battlefield Performance and Organisation

At a show, all combatants on a battlefield will be organised into distinct and recognisable units. Each unit must have an appointed unit commander, and each army must have an overall army commander. Commanders must have passed the relevant command tests, but in certain circumstances someone who is deemed competent by the combat sub-committee present at the relevant show can fulfill this role.

Units on the battlefield can be broadly described by the following three categories: infantry, skirmishers, and archers/slingers. The role of the infantry will be the anchor of each force in the arena. These units will be the slowest moving, the largest portion, and will do the bulk of the close-combat fighting. The skirmishers will primarily be armed with javelins, but can also include thrown rocks, spears, and hand weapons. These units will be the most mobile on the battlefield, used for early engagement at the beginning of an arena slot and as a screening unit on the flanks. Skirmishers will do the most movement, but will not engage opponents for extended periods, particularly at close distances. Archers/slingers will almost always be expected to engage at range, and likely engage continuously in some fashion throughout the arena display. These units may also be the very first to engage. Historically, archers made up the bulk of the Persian forces, so it is expected that archers will be causing a good number of the show-deaths on the opposing side.

Arena displays should follow a script agreed by all commanders prior to the display. The script should be mindful of the guidelines given above. The script should be clearly communicated to units via unit commanders in a pre-display briefing.

For public arena displays, members portraying any rank should be wearing kit

appropriate to their status. For full guidance on this please consult the relevant kit guides.

6 Use of Aramaic and Ancient Greek Languages

Aramaic orders will be used in training and at shows. As our intention is to primarily portray the Persian forces, so Aramaic will be the main language used.

Aramaic will be mainly used in the form presented in the Persian Orders document. These are simple formation and combat commands given by unit and army commanders to combatants in their units. The standard practice at an introductory level will be to give a preparatory order in English, then give the executive order in Aramaic. With time, training, and assessments, units will be given orders without preparatory English orders. It is expected that commanders will learn these orders and use them with confidence.

Ancient Greek orders will not be used at an introductory level. However, any members showing an interest in training and fighting as part of a Greek contingent will experience the introduction of ancient Greek in much the same way as Aramaic. Again, the expectation of commanders of Greek cultured units will be to learn these orders as laid down in the Greek Orders document.

In the case of an emergency, orders or alerts must be given clearly in English.

AFTERWORD

You should now have a clear understanding of the basic safety standards and expectations for combat within Immortals. We look forward to meeting you, training you, and fighting with you at our future training sessions and shows. If any aspect of this guide is unclear, or you have further questions, email us at:

`immortalsreenactmentgroup@gmail.com`



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