



Saxon, Norman, Celtic, and Viking Re-Enactment
The Vikings

Training Thegn's Handbook

Vol. 2 - Training Guide

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1 Introduction

The Training Thegn's manual and combat rules are intended to ensure that all combat is as safe as possible whilst remaining enjoyable. The rules change and evolve as does "The Vikings" and are the result of many years of experience. This handbook is intended to provide a reference for the combat rules of "The Vikings", and to ensure that all Combat Training within "The Vikings" follows a standardised procedure with a uniform aim.

This second part of the Handbook specifically concerns the process of training – both the individual and the group which includes the theory of "shield wall" and "hunting party" fighting: the Two Towers that our Combat system is based upon. This volume finishes with the battlefield commands we all need to know and recognise and which are tested in the Basic Formation Assessment.

The RTT should develop a varied approach to training using visual (showing); verbal (explaining) and kinaesthetic (hands-on practice) aides. This combined approach should stimulate discussion and offer the trainee (and RTT) insights into the logical process of fighting and why we do what we do and not another approach. All this is a very important aspect to learning how we approach fighting.

Each main Section written here is a stand-alone segment of combat that should only be taught by those specific RTT's who have trained to deliver that specialism within the Society.

The order in which the lessons are written is not to be taken as "the" order: it is an order. I had to write the lessons in an order and this is it. If another RTT wants to teach "b" before "a" then that is OK, so long as the totality is taught to the trainee. Every step should be explained as part of the whole so that the trainee knows exactly why they are doing the current task.

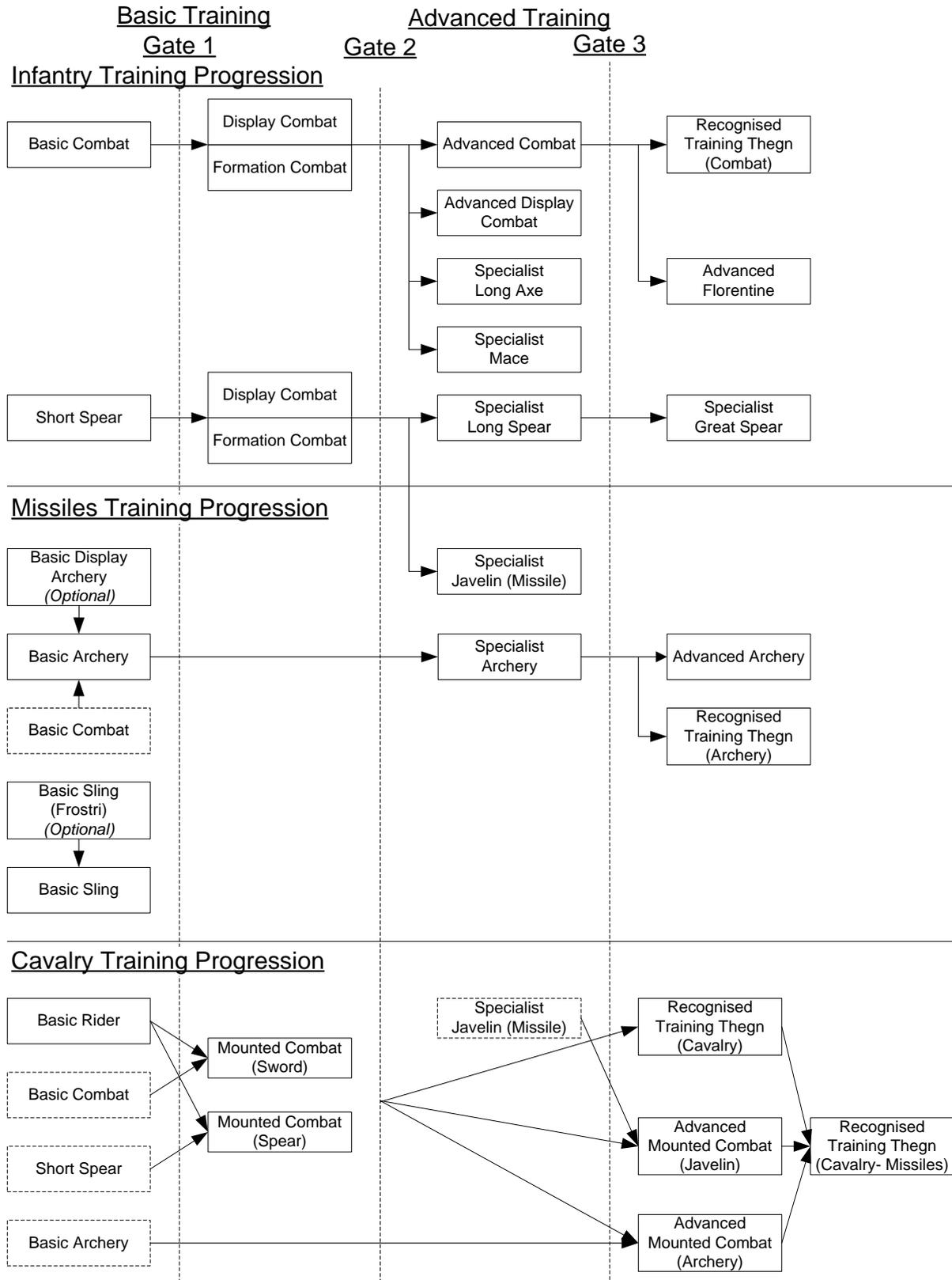
Chapter 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The core knowledge on how to train an individual fighter ranging from the Basic Combat up to the Advanced Combat Assessments in association with the Theory of Fighting individually and how to become an RTT.• After that come the Specialism weapons for those RTTs who want to focus here and train and hopefully test these weapons.
Chapter 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The core knowledge on how to train a group of warriors to fight cohesively as a unit within our Rules.



2 Individual Training

The training regime adopted by "The Vikings" is layered, and more advanced disciplines are accessed via the successful completion of basic level training and assessment gateways.

Below is a diagram which illustrates the progression of training and the relevant assessments;





2.1 Basic Combat & Display

2.1.1 Introduction

The purpose here is to guide the RTT in delivering the necessary content to successfully teach someone their basic Combat and Display skills and so improve their own teaching skills as a result. This guide should indicate discussion points; give teaching aides and set down a general framework for any RTT or Group Trainer to better approach the teaching of fighting in our Society to the Basic Combat and Display Assessment standard and beyond.

Everything within these pages should be said to every trainee at some point throughout their development as a warrior.

These sections should all be said before the trainee goes onto the Battlefield (if not before they take their Basic Combat Assessment) but in reality there should be a constant discussion between the RTT and every trainee irrespective of their level of skill.



2.1.2 Basic Stance

The trainee should already know;

- N/A

What is to be taught;

- The basic stance and the reason for leading with their shield or weapon leg.

The RTT needs to know the technical points of both versions of the basic stance. These should be discussed by the RTT with the trainee as both have merits and drawbacks.

Shield leg leading

This is a defensive stance as the trainee's body is further back and so further out of range. There are two main drawbacks:

- a) The trainee's weapon is also further away from the RTT so it is harder to place a killing blow.
- b) The leading leg is vulnerable to attack under and around their shield.

Weapon leg leading

This is a more offensive stance as the trainee's weapon is a lot closer to the RTT, offering more attacking potential. The main drawbacks of this stance are that:

- a) The shoulder of the weapon arm is open to attack, so a defensive strategy will need to be developed in time.
 - b) The leading leg is again exposed.
-

The RTT should spend time discussing **balance** using a fairly open stance where the leading foot should be facing the opponent whilst the trailing foot forms roughly an L-shape on the floor and placed about shoulder width apart.

To gain stability, discuss the use of bent knees to lower the centre of gravity rather than simply leaning forwards as this brings the head/face into a more active fighting region in addition to the negative effect on their overall balance.

The shield should be held loosely on the top of the hand behind the boss rather than gripping the handle tightly in which situation their forearm will tire very quickly.

Practice keeping the shield in front of the body at all times: no dropping down or to the side.

The trainee should be able to see over the shield at all times but it should not be so close that it could hit their own chin or mouth.



2.1.3 Weapon Basics

The trainee should already know;

- The basic stance
- Reasons for leading with their shield or weapon leg.

What is to be taught;

- The correct weapon grip.
- En garde position
- Fighting distance.

Correct weapon grip

The **seax, axe and sword** should all be held loosely in the hand using the thumb and fore-finger. The other three fingers are only strongly applied to the grip when the weapon needs to be stopped, thus acting as a brake.

The **single handed spear** should be held in the middle third of the shaft in either the overhand or underhand grip with the tip of the spear angled down towards the RTT's body and never upwards towards the face.

En garde position

The trainee should stay in the en garde position when not attacking or defending, to be ready for either eventuality. The trainee should be square on to the RTT with their shield in front of the body. See the handbook for the specifics of the stance.

We should tell the trainee to return to the en garde position after every attack in the Eights. This will help the trainee to slow down and think about the next shot and will also instil a sense of "returning to the centre" just in case they have to then defend against an attack.

Note: The shield should not move around the body or drop to the side as the trainee moves.

Fighting distance

From en garde, the trainee should be able to place a shot on to the RTT, making contact with the body of the RTT. If the blade misses then the trainee is too far away and needs to be closer or move to an offensive stance.

The fighting distance will alter depending upon the type of weapon used. The trainee needs to begin to gauge this distance, correcting themselves, without prompting.

The trainee also needs to be aware that their opponent's fighting distance may not be the same as theirs so strategies to combat this will need to be developed over time.



2.1.4 Control, Standing – The “Eights”

The trainee should already know;

- The basic stance.
- How to hold the weapon correctly.
- The correct fighting distance between warriors.
- The en garde position.

What is to be taught;

- The location of the 8 basic shots.
- How not to do this exercise (to reinforce the correct approach).

The trainee is to make 8 prescribed attacks onto a shield held by the RTT. These eight shots are to be visualised around the edge of the shield as:

- Head Shot
- Both shoulder shots
- Both waists
- Both outer thighs
- Thrust to the chest/stomach

The trainee should consider the shield to be a person so the fighting distance should be altered to have the shield at the correct striking distance for the weapon being used. The aim of this task is to practice weapon control before advancing onto hitting a person safely.

Notes:

- The trainee should have enough body movement in the shoulder through the weapon arm to the weapon itself to instil a look of power and **lethal intent** that the RTT can see. This takes time to perfect and needs plenty of practice to improve upon. We do not want to allow a perfunctory show of swinging the weapon in an, albeit, safe manner: we want to generate **lethal character** at the earliest possible moment.
- The use of telegraphing the shot will help to instil the look of lethal intent and also give the opponent a few seconds of thought to process where the shot is aimed.
- The RTT should also show the trainee how not to perform control: both not enough and then too much control, as both will fail the assessment.
- Over time, the trainee can develop the Eights into a more fluid movement but still remembering to include telegraphing, lethal intent and control.

Discussion of Issues

The trainee should return to en garde after every attack to slow down the exercise and to reset the warrior.

Whilst performing the attacks on their shield side, the trainee will have to turn their body to generate the swing and get the correct sword direction. This needs to be done without exposing the weapon shoulder too much or without moving the shield away from facing forwards. The trainee needs to work through these issues with the RTT but having a shield that is of the correct size can help.



2.1.5 Telegraphing a Shot

The trainee should already know;

- The basic stance (defensive and offensive).
- Weapon Basics.
- "Control, standing"

What is to be taught;

- How to telegraph each of the Eight shots.

Our exercises are there for trainees to learn the skills required of a combatant. Whilst training, the shots should be done slowly and clearly: speed can be developed later. To help each other, every shot of the Eights is **telegraphed** to the opponent thus giving them an indication of where the shot is aiming for. The correct method is as follows:

Head Shot	The blade travels from en garde backwards over the trainee's head before coming vertically forwards as though attacking the RTT but striking the shield instead.
Shoulder Shots	The blade travels from en garde backwards over one shoulder to then swing at 45 degrees downwards onto the RTT's facing shoulder. The blade should not cross the central axis of the 2 warriors. The aim would be to cleave the RTT from shoulder to opposite hip. Make sure <ul style="list-style-type: none">• To use the correct angle of approach as too often the blade is too horizontal thus creating a decapitation motion.• The blade is high enough otherwise the strike will contact the RTT somewhere on the arm rather than the shoulder.
Waist Shots	The blade travels from en garde backwards horizontally behind the waist to then return aiming for the RTT's corresponding waist. The blade should not cross the central axis of the 2 warriors. The aim would be to cleave the RTT in two at the waist. Make sure <ul style="list-style-type: none">• The blade is flat enough to achieve this motion as too often this shot looks similar to a low shoulder shot or a high leg shot.
Thigh Shots	The blade drops from en garde backwards and downwards to the leg before swinging upwards aiming for the RTT's facing outer thigh. The blade should not cross the central axis of the 2 warriors. The aim would be to cleave the RTT from hip up to the opposite shoulder (in a reverse of the shoulder attack). Make sure <ul style="list-style-type: none">• The blade is coming upwards on contacting the RTT's thigh.
Thrust	The arm travels back from en garde with the blade still facing forwards. As the thrust contacts the RTT's midriff, the weapon hand must have a "broken wrist": neither wrist nor elbow should be locked. The locked scenario should be shown to the trainee for reference. Make sure <ul style="list-style-type: none">• The blade is not angled upwards in case it slides along the shield, up into a face.

Notes:

- Whilst performing the shoulder and thigh shots, the blade should look to create the 4 branches of an X-shape.



2.1.6 Lethal Character

The trainee should already know;

- The control of their weapon.

What is to be taught;

- How to impart lethal character to a blow.
- How to strike a person safely.

Once the trainee is confident in controlling the weapon whilst hitting the shield, the RTT should start to talk about landing blows on to a person (initially the RTT) both statically and then during a fight situation. The importance of this lesson cannot be over-stated since the look of all subsequent fighting that the trainee does will have its origins in how well this is put across by the RTT.

Initially the RTT needs to talk about shots being cuts rather than jabs, since all swords and longer seaxes were slashing weapons rather than stabbing weapons. The RTT should demonstrate on the trainee how to perform safe slashing shots using control. The trainee should then practice upon the body of the RTT: on the shoulder, on the chest from under the arm, waist, thigh and a thrust to the belly to get used to striking with a swinging weapon. This will prepare the trainee for free fighting where the objective is to land blows on their opponent.

The RTT should show how flamboyant a kill can be to the trainee but note must be made of correct safe follow-throughs of the weapon to avoid hitting the face or elbows as the victim reacts to the blow by bending into the blade.

As part of lethal character training, the RTT can show the trainee how to kill someone from behind. The use of the trainee's shield to defend against the victim's back swing and then a purposeful cut to the belly is safest, allowing the blade to press and so allow the victim to register the blow. This of course slows down the full attack considerably but will stop the attacker from running down a line of warriors tapping each one in turn with a very poor blow. The trainee can then pull the blade away thus becoming the second of the two shots and the victim is dead.



2.1.7 How to Move

The trainee should already know;

- The basic stance (defensive and offensive).
- Weapon Basics.
- "Control, standing".
- Telegraphing Shots.

What is to be taught;

- How to move forwards and backwards to progress to using this whilst attacking and defending.

Moving Forwards	Stepping	From the stance, the leading foot steps forwards then the rear foot steps forwards to finish in the stance again. The body should remain upright throughout with no loss of balance. Do not over reach as you advance.
	Cross over	From the stance, the rear leg steps forwards beyond the front foot, thus crossing the legs. The original front foot then steps forwards to finish in the stance again.
Moving Backwards	Stepping	From the stance, the rear foot steps backwards then the front foot steps backwards to finish in the stance again. The body should remain upright throughout with no loss of balance. Do not over reach as you retreat.
	Cross over	From the stance, the front leg steps backwards behind the rear foot, thus crossing the legs. The original rear foot then steps backwards to finish in the stance again.

The trainee should practice both styles, both forwards and backwards, to get used to the feel of moving in both, remembering that soon they will be concentrating on moving their weapon and forgetting their feet so foot movements need to be subconsciously made without destroying the balance of the body as a whole.



2.1.8 Control, Moving

The trainee should already know;

- The basic stance (defensive and offensive).
- Weapon Basics.
- "Control, standing".
- Telegraphing shots.
- How to move forwards and backwards.

What is to be taught;

- How to place controlled shots onto a shield whilst moving forwards and backwards.

Control against a shield moving forwards and backwards

With each step, the trainee performs each of the 8 shots from en garde with the correct telegraphing, finishing back in the en garde stance after each step.

The RTT, holding a shield, should control the speed of these exercises. The RTT should walk backwards and forwards, slowly at first, to give the trainee enough time to perform the exercise correctly. As the trainee's coordination and balance improve, the movement of the RTT can speed up thus forcing the trainee to perform the task more quickly.

Discussion of Issues

The trainee should become competent in placing shots on a shield whilst moving forwards and backwards at a pace set by the RTT. All swing shots should:

- Begin from the en garde position.
- Not cross the centre line.
- Be telegraphed
- Be controlled.

The trainee should practice this exercise from both a defensive and offensive stance because on the battlefield that flexibility of stance will be needed.



2.1.9 Eights, Standing

The trainee should already know;

- How to control a weapon against a shield whilst:
 - Standing.
 - Moving forwards and backwards.

What is to be taught;

- To telegraph and aim the Eights.
- To block the Eights using a weapon or shield.

Attacking

The Eights are the same shots performed in the "Control, Standing" exercise but this time are aimed at the correct part of the RTT's body. All the shots start from the en garde position, are telegraphed and again finish in the en garde position.

Defending

The trainee needs to learn how to block effectively using either weapon or shield.

Head Shot	A shield should never be used for this block as the line of sight of the trainee is affected. However, a single-handed spear is too weak to use so the shield has to be used: discuss the relative merits of the different shield blocks in this situation.
Weapon side	The waist shot can be parried with the blade pointing up or down. It usually comes down to preference but position of the weapon hand/fingers could be discussed as a possible reason to change the orientation of the blade in this block.
Shield side	The shield should not move excessively. It should already cover the majority of the body. Discuss with the trainee the required movement to protect the shoulder and thigh: keep the movement to a minimum. Instead of dropping the shield to defend the thigh, think instead about lowering your stance.
Thrust	If the shield is used to block, remember to angle it slightly forwards so that the weapon does not slide up towards the face.

Discussion of Issues

Return to en garde after every movement to slow down the exercise and to get into the habit of returning to the neutral position because in reality the shots will not be arriving in any standard order so the trainee has to get into the habit of returning to a good central ready stance after every attack or parry. This randomness can be introduced by the RTT as the skill of the trainee increases.

Whilst performing the attacks from their shield side, the trainee will have to turn their body to generate the swing and get the correct sword direction. This needs to be done without exposing the weapon shoulder too much or without moving the shield away from facing the RTT. The trainee needs to work through these issues with the RTT but lowering the stance (by bending the knees) or getting a smaller shield can both help.



2.1.10 Eights, Moving

The trainee should already know;

- The basic stance.
- Control.
- The Eights, standing.

What is to be taught;

- How to place controlled attacks
- How to parry whilst moving.

Attacking

The trainee should practice the Eights moving forwards and backwards: either the trainee or RTT should initiate the movement.

As the trainee steps forward or backwards, one of the 8 shots is performed per step – always remembering to start from en garde each time with the correct telegraphing.

Defending

The trainee should practice blocking the Eights moving backwards and forwards: either the trainee or the RTT should initiate the movement.

As the RTT steps and attacks either forwards or backwards, the trainee blocks each attack either on their weapon or shield. Remember to start from en garde before every block.

Once proficient, the trainee can receive the Eights in a random order (always starting with the Head shot) and the speed of this exercise developed until a natural pace is reached. This facilitates the transition into fighting rather than performing rigid exercises.

As an advanced exercise, all parrying can be done with the weapon or with the shield. Discuss anything that crops up with this e.g. how to block the head shot with the shield.



2.1.11 Circle Fighting

The trainee should already know;

- How to perform the technical skills of combat.

What is to be taught;

- How to behave as a single combatant in a combat situation.

The trainee should be introduced to one-on-one fighting as soon as the RTT believes them ready. Initially the RTT should fight them in a very non-threatening manner by doing slower shots to the shield and then the body and by leaving gaps in their own defence to see if the trainee spots them and can land safe blows.

Once the RTT is happy with this, the RTT should find someone with a little more experience than the trainee who will hopefully not kill them too easily but will be a fairer competitive fight. This situation is a good stepping stone to prepare the trainee for battlefield fighting because it gives the trainee:

- A realistic chance to land blows which can be monitored by the RTT for control, general safety and lethal character.
- The opportunity to build up their fighting confidence and to develop their own style.
- The chance to practice dying well which should not be overlooked by the RTT: we do not want trainees on the field who respond badly to being killed because they will be killed a lot when they start.

To help the RTT there are a few training exercises that can be used at this stage – primarily “Winner or Loser Stays In” which can be found in the Training Exercises Section. These allow the trainee to fight more people in competitive situations and with their peers watching which can certainly be a real challenge for some.



2.1.12 Against a Spear

The trainee should already know;

- Everything up to how to perform the Eights, moving.

What is to be taught;

- How to defend against a spear.
- How to attack and kill a spearman.
- How to display fight against a spear.

Defending

The trainee should be told that the head of the spear is the killing part: the shaft is just a piece of wood so do not be scared of the spear.

The shield is the primary defence against the jabbing of the spear so practice keeping it in front whilst the RTT tries to move it by jabbing or get the trainee to move it by the use of a feint.

Also practice sweeping down with the weapon to block or lock up the spear.

Attacking

There are only two places the spear can attack: the trainee's weapon side or their shield side. The RTT needs to demonstrate to the trainee the various techniques of advancing on the spearman with the spear going for both of these areas.

The RTT must start slowly and discuss the relative merits of advancing on the spearman whilst the spear is on either side of the trainee.

Display

The trainee will be in situations during a scripted fight or "show and tell" where the objective is to make the spearman look good by feigning terror and allowing the spear in to strike without making it obvious. This is primarily to allude to the spear striking the face or feet which were the historical targets for the spearman.

Avoid running the spearman down straight away!

Discussion of Issues

How does the trainee manage the spearman if the spearman is holding a secondary weapon? Discuss the pros and cons of running the spearman down or being more subtle by keeping the fighting distance to the advantage of the trainee.

The trainee should not run directly at the spearman but should aim to run past thus generating enough space to kill the spearman without tripping up on the spear shaft or running into the spearman which has the double issue of increasing the risk of being killed by the spearman's back-hand weapon or even causing injury to one or both warriors in a collision.



2.1.13 Against a Long axe

The trainee should already know;

- Everything up to how to perform the Eights, moving.
- How to face a spear.

What is to be taught;

- How to defend against a Long axe.
- How to attack and kill a warrior wielding a Long axe.
- How to display fight against a Long axe.

Defending

The trainee should be told that the head of the axe is the killing part: the shaft is just a piece of wood so do not be scared of the Long axe.

The shield is the primary defence against the jabbing and swinging attacks of the Long axe so practice keeping it in front whilst the RTT tries to hook it or get the trainee to move it through feinting.

The trainee should also practice sweeping down with their weapon to block or lock up the jabbing attacks.

The priority must be to instil a sense of self-preservation in the trainee whilst facing a Long axe: the trainee must learn to step out of the arc of the head of the Long axe, either away from or step toward the RTT. Stepping forwards is favourable since the trainee will be closing the fighting distance and so should be able to kill the RTT a lot more easily.

Attacking

The Long axe has just 2 basic attacks: the swing which albeit scary at first does offer the trainee plenty of opportunity to step in towards the RTT, whilst keeping their shield up to block the shaft of the axe. Doing so should afford the trainee a relatively easy kill, remembering not to step to the RTT but to one side to maintain some semblance of fighting distance to allow for a clean kill. Remember to keep your head out of the arc of the axe head swing.

The jab is used (usually added with feints) to try to move the trainee's shield either by hooking or by getting the trainee to move their shield themselves to block a feinted attack. The RTT can then thrust at the body. The key to fighting a Long axe is for the trainee to keep their shield firmly in front of their body and resist the urge to follow the axe head movements.

Axe swings will be directed towards the head to see how the trainee copes with such an eventuality: it should never happen in open fighting.

Golden rule: step out of the arc made by the axe head, either towards or away from the RTT.

The Long axe is there primarily for scripted purposes and so the trainee should be introduced to reacting correctly when being hit by the Long axe as directed in the Display Combat Assessment.

Display

The trainee will be in situations during a scripted fight or "show and tell" where the objective is to make the axe-man look good by feigning terror and allowing the long axe to strike the shield and probably to strike the body without making it obvious. This is primarily to allude to the long axe being **THE** terror weapon of the Viking Age.

Avoid running the axe-man down straight away!



2.1.14 Against Archers

The trainee should already know;

- Everything up to how to perform the Eights, moving.
- How to face a spear and Long axe.

What is to be taught;

- How to defend against an archer.
- How to attack and kill an archer.

Defending

An archer on the field will be aiming for the body so the trainee needs to keep their shield up for protection. They also need to be aware of not stepping out from a shield wall thus exposing themselves from the side to a possible arrow strike.

In terms of the Basic Combat Assessment, the trainee needs to learn a few basic skills:

- Always watch the arrow coming towards you.
- As the arrow strikes the shield, angle the shield slightly downwards so that the flight is directed towards the ground.
- If an arrow is coming towards the head, the trainee needs to lower their face behind their shield. They should not raise their face until told to do so by someone near, just in case a second arrow is heading their way.
- The trainee should not bat an arrow away as this will likely add to the arrow's momentum and deflect it into someone else or, worse, the crowd.
- An archer should never lose an arrow at you if you are standing in front of the crowd. If it does happen, make sure that any arrow aimed at you is dealt with safely.

Notes:

If an arrow is low and aiming for your shin or foot: move your leg as the arrow hurts!

Attacking

Once an archer has loosed an arrow they are vulnerable to attack, hence why they tend to hunt in pairs. If you get the opportunity to run an archer down they may just run away but should you reach one, they should offer themselves by raising their bow out of the way so you can kill them across the body and you do not damage their bow. Please get the trainee to practice this as many get carried away in the moment and injure the archer (or worse, their bow). Be aware that some archers will throw their bow away and then take out their secondary weapon.



2.1.15 Against Javelins

The trainee should already know;

- Everything up to how to perform the Eights, moving.
- How to face a spear, Long axe and archers.

What is to be taught;

- How to defend against javelins.

The javelin is used solely in a scripted phase of a battle and so the javelineer should make eye contact with you before throwing the javelin.

The basics to coming against a javelin are as follows:

Make eye contact	Always make sure that the javelineer is aiming at you and that he knows you are ready. Keep watching the javelin as they do rotate sometimes in the air.
Shield position	Keep your shield in front of your body. The javelineer should be aiming for the centre of your shield. Remember to angle your shield slightly downwards so that the flight after impact is directed towards the ground. Do not bat a javelin to the side as this will likely cause it to deflect into someone else who is not prepared for the incoming missile. Even worse, it could go into the crowd.
Low Shots	If the javelin is coming low to your shins or feet then remember to move out of the trajectory as the javelin does hurt.
High Shots	If the javelin is coming high to your head, the trainee should raise their shield up. This will also stop the javelin from flying beyond the front rank of the shield wall.
The Crowd	The javelineer should never lose a javelin at someone standing in front of the audience. If it should happen, be extra careful to manage the javelin correctly.
Javelins in your shield	Javelins do punch through the shield occasionally. To remove it, simply pull the missile out. Do not knock it out with your weapon as it may break if hit too hard.
Javelins in the ground	If in doubt, pick the javelin up and lay it flat on the ground to avoid any potential hazard.

Being a display weapon, the onus is on the victim to make the javelineer look good. This can be achieved by the victim reacting to the throw and the blow rather than just standing there, immobile.



2.1.16 The Shield Wall

The trainee should already know;

- How to fight individually against other warriors, facing any weapon.

What is to be taught;

- How to fight as part of the shield wall.

The shield wall is the defensive tactic of choice during the Viking Age, used by both Vikings and Anglo-Saxons. Every warrior stood close to their neighbours with their shields interlocked (elbow pushes out and grip pulls in). Left handed warriors need to move to the right hand end of the wall.

There are commands to learn and practice too detailed in section 4 of this manual.

Roles and responsibilities of being in the shield wall	Working and moving together in close quarter fighting: not stepping out of line for an easy kill. Be aware of cross kills. Do not be drawn into jabbing near faces.
Roles and responsibilities of being on the flank	Protecting spears and Long axes with your shield. Be aware of archers picking off individuals. Experienced warriors should be placed here as it is the weakest point of the line and is also nearest the crowd.
Communication	Always listen for commands and be ready to give clear commands. Execute commands well as a unit.
Against spears	Keep the spearman busy so they are not free to aim for other people further down the line.
Helping a spearman	Using your shield for a spearman to hide behind.
Pressing a gap	With communication, pressing forward through a gap in the wall as a unit rather than as an individual.
Flanking	Having the awareness to try to flank the opposition. Knowing how to advance individually or as part of a group and when to retreat.
Against flanking	Knowing to extend the line rather than fold.
Wounds	In all fighting, a valid blow should be reacted to as a wound. If a second blow is landed within 10 seconds of the first, then a convincing death is required. If not, the trainee can "recover" and re-enter the combat.

To build up the trainee's instincts and awareness of the effects of doing or not doing certain things, hunting party training is also very useful as this is a smaller, more dynamic version of shield wall fighting requiring fewer warriors to be present during training.



2.1.17 Killing from Behind

We are trying to get to a point where every warrior is simulating Dark Age fighting as realistically as possible. We take hours to train our warriors on how to fight and kill someone stood in front of them but we do not do the same for warriors coming against an opponent from behind.

We want to avoid the situation of a warrior who is behind the opposition shield wall just running down the line of a shield wall, tapping their victims' backs as they run. This looks awful; the victims invariably do not register the shot because they are not expecting it and ultimately it has no lethal character anyway so is not a valid kill in our Rules.

We therefore need to teach how to also kill, effectively and safely, from the rear during a battle. The primary issue is that the victim is not expecting this kill and the trainee will need to approach more warily as there are inherent dangers.

Un sighted	The victim will not know you are there. They will be engaged in fighting someone else so will be moving and swinging their weapon and/or shield. Take care advancing into that.
Back swing	To avoid being hit by the victim's backswing it is probably best to advance with your shield further out and make sure that any contact is made with your shield first before your weapon. This will also block the victim spinning round at the last moment when they become aware of you.
Killing Blow	<p>Land the killing blow on the victim's stomach and leave it pressed there long enough for it to register with them that they have been hit/killed. You can also whisper in their ear too! All too often the attacker wants to kill every warrior possible and then actually kills none of them within our Rules or, worse, kills them looking really badly.</p> <p>A blow to the buttocks is a safe option too but then the attacker invariably moves on quickly to the next warrior without killing the victim properly and even worse without making sure that the victim has even registered the blow: as far as the victim is aware it could have been someone passing and hitting them with a shield or spear (Remember the victim is not expecting a blow from the rear and so is less likely to respond). You must give the victim time to realise they have been hit and then time to go down dead. Then you can move on to the next warrior.</p> <p>Avoid a blow to the back as no matter how careful you are, it always seems to hit the spine or an elbow.</p>

The point of doing it this way (which is only a recommendation) is primarily to slow down the attacker so they cannot decimate an entire flank in 10 seconds. This method forces them to get in close and make sure that the victim responds to their kill.

Slowing down the process of attacking from the rear now removes the advantage from a lone warrior because by the time they have killed the one person, someone else has noticed and killed the attacker at the same time. Any lone flanker must therefore be very sure of their intended victim in the sense that they can kill them safely whilst remaining alive long enough to do it. Any advantage in this situation must be taken by the attacker's shield wall making use of this opening in the enemy shield wall.



2.1.18 Further Display Elements

There have been elements of Display introduced already in this Training Regime. The following should now be covered too, to prepare the trainee fully for the Basic Display Assessment:

How to die	Must be done safely. Keep your arms out of the way to avoid elbows being hit. Do not over-play your death by grabbing your opponent's weapon and thus stopping them fighting others – this is unfair. Once dead, using the shield to cover the head or if a wet surface, lying on the shield.
Recycling	How to be recycled and when – primarily during the parley sessions but can also be done when a unit is advancing over you.
Killing from the rear	As part of a display usually during a one-on-one fight or as part of killing hostages within an acting scenario, the trainee should be shown how to cut someone's throat for dramatic effect. This should always be done through the aggressor's hand and never directly against the throat of the victim in case of burrs etc.
Receive Berserker	The trainee should experience being in a shield wall as a berserker hits. Remember to keep weapons upright and hide your face behind your shield. The shield wall should attempt to both stop and allow the berserker through. In both situations the trainee should practice engaging the berserker to finish them safely.
Receive Boar snout	The trainee should experience being in a shield wall as a boar snout hits. Remember to keep weapons upright and hide your face behind your shield. The shield wall should attempt to both stop and allow the boar snout through. In both situations the trainee should practice engaging the warriors to finish them safely.

The trainee should now have covered every combat technique and situation from both the Basic Combat and Basic Display Assessments. The trainee needs to practice these until they become second nature and when the RTT is confident that the trainee is safe, the trainee should be put in for their Assessments. Once the Basic Combat is passed, the trainee can take their position on the battlefield.



2.1.19 Questions and Answers

The RTT and every member of the Group need to discuss scenarios with the trainee, discussing the rules and etiquette of the battlefield. To guide the RTT, the following are a bank of questions that the Basic Combat Assessing Thegn should pick questions from:

What are the valid Hit areas?	Torso front and back (not spine), shoulder. Thighs
What should you do if hit on off-target area?	React to the wound.
What are the mandatory items of safety equipment?	Helmet, gloves with min of 6mm of padding (should be hidden under leather.
What are advised items?	Arm, elbow and knee guards, box (men), fencing cups (women)
Imagine you are fighting near to the audience. If you hit your opponent on the helmet, what should you do?	If no injury, carry on but open yourself up for a good death. Apologise later.
What should you do if you cause a wound injury?	Check that the person is safe and needs medical attention – find someone who can give it. Stay with person and when appropriate, apologise. Find a RTT and report the incident yourself. Buy the victim a drink later.
What should you check for before going onto the battlefield?	No sharp weapons, no burrs on weapons, no dangerous parts to the shield or weapons.
What is the 2 hit rule?	If the first landed shot is valid, with lethal character, then step back a few steps without defending, acting wounded. If after a count of 10 you have not been finished off then return to the fight.
What is the advantage of wearing chainmail?	You win a contest where there is a mutual kill with an opponent not wearing mail.



2.2 Specialised Sword and Shield

This Section is another aspect of our training that has never been formally written down before in our Manual. It has been developed by a few warriors but championed and driven forward by Cornelius. It is an attempt to develop the posture and control of a warrior to then develop better co-ordination of the weapon with an "active" shield primarily when fighting individually rather than in the shield wall.

The several processes are detailed here but the caveat is that the trainer must allow the trainee to see openings and to investigate them, rather than blocking these.

2.2.1 Lowered Stance

The trainee should already know;

- Skills at a Basic Combat level

What is to be taught;

- How to lower their stance.
- Learning to stay in the lowered stance.

The trainer needs to discuss the relevance of having a good, balanced stance. The best way to develop this is to fight in the extreme version of the stance for as long as possible to build up leg strength.

When the normal L-shaped stance is stretched, the body is forced lower. To achieve this stretched stance, the rear foot needs to be moved further back, in one of two positions:

In the L-shape

This will keep the rear leg locked and offers less manoeuvrability.

On the ball of the foot.

The rear leg in this position has the knee pointing to the ground and can even be placed on the ground in the extreme version. The rear leg is open in this stance, offering more manoeuvrability. The lower you go, the more discomfort there is sooner but the dividends are greater, eventually.

In all good stances, the centre of balance should be centralised between the legs. The torso should be held vertically upright in this (and all stances). The RTT should watch the trainee carefully and correct any leaning either forwards (leading with their head) or backwards (too much weight on their rear leg).

We do not advocate fighting this low down as it is too extreme but training in it will strengthen the legs, open up new lines of attack for the warrior whilst reducing the visibility of their own vulnerable areas. It also affords better movement to attack and withdraw because the body is balanced and held in a more active posture. Once movements have been learnt in this lowered stance, the warrior can then raise their posture (without standing upright) to allow for even more flexibility in their movements which can only benefit their fighting.

The shield should be placed covering the shield side of the body, angled slightly in the vertical to face their opponent, rather than held directly in front of their opponent, effectively closing off lines of attack. Their weapon arm should be held back in line with their body so that the sword tip extends just slightly beyond the shield rim.

2.2.2 Accuracy

The trainee should already know;

- Lowered Stance

What is to be taught;

- How to practice better accuracy of shots.

When fighting, a warrior will want to hit a specific spot e.g. the shoulder and not the arm (non-target area) or the head (banned area). This affords a very narrow region of success. To be able to hit the shoulder at speed, safely, requires accuracy in landing blows. To develop accuracy, the trainer should place a set of



objects (each about 18 inches tall) – a set of cones is good – in a rough circle of large enough radius that the warrior stood in the centre has to step to the object to make a strike.

The objective is for the warrior to hit the top of the “cone” at least 15 times out of 20 attempts: controlled, full swing hits. The warrior then moves to another cone either of their own choice or called out by the trainer. The aim is not to do this fast: speed here is irrelevant so stipulate the accuracy goal and that the warrior should take their time..

2.2.3 Moving

The trainee should already know;

- Lowered stance
- Better accuracy of shots

What is to be taught;

- How to move to maintain balance whilst keeping the accuracy of the shots.

Movement in the lower stance is done slowly at first to give the trainee every chance to learn the necessary skills of moving whilst maintaining their balance. The trainee should not cross over their legs (which would cause the warrior to end up off-balance). Leeway should be given to how the trainee wants to move so long as they are always balanced and in the low stance: the trainee should not stand up whilst moving from one target to the next..

2.2.4 Target Areas

In the training sessions, the arms are valid hits so the warrior should keep their weapon arm behind their own shield to protect it from attack. This will teach the warrior to always be aware of the position of their arms (in particular) relative to their shield. The en garde position is therefore behind the shield and the weapon comes out for an attack.

2.2.5 Active Shield

The trainee should already know;

- The lowered stance
- Good balance.

What is to be taught;

- How to use their shield more pro-actively to manage the opponent's weapon and body position.

The shield is used as part of the attack by blocking the opponent's attack but then maintaining the pressure on their hand or arm whilst advancing their own attack. Attacks to the weapon side can be initially blocked by the weapon but should be taken on the shield to free up their weapon to attack, whilst still advancing and pressing their shield to maintain the control on their opponent's weapon. This process is formally tested in the Advanced Combat Assessment.

2.2.6 Training Slowly

The trainee should already know;

- The lowered stance.
- Active Shield theory

What is to be taught;

- How to progress their attacks and defences through slowed down movements.

The whole training process should be done as slowly as possible to offer the warrior the chance to see gaps developing and to have the time to think about making those attacks before the trainer moves on. It should also help the trainee develop their defence from the (slow) attacks of the RTT.

Chinese martial arts (Kung Fu and Tai Chi) are taught by doing things slowly and then building up the speed once muscle memory and knowledge are there. If the trainer is blocking shots too quickly or instinctively, you must slow down to allow the trainee the time to “see”.





2.3 Advanced Combat

2.3.1 Introduction

Ideally, the trainee will have been a member of the Society for a few years; will have worked through some or all of the other combat assessments and fought in several, hopefully many, Major, Medium and Minor battles. The trainee's RTT should have introduced all the skills laid down within the Advanced Combat assessment from early on together with developing their Specialist Sword and Shield skills (but this is not a pre-requisite for taking the Advanced Combat test. The RTT should have also discussed the Theory of Fighting both individually and as part of a shield wall (**see the relevant sections contained within this manual on these topics**).

Now the RTT should be looking to tie together all these skills and finally put the trainee forward for the assessment. However, many applicants taking the assessment are hesitant; lack fluidity of movement when fighting and show poor technical ability in those parts that look specifically for it. In every section of the Advanced Combat Assessment the trainee must look like the "Advanced warrior". All these failings must be improved and this is done primarily by time spent at diligent training from day one and open discussion between the trainee and the RTT.

The Advanced Combat Assessment is the highest combat assessment for any hand-to-hand warrior in our Society and we have a duty to both the trainee to make sure that they are worthy of the accolade and also to everyone who has already passed the assessment who expect those passing to match their own level of ability when they passed. If this is not done there will be a steady watering down of the standard expected of our very best warriors.

The Advanced Combat Assessment, once passed, is the gateway for a warrior to become a RTT in their own right. Here the trainee will need to display clear, confident technical ability and show good battlefield awareness with which to pass on that knowledge to others. These are the reasons why we take the Advanced Combat Assessment very seriously.

As stated above, many who fail the Advanced Combat Assessment are not bad fighters but they do lack the precision to display the technical skills when asked. To that end, embarking upon learning the theory required to pass the Advanced Combat Assessment, the trainee must revisit the skills of the Basic Combat Assessment with their RTT and perfect those skills fully before they can begin what is here. Remember that everything the trainee does after the Basic Combat Assessment is underpinned by its theory, in particular:

- Performing safe, correctly weighted blows that are also accurate and telegraphed.
- Having a correct stance and good footwork.
- Executing positive and firm parries and blocks.

If a trainee does not learn these basic skills well enough at the start of their fighting career, they will pick up bad habits that will impede their progress through to the Advanced Combat Assessment and these habits will be difficult to rectify further down the line: we expect Advanced warriors to know and be able to execute the required skills correctly as well as be good, effective warriors individually and as part of a shield wall.

Each section in this guide is broken down into the same basic structure of:

- What the trainee should already know to help with the skill being taught.
- What the trainee will be taught to acquire the skill.
- A breakdown of the important aspects in acquiring the skill.
- Some training notes where appropriate on how to approach the teaching of the skill.



2.3.2 Feints

The trainee should already know;

- Telegraphing shots.
- Fighting distance.
- Good footwork.
- Lethal character.

What is to be taught;

- How to sell a shot to their opponent to make them move their weapon, shield or body in such a way that the trainee can then land a killing blow elsewhere a lot more easily.

Feints are typically one of the two most difficult skills to practice (and indeed teach) effectively since trainees may not appreciate how effective or widely used feints are in free-fighting: watch experienced warriors and many, if not all, use feints even if they do not remember doing so.

How to sell a feint

A feint can be as little as a drop of a shoulder, a look with the eyes or a twitch of the blade tip.

The "classic" feint is an actual shot that is re-directed once the original shot is reacted to by their opponent.

For this type of feint to work the trainee needs a flexible and strong wrist and needs to build up the speed of the transition from one attack to the other.

This takes laborious practice from day one and will not be achieved in a few hours before taking the assessment.

Realistic motion

Watching trainees trying to execute a feint usually illustrates how rigid they look: their whole body is not relaxed with their weapon arm especially being very rigid and lastly the weapon itself is moving too slowly and obviously.

The result is that their opponent is not sold on the feint and can then also respond equally well to the follow-up, true, attack.

Hence the trainee sees feints as not very effective in their arsenal of shots so they do not continue to practice them and so they do not improve.

Training

The trainee performs one of the Eights. This needs to be either a true shot or a feint so that the RTT must defend that initial shot well because it might be a true attack. The trainee must sell that initial shot if it is a feint to force the RTT into moving their shield or weapon to block the attack.

There has to be discussion between the warriors concerning the effectiveness of each shot to try to understand why a particular feint works or does not work. The RTT must impress upon the trainee that a feint that works for one warrior may not work for them since everyone is different. The trainee needs therefore to practice lots of different feints and select those few that work for them. The more feints a warrior can use, the better.



2.3.3 Circular Parries

The trainee should already know;

- Telegraphing shots.
- Good parries.
- Fighting distance.
- Good footwork.
- Lethal character.

What is to be taught;

- How to take control of their opponent's weapon, move it away safely in a circular motion and then land a killing blow.

The other of the two hardest skills to acquire and to teach effectively as the crux lies in the rolling wrist.

Effective Block	To produce a good block, the trainee must be balanced, have a good stance, start from en garde, see a well telegraphed shot and parry with the forte part of the blade.
Keep the Pressure on	All too often the parry is, incorrectly, a "beat" of the weapon away. A successful circular parry cannot be performed if the weapons are not in contact.
Rolling Wrist	Rolling the wrist is the motion needed to execute the circular parry. It is not an arm movement. This is the part that will take some time to master. Your blade should not slide down your opponent's blade as this will lose control: keep the forte in contact.

Training

The RTT should stand behind the trainee, taking control of their weapon hand to show the trainee the motion of a correct circular parry. When a circular parry is done well, the opponent should be pulled down with the motion of the weapon. The opponent may even grunt as air is expelled from their lungs. Both are good signs that the skill is being done correctly.

As with all the technical aspects in this assessment, the RTT must discuss the process with the trainee to offer insights into why certain moves are effective or not: the trainee should begin to think about the technicality of how they and others fight.

The RTT should be interested in the top three parries for this exercise as the lower ones, once blocked, will have to be circular parried upwards across the face of their opponent. This has too much potential for injury so we must explain this to the trainee.



2.3.4 Parry Riposte

The trainee should already know;

- Good blocks.
- Fighting distance.
- Good footwork
- Shield control.
- Lethal character.

What is to be taught;

- How to parry a telegraphed attack effectively to then riposte with a killing blow using lethal character.

Possibly the most useful aspect of the assessment when applied to free-fighting.

Using a shield	Used in free fighting to control the opponent's weapon from a good block or sweep. The trainee needs to use their shield to keep control of their opponent's weapon to free up their own weapon with which to lay on a successful killing blow.
Without a shield	The warriors perform the Eights in a random order, first one warrior attacking and the other blockings and beating the weapon away to then respond with their own attack which the first warrior blocks and beats away to then respond again. This process carries on until one warrior misses a block and the killing blow has to land. This improves the telegraphing and blocking of shots which helps in a show combat situation.
Attacks on the shield side	The trainee can step in to the attack catching the weapon near the top of the arc where there is less momentum. Continuing to move forwards, around the attacker, and keeping the shield pressure on the weapon arm will push the weapon backwards thus exposing the attacker's side and back. If the trainee has lowered their own weapon they can place a killing blow at any time with lethal character.
Attacks on the weapon side Or To the head	The weapon is used to block. The trainee then needs to swap the weapon for their shield whilst maintaining the pressure on the attacking weapon at all times. The trainee should now have the attacker under control and their own weapon free. By moving effectively, the trainee can move their shield (and hence control the attacker's weapon arm) in such a way to open their opponent's defences and so land a killing blow.

If a block is not good enough or the subsequent control of the attacker's weapon arm is not firm enough, a good warrior will react to free their weapon and then kill the trainee.

The crucial aspect of this task is the effective control of their opponent's weapon arm on the trainee's shield.

All ripostes need to be fluid and have lethal character: the trainee needs to look as though they are fighting for their life and not just going through the motion of playing at fighting.

Training

The RTT must discuss the process of blocking, opening their opponent's defences by bodily moving around them and using the shield more offensively. The best time to be offensive is when weapons are in contact: you know exactly where your opponent's weapon is at that moment and if you are quick enough you can keep control of it using the skills taught here.

The process is again laborious: the trainee must break down everything they do and analyse why they do that; is there a better step they could do to achieve the same or a different end product.



2.3.5 Seax and shield

The trainee should already know;

- Fighting distance.
- Good movement.

What is to be taught;

- How to fight at close quarters using a short seax and shield to land effective kills and defend against similar attacks.

This is a skill that many warriors never try to acquire, preferring instead to progress to a sword as soon as possible.

Close-quarter fighting

Many trainees avoid shorter weapons preferring the sword or langseax.

This removes the chance to learn some important skills on fighting closer.

The speed element of a seax; the greater number of attacks that are possible with a shorter weapon and the simple under-estimation of a seax fighter by a warrior with a sword can be effective.

Co-ordinating weapon and shield

Using a quick seax with a shield in combination at close-quarters is a very powerful form of fighting.

Warriors do not like being closed down, preferring the sword distance between warriors.

Using the shield more offensively to control the opponent's weapon to free the seax for kills is very important too.

Drawbacks of the seax as a weapon:

- The trainee must avoid getting too close to their opponent's face with the blade or weapon hand and should not advance with the point of the seax leading as with any weapon but being so much shorter, there is less chance to divert away.
- The shield can easily be used in a punching motion in this type of fighting. Any contact of the shield rim on flesh or joints or teeth can lead to severe bruising, damage or loss.

Training

The trainee can fight other seax warriors but better still, fight those who use a sword or langseax. Instantly, the trainee is at a distinct disadvantage in terms of weapon length. The trainee will need to learn how to defend better but also the simple fact that closing down the warrior quickly has its merits: the warrior who uses a sword does not like to be closed down as it tends to tangle their sword up and then the seax comes into its own.



2.3.6 Versus Pole arms

The trainee should already know;

- Defence against pole arms
- Effective fighting distance.
- Lethal character.

What is to be taught;

- How to block and run down (in a safe and fluid motion) the long weapon to place a killing blow on their opponent.

This part of the assessment does not have a display element to it. The Basic Combat Assessment requirement is only the safe blocking of these weapons. The Advanced Assessment is the situation for the trainee to show what they have learned in how to dispatch these weapons.

Blocking	The trainee should show good shield control in not moving their shield away from their body. They need to show a good solid, safe block of the long weapon.
No hesitation	The trainee should advance as soon as the block is made, affording their opponent no time to retreat or prepare another attack.
Controlling the long weapon	The trainee needs to show that they can maintain contact and therefore control of the long weapon as they are advancing along it. The shield should be kept in front (in case the spear has a secondary weapon) and remain in contact with the shaft of the long weapon.
Clean kill	The advancing trainee needs to be aware of where all the weapons are so that no weapons or arms get tangled so that a clean effective kill can be made. Knowledge of killing distances is required.

In the first instance, both the spear and Long axe will be fairly pedestrian in their attacking and defence. This affords the trainee the chance to perform the tasks without undue pressure. This is the trainee's chance to show how confident they are in this skill.

In the second instance, the long weapon is trying to kill the trainee and will not make things simple for the trainee. This is the chance for the trainee to gain extra marks for a confident advance and kill.

Note: The spearman will not have a secondary weapon.

If the pole arm is being swung, this is the ideal time to advance. If the pole arm is jabbing, the trainee needs to make sure that their shield is angled downwards (to avoid a ricochet up into their face) and advance so that the pole arm is deflected to either side to save the embarrassment of then running full onto it and it hitting their chest.



2.3.7 Side arm and secondary

The trainee should already know;

- Good en garde position.
- Effective blocking.
- Lethal character.

What is to be taught;

- How to use a side arm and a secondary weapon against a warrior with a shield: showing both blocking and attacking movements with either weapon.

If a shield is lost during a fight, for whatever reason, the trainee will have to resort to a secondary weapon; usually a seax but it could be a hand axe. They will need to know how to use these two weapons correctly and to their advantage.

Stance	The trainee needs to adapt their stance whilst using two weapons to still have an effective defence without their shield.
Secondary as a block	The trainee needs to have robust blocks with the secondary, shorter, weapon.
Secondary in attack	The trainee needs to perfect safe, effective kills using the secondary weapon.

The trainee's opponent will have a shield, so the effect of losing their own shield should be somewhat negated by having two weapons to their opponent's one weapon. The effectiveness of the trainee will depend upon how good their blocks are and controlling their opponent's weapon for long enough to attack with their other weapon.



2.3.8 Disarms

The trainee should already know;

- Effective blocking.
- Killing distance.
- Lethal character.

What is to be taught;

- How to block an attack and then continue to control their opponent's weapon whilst placing a killing blow safely on them.

Disarms are particularly useful in the following situations: seax fighting where no shields are being used and for archers who drop their bow and take up a secondary weapon whilst having no shield. Both situations require the trainee to use an open hand to help control their opponent.

A disarm is any process whereby the opponent's weapon and/or weapon arm is disabled long enough to land a killing blow. Confusingly, a disarm is not necessarily a process whereby the attacker is forced to drop their weapon: a weapon flying out of someone's grip is not a safe thing for us to do no matter how spectacular it looks.

Blocking	The trainee needs to correctly block an attack. This will stop their opponent's blade thus enabling the disarm, which can be one of the following 3 versions:
Disarm 1 (the classic)	Grab the pommel or weapon hand and rotate against the thumb to break the grip. This will invariably lead to a lost weapon but the blade should fall in a controlled manner close to the combatants. This is tricky to execute at speed due to some pommels being small or the hand being heavily gloved but it does look impressive done well.
Disarm 2	The trainee should place their free hand on their opponent's weapon hand or wrist and as the trainee steps in they need to continue to <u>press</u> their opponent's forearm back, forcing them off balance.
Disarm 3	The trainee should <u>push</u> their opponent's forearm back (like a beat) and away with enough force, making them off balance.
Killing Blow	Remember to keep your killing distance to successfully place a killing blow without the attack looking cluttered.

Training

This skill is very useful in many fighting situations: warriors locking weapons will try the beat disarm using their own weapon rather than a free hand to turn or unsteady their opponent.

The RTT should remember to introduce disarms against left-handed warriors since some very easy disarms can be achieved this way due to the nature of how the two weapon hands align. Left handed trainees will naturally be better at these with right handed opponents because that is their usual type of opponent. If possible, left handed trainees should train with other left handed warriors for the experience.



2.3.9 Freestyle against two warriors

The trainee should already know;

- Everything up to now: to be able to use each technique when required.

What is to be taught;

- The use of the correct tactics when facing two warriors whilst still fighting to kill them both.

In free fighting, a warrior can become isolated and then may have to face two or more warriors. How does the trainee approach this situation when running away may not be an option? There are specific tactics that can be used by the single warrior to increase their chance of survival: either by killing his opponents or staying alive long enough until help arrives.

Before the start of this section, the trainee should be assessing the two warriors picked and choosing the one that affords the easiest kill. This does not necessarily mean the weaker of the two warriors as it depends who is using which weapon(s).

Note: If there is a left-handed and a right-handed warrior, they will start on the "wrong" side of each other with their weapons together. This will make the pair not fully effective.

Attack 1	The 2 warriors walk whilst the trainee can run. The aim is to see if the trainee can engage one warrior whilst keeping the other out of range by effectively running around the pair. The trainee should endeavour to never engage both warriors together.
Attack 2	The 2 warriors now run too and should try to work together to never engage the trainee one-on-one. The trainee should be funnelled between the two warriors to afford an easier kill. It is up to the trainee to avoid this as long as possible whilst still fighting.
Avoid	The trainee should not just run around the pair of warriors and never engage. The aim is to engage the pair but on the best terms for the single trainee, which means one-on-one. The trainee should not run straight for the pair and "hope for the best".



2.3.10 Hunting Parties

The trainee should already know;

- Battlefield commands.
- Battlefield awareness.

What is to be taught;

- How to use effective commands and tactics leading a hunting party.

A hunting party is a small group of typically three/four warriors who have a specific objective to achieve e.g. to kill or nullify a particular person.

Weapon Combinations	If the Group has different weapons, can the trainee position these effectively and use them to gain the best advantage.
Commands	Need to be simple, clear, loud and effective.
Battlefield Awareness	The trainee needs to avoid taking his Group into a dangerous area. Likewise, watch for an opening with other Groups and exploit that to the best of their ability.
Cohesion	The trainee needs to keep his Group working together. The Group should not split into individuals fighting.
Timing	When is the best time to attack and from which direction? When should they retreat?

Training

The trainee needs to get used to working in a small unit of warriors against others. First, this has to be as a warrior listening to the commander and learning how best to use certain weapon combinations and the terrain, when to advance and retreat etc.

Once the trainee has become accustomed to these skills it is time for the RTT to allow them to take command. Trainees can have difficulty giving clear, quick concise commands at first so this needs practice.

The trainee needs to learn "left" from "right"!



2.3.11 Conclusion

The trainee who passes the Advanced Combat Assessment should be very proud of this fact as it shows a good understanding of the technical principles of how we, as a Society, fight.

The Advanced warrior should still continue to look to others and think about how they fight, constantly incorporating aspects of other warriors' skills into their own fighting style.

If the trainee now wants to start to train others, they need to be aware that they will now be moulding our future warriors: there is a need to train everyone to the best level possible to do everyone the justice of fighting well. Remember that the RTT who is defeated by his trainee in a fair fight can be justly proud of that fact. A RTT who is consistently beating his trainee should be doing better, more focussed training to improve the combat of each and every one of their trainees.

For the trainee who does want to start training others, it is advisable for them at this stage to revisit the whole of Basic Combat theory – by talking to and watching other RTT's and also by reading a copy of this manual. It is only when a warrior is fully aware of every facet of our fighting that they can hope to pass this knowledge on to others.



2.4 Theory of Fighting - Individually

The following discussion is an attempt to show warriors effective fighting techniques that are not strictly assessed in either the Basic or Advanced Combat Assessments but which extend ideas broached during this time. They are meant to complement those ideas introduced into the Specialist Sword and Shield Assessment and hopefully help to explain some of the approaches to fighting that our warriors can investigate.

2.4.1 Controlling your Opponent

In any martial system, the aim is to control your opponent's weapon hand. To achieve this first you have to know where it is. Looking for it is obvious but the best way of doing this is by touch: as soon as your opponent's weapon makes contact with your shield or own weapon you are half way to controlling it because you know exactly where it is. If the weapons are not touching then your opponent is free to choose either direct, indirect or feint attacks and unless you are very quick, one of these may well get past your defences.

To get contact means either a good block to an attack or just having the two weapons resting against each other from an en garde position. Either way, once touching, to control your opponent's weapon is a matter of:

Persistent pressure	Having contact is not enough to generate control of your opponent's weapon because your opponent is not going to allow you to do this easily: you will have to work for it. To achieve the required control, you need to exert pressure on their weapon and keep that pressure applied at all times.
Use of the shield	Controlling your opponent's weapon with your own is fine but how are you going to land a valid kill? At some point, you have to swap your weapon for your shield which could be a direct swap of the two or involve a sweep or beat motion of your opponent's weapon away giving you the time to bring in your shield onto their weapon arm which then frees up your own weapon. Remember though that your shield must continue to exert pressure on your opponent to keep control of their weapon hand.
Movement	Pressing with your shield against your opponent's arm or weapon is not enough to generate an opening for yourself. The act of continued pressure from your shield means that your shield is moving away from you. Therefore, to keep the pressure applied, you are going to have to move with your shield. This is fine, because you know exactly where your opponent's weapon is and you are in control of it. This movement will direct your opponent to where you want them to be thus creating an opening for you to land a valid kill.

2.4.2 Fighting Line

Warriors usually naturally move and fight linearly along the Fighting Line and either shorten or lengthen the killing distance to get into or out of range: many RTT's also teach just this style of fighting. More experienced warriors will move off this line by stepping left or right, keeping the killing distance fairly constant but altering the line of attack. This offers many more opportunities for achieving valid shots that look really good whilst keeping your opponent off balance and out of range.

The really important concepts in the theory of fighting are contained within the Advanced Combat Assessment, namely:

- Parry-riposte,
- Feint,
- Circular parry

These typically start being taught as linear processes but they really need to be developed into more non-linear movements, parries and attacks: a good RTT will introduce this as soon as possible to help develop the trainee's awareness of what is possible in their fighting.



2.4.3 Summary

Together, these two facets of fighting open up a much more varied range of shots to a warrior and can offer the warrior escape routes from attacks too, rather than merely retreating, which can then be turned into fast ripostes and hopefully excellent kills.

This whole process will take seconds to perform, will afford you safety behind your shield and give you a really well-executed killing blow. Behind these techniques are the underlying ones of good parrying; good footwork; balance and awareness of others. A one-on-one fight is possible but what if it is part of a larger melee? You have to be aware of the other warriors and your excellent generation of a valid kill may be spoilt by another warrior coming in to help their colleague in which case a good kill by you followed by your ignominious death a second later is not the best outcome: better to back off and live to fight another day: awareness of everyone close to you is needed for you to be truly effective in a melee situation.



2.5 Training the Trainer

This Section is placed after the Basic and Advanced Combat Sections and the short Theory of Fighting Section because it is about now that warriors know enough about what we do and can understand how things tie together and have experienced a few years of fighting and they feel that they can contribute to training others. However, any warrior who wishes to begin training others must understand one important concept: **being considered a better than average warrior does not imply that they will be in any way a good trainer.** All too often, we get the best fighter training everyone in that group and that person might not have the necessary skills to be the most effective trainer.

During training sessions, the RTT's does need to allow (under supervision) group members to experiment with training each other sometimes. This allows peer-to-peer training which is very useful for both parties but it is also to see if any other warriors enjoy the process and to see if they have any natural aptitude towards it. This way the RTT gets to see potential new trainers and also of course can gently usher away those not inclined to teaching. When the time is right, the RTT needs to introduce these potential trainers to other RTT's who can start to act as mentors: at present, this process is very low key and differs for every new trainer.

We, as Society Trainers, need to improve this aspect of our role as it is at the very centre of what we do: we train people to fight. We therefore need to improve our training of others who can then become the trainers of tomorrow.

The trainee trainer definitely needs to revisit the whole of the Basic Combat theory, whilst reading the RTT manual and talking to as many other RTT's as possible. It is only when you really understand how things inter-connect that you have any chance to then get those points across to new members.

A good trainer needs certain skills, including:

Clarity of communication	It can be a painful business when the trainer has traits that make it difficult to listen to them.
Good listening	If your trainee says they do not understand, can you hear the problem and think around it?
Putting people at ease	We are all adults doing a hobby and should be treated as equals.
Solid subject knowledge	The trainer must know their stuff.
Enjoyment for the process of teaching	In rain trying to teach one weak student: do you really care now?

Being an effective RTT means wanting to understand all of these pages here and then furthering their knowledge still further. The RTT will then want to instil this knowledge to their own Group warriors and to others to then nurture the new generation of RTTs. It is a constant process of thinking about combat in every facet.

Being an RTT is not a badge to wear whilst doing nothing but showing that badge.

Now we have formally written down all of this material it is up to every RTT to read it, use it and improve upon it. This is only going to be done by teaching our members well and getting cross-fertilisation from other RTTs, Groups and Societies.

It is up to our existing RTTs to nurture aspiring Trainers into wanting to take that step up to becoming an RTT because becoming an RTT is not a simple process and it will take time and effort to really get to grips with the content and learning your own teaching style.



2.6 Spear

2.6.1 Introduction

As well as teaching the trainee how to use the spear safely and effectively, the RTT should be instilling into the trainee how to look like a spearman: in the way they carry the spear; how they move with it and how they approach an individual or group fight. All of these aspects will be taken into consideration in the Assessment.

2.6.2 Misconduct Issues

The following issues need to be broached by the RTT at the start of the trainee's spear career. Each is a serious safety issue and will result in a fail in the assessment or demand a re-assessment if seen on the battlefield. The reasons behind each issue should be discussed by the RTT so that the trainee fully understands the fuller picture.

- Never have the tip of the spear pointing upwards. Always have the spear level or preferably tip downwards. To facilitate this, the back hand should be held higher than the front hand.
- Never have the back hand pressed against the butt of the spear shaft. The back hand should sit about a hands width from the butt of the spear.
- Never let your hands, gripping the spear, be less than shoulder-width apart. This should stop the majority of dangerous "snooker cueing", to try to gain extra distance. If the trainee needs to reach further, they need to shorten their killing distance by stepping closer to their opponent.

Other things to avoid

- The spear head should be held such that the blade rests vertically rather than horizontally. This allows the audience to see the blade better whilst offering your opponent very little visually. To make this orientation more certain of happening, before attaching the spearhead, the spear shaft should be checked for any skewness along its length. Now attach the spearhead such that the spear naturally rests in the hand with the blade vertically.
- Resist leaning too far forward which leads to the lifting of the rear foot. The trainee should remain planted in the stance at all times i.e. all shots must be made with both feet firmly planted on the ground: it is from this solid position that the trainee can develop good range skills and also develop the look of an experienced spearman.
- Do not grip the spear too hard. The grip should always be loose because if someone does run onto the spear or the trainee misjudges a hit, the spear should run through their hands, lessening the chance of serious injury.
- To keep relaxed whilst using the spear, the trainee should have their hands just a little over body width apart. This also maximizes the range of the weapon whilst allowing the trainee to maintain good control on the spear.

2.6.3 Grips

The front hand is usually palm down, over the shaft to give more control if the spear is parried upwards. The rear hand can be placed either way, depending upon personal preference. However, the front hand can be palm up on occasion or to preference: the trainee should be given the opportunity to try many grips.

If a secondary is to be used in the rear hand, then that hand must close around both the spear and secondary weapon so that both are held securely.

2.6.4 Stance and general appearance.

The spearman should always try to maintain a stable and balanced stance together with good footwork for an overall safe and good-looking appearance. All body weight should be distributed equally down both legs and both feet need to be kept firmly on the ground when placing any shot: be aware of the trainee leaning in to the shot and thus lifting their back foot. If this is happening, the trainee is too far away and their fighting distance needs to be corrected first before they place more shots on any opponent.

When moving, both the crab-like and step-over footwork are acceptable.

The trainee should be taught to use the spear in both a left and right handed fashion. The sooner the trainee is comfortable in both stances, the more their range of shots will increase.



With all the exercises, all movements must be done with panache as the trainee must be competent and look convincing at all times.

2.6.5 Merits of Training

The trainee has a 7'6" spear whose length is beyond anything they will have used before. The trainee needs time to learn how to gauge safe effective killing distances for this sort of weapon length. The trainee needs to be aware of the back end of the spear as this can easily be thrust into someone as the spear is pulled back.

The trainee needs to learn how to manoeuvre in a melee situation, both to place kills and to be safe with both ends of the spear. Lastly the trainee will become the focus of a group of warriors where the spear's primary objective is to find the kills whilst being protected behind the shields of the defenders. All this needs effective communication, speed and agility.

Used correctly, the spear is a fearsome weapon on the battlefield as it kills people who usually never see the shot coming. However, used badly the spear becomes a liability as it offers a gap in the shield wall for the opposition to rightly exploit and can be a dangerous weapon in untrained hands, inflicting some nasty injuries.

2.6.6 Using the Spear single-handedly

The double handed spear can be held single-handedly and used with a shield. This is primarily done in scripted parts of a battle as fighting freestyle whilst holding the spear at the balance point in just one hand requires a high degree of technical skill. The trainee should certainly be offered the chance to train in a shield wall situation to use the double handed spear single-handedly.

The trainee should be reminded that during all single-handed spear work, the spear must be held at or just behind the balance point: having a very light spear and physically being able to hold it at the butt end is not acceptable because you do not have control of it.

In terms of wanting to carry on with this on the field, the trainee should voice this desire to the Assessing Thegn at the start of the Spear Assessment so that the trainee's safety and competence in this can be gauged. We would hope that no trainee would keep quiet to avoid this part of the assessment if they knew they were going to use the spear single-handedly in the future.

2.6.7 Control

The trainee should already know;

- The basic stance (defensive and offensive).
- Weapon Basics.
- How to move forwards and backwards.

What is to be taught;

- How to place controlled shots onto a shield whilst moving.

The trainee should start at the basics again because this is a new weapon; the extra length especially needs to be gotten used to, both from a safety and martial point of view. The trainee should practice control on the shield with the RTT to help with learning the stance and effective killing distances in addition to placing correctly controlled shots.

The spearman is a versatile warrior who should be looking for various kills in a shield wall, where their victims will be at different distances away and at various angles from the front. The spearman needs to learn quickly the correct killing distance to an opponent so that every shot is landed with control. To aide this, here are three simple yet effective training exercises to practice this skill:

Stepped	Starting slowly, the trainee stands with the spear lowered, ready. They take one step towards the RTT, striking a controlled blow to the body and then step out again. This can be speeded up through practice.
Basic	The trainee should start away from the RTT with the spear pointing downwards. They should then run to the RTT, stop and place a controlled shot on the shield. Once this can be done at speed, the trainee should be well on the way to gauging killing distances in a melee situation. This will stop the trainee landing heavy blows on their opponents.



Advanced Have 4 warriors surrounding the spearman at the points of the compass at varying distances (10', 12', 14' 16' for example) and have the trainee start from the centre (use a shield on the ground as a marker if that helps) and nominate each of the 4 warriors in turn.
This version adds more variety to the basic situation (and tires out the spearman!).

2.6.8 Clear and strike

The trainee should already know;

- Good stance.
- Good movement.
- Good body pivoting.

What is to be taught;

- How to clear a shield to land an effective killing blow.

The trainee will need to show two approaches to clearing the shield: pushing (hooking) or knocking aside. Blows to the shield must be quick and sharp to move the shield enough to produce a gap to afford a safe strike at the opponent. The best place to strike the shield is at 9o'clock (looking at the shield as a clock face) as that affords the most leverage. Obviously, if the opponent is left-handed then 3o'clock becomes the best place to strike.
The RTT needs introduce the idea of leverage once the spearman has grasped the basic control aspects of the spear. Changing the leading arm (i.e. using the spear both right and left handed) will offer greater leverage against shields in certain circumstances. Also, taking a step away from the line of sight will also generate better leverage and possibly open up a warrior more.
In terms of the assessment, the trainee will be expected to lever the shield away from the 9 O'clock position and to strike to clear the shield at the 3o'clock position (for a shield held in the usual left hand).

2.6.9 Unusual Actions with the Spear

The trainee needs to practice the ability to

- i) dispose of the spear safely**
- ii) shorten the spear and**
- iii) use the spear as a parrying weapon whilst taking up a secondary (seax).**

The spear is the primary, and sometimes the only, weapon of a spearman. At no time during combat should a warrior think that discarding the spear is a good thing to do but there are situations where it is called upon: the spear may have become damaged or it is part of a scripted routine to discard it. The trainee needs to learn how to do this safely and effectively.

The trainee should practice shortening the spear if they are being run-down at speed as this allows the spear to still be used offensively, whilst retreating.

Lastly, planting the spear vertically in the ground and using one hand to control it whilst parrying their opponent's attack thus allowing the trainee to pull a secondary weapon is a great technique to use to confound an opponent. Done well, the opponent usually does not see the secondary until the trainee turns retreat into a fast killing blow.

Disposing Whilst retreating, and working to the side rather than in line, let go with your forward hand so that the spear point drops to the ground. Once there, let go with the rear hand. The spear should land to the side of the warriors thus minimising any tangling issues and the aim is for it not to bounce too much on landing.
Never throw the spear away.

Shortening Run the spear through the hands quickly to reduce the length in front of the trainee. This way, it can be used much more effectively in close quarter fighting.
Be aware of the extra length behind!

Parrying Whilst vertical, the spear acts as an effective block if the trainee moves around the



spear. Once the secondary is out, the spear can be disposed of or kept whilst the trainee turns defence into attack.

For the assessment, the trainee is expected to show effective disposal of the spear and drawing of their secondary weapon.

2.6.10 Circular disarms

The trainee needs to show effective circular disarms against a sword or hand axe.

The trainee should already know;

- Good parrying.
- Good stance.
- Good movement.

What is to be taught;

- How to control a sword or axe using a circular disarm.

This is a static situation where the trainee needs to show competent disarms against a warrior holding a sword or hand axe. The opponent stands with weapon in en garde and the trainee needs to use the spear to move the other weapon against the thumb, in a circular motion downwards so that the weapon is pushed to the ground or is forced out of the hand of the opponent to land at their feet. To try to stop the trainee ripping their opponent's weapon from their hand it is usually safer to teach the trainee to move the spear sideways first then slap downwards.

The trainee should not attempt to do a full circular motion as the other weapon may easily fly out of the grip and hit someone.

Done correctly, the opponent will definitely feel the force of the manoeuvre and should be bent forwards in the process. Audible expulsion of breathe is usually heard too. Both are good indicators of a successful circular disarm.

2.6.11 Versus another Spear

The trainee should already know;

- How to hold, move and fight with the spear.

What is to be taught;

- How to fight another spear competitively.

The trainee will come across other spears on the battlefield and will need to be able to block them and lay on safe but effective kills in return.

The trainee should be taught how to block another spear and to turn these into quick attacks. It is the beginnings of quarterstaff fighting.

The two minute part of the assessment is against another Advanced Spearman. This is tough but with no shield to aim for, the trainee is forced to go directly for the body of their more experienced opponent. With tiredness and possibly some desperation a factor, this is where the faults and skills of the trainee can be seen most readily.

The Assessing Thegn will be looking for a variety of killing blows attempted and placed as this shows the trainee is well versed in the weapon.



2.6.12 Shield Wall Fighting

The trainee should already know;

- Tactics of the shield wall.

What is to be taught;

- How to be effective and safe in a tight and loose shield wall.

Tight Shield wall

Being tight, warriors are closer together, affording the spear plenty of kills on legs down the shield wall. The Assessing Thegn will be looking for these kills up and down the line, remembering that all shots must be on target and controlled whilst showing lethal character.

The trainee should be careful of not exposing their back to kills in going for a killing blow. The trainee should use the shields around them carefully and communicate with them to tell them what is needed and where the spear is moving next, so they can close the gap left by the trainee and create a new gap where needed.

Loose Shield wall

Being looser, opponents are further away and the trainee will have fewer opponents within a safe range. Also, there will be less help from their own side in defending.

Relevant techniques include:

Cross kills	The spear attacks warriors further down the shield wall rather than those warriors directly in front.
Shield partner (Felagi)	The spear must have trusted warriors on one or better both sides who will stay with the spear and not get drawn into their own fights. Their job is to protect the spear from attack.
Positioning	The spear should assess the combat and place themselves in the most advantageous position in the shield wall or behind it.
Swapping Hands	One of the most telling skills for a spear is to be ambidextrous. This allows the spear to hunt both ways down a shield wall.

2.6.13 Hunting Party

The trainee should already know;

- All the theory.
- Commands.

What is to be taught;

- How to work as part of a team, taking command when instructed.

In a small group of warriors, the spear is the weapon that needs to do most of the initial kills. These should be quick and aimed indirectly. Leg shots are very useful here, even if only one shot is laid on: the opponent will take this as a wound and the hunting party can pressure their remaining opponents to get a quick victory.

The spear should be placed as the centre of three warriors. It is rare for a spear at the end to be as effective but remember that working left-handedly can be a great advantage.

If facing opponents who also have a long spear, the trainee will have to decide where best to place themselves: to go head to head against the other spear or move slightly away. Each trainee will have to go through this process of learning what works for them and their hunting party.

The Assessing Thegn will be looking to the trainee to be actively communicating to the other members of the hunting group, in particular how they can be used to create openings for the spear.



2.6.14 Competitive Fight versus 3 warriors

The trainee should already know;

- All the theory.

What is to be taught;

- How to analyse several opponents and the tactics of attacking them.

The 3 warriors (who should be below Advanced Combat standard) should have a selection of weapon types enabling the trainee to choose their preferred first warrior: no more than 2 are allowed a shield. Typical combinations are: Two Weapons (hand axe and sword) which offers a “no shield” opponent, a short weapon and a longer weapon with a shield.

The trainee has two attempts where they can run but in the first attempt the three warriors can only walk and should not work together. In the second attempt, the three warriors can also run and will be working together. It is therefore important for the trainee to assess quickly the three warriors: who looks to be the weakest fighter? It may not necessarily be the warrior using Two Weapons.

The trainee should attack decisively, using any attack appropriate to their opponent. The Assessing Thegn will be looking for the trainee to kill at least one warrior in either version of this. Any additional kills will score the trainee more points.

Remember the trainee is being assessed on their overall look as a spearman throughout the assessment and this needs to be impressed upon the trainee: do not look bored or lethargic – you are fighting for your life in all stages of this assessment. Being merely proficient with the spear is not deemed enough to pass this or any Specialist or Advanced Combat Assessment.



2.7 Two Weapons

2.7.1 Introduction

We as Vikings take the term to mean two long side-arms and in particular a sword and a long hafted hand axe. The RTT should inform the trainee that the use of two swords in the Viking Period is not substantiated and should not be a selection of choice during a battle. It is more acceptable to use two weapons during Circles and similar Training Exercises.

This Guide exists to help RTT's teach Two Weapon fighting by offering a structured syllabus to refer to, one that standardises the core knowledge. This way, every RTT who teaches Two Weapon fighting can stick to the "official line" but are given the chance to deliver it in their own style.

It would be expected that any RTT interested in teaching Two Weapon fighting will have already passed the Two Weapon Assessment themselves.

The Two Weapons Thegn and/or assistants should be accommodating of any RTT who wishes to specialise in teaching this. They should:

- Train the RTT in how to teach the syllabus and give them guidance on how things relate as a whole.
- Explain to the RTT what the Assessment is looking for since the RTT will be helping to run future Two Weapons Assessments.
- Have the RTT shadow the Thegn during Society Training sessions and during Assessments to watch and learn.

2.7.2 Terminology

For ease of writing this guide terminology has been standardised. The RTT will need to understand this and apply the spirit of the text when they have a left-handed trainee whose right hand is the off-hand.

The combatant being taught Two Weapons by the RTT is termed the trainee and the person facing them is their opponent. The trainee will start as right-handed, using the sword in that hand. The hand axe is to be used in the left hand, their usual shield hand.

Later in this Guide we shall discuss the relative merits of swapping the weapons and also consider using two swords. These additional situations should be considered only after the core skills have been learnt by the trainee.

2.7.3 Basics

The RTT has to teach Two Weapons as a whole to the trainee rather than impart just enough information for the trainee to pass each section of the Assessment. The Assessment does look for certain pre-defined skills that can be reproduced for and marked by the Assessing Thegn.

However, there are certain intrinsic skills that permeate every part of Two Weapon fighting and are included in the Assessment and the RTT needs to spend plenty of time teaching these basic skills because the trainee can and will be failed if their use of Two Weapons is wrong. Three things the trainee should always strive for when fighting in the Two Weapons style are:

Parries	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Having no shield, the trainee will need to make all blocks with one or both weapons. A good block therefore becomes very important as the weapon is a lot narrower than a shield: accuracy and strength in the off-hand is needed to achieve effective blocking here.• Effective off-hand blocking will probably take longer than the process did for the primary sidearm since the off-hand is relatively weaker and less developed in terms of hand-eye coordination.• The RTT needs to be patient and offer praise whilst being realistic about the progress with the trainee.• The RTT should look for odd-angled weapon positioning brought on by a weaker wrist. This needs addressing as soon as it becomes evident to help develop a correct
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fighting posture and to help build up strong off-hand blocking techniques.

Ambidexterity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The trainee needs to become ambidextrous with the two weapons: both should be used for blocking and both for attacking but each type of weapon needs to be used to their strengths. The trainee should not favour one weapon over the other for either activity: meaning a trainee that always kills with the sword or always blocks with the axe when this is plainly a habit rather than using the best weapon for the situation.
Co-ordination	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The trainee will need to use the two weapons safely and fluidly: the trainee now has two long weapons that will be moving rapidly. The trainee will need time to get used to knowing where the weapons are during combat. All training should be taken slowly at first to aid this process. Over time, the Two Weapons skills will become co-ordinated and thus can then be speeded up to become more effective in combat.

2.7.4 Before Training begins

A useful starting point to Two Weapon fighting is to get the trainee to swap their weapon and shield around so that the trainee is now left-handed. The aim of this is to highlight to the trainee just how weak their off-hand is in terms of agility with a weapon and how slow their hand-eye coordination is when the left hand is the primary one. The RTT should start to discuss the above items whilst the trainee has just one weapon. This way the trainee is focussing on their off-hand without having their main weapon hand trying to dominate. Once the trainee appreciates the difficulties ahead and has made some in-roads to these, they will be ready to start Two Weapons training proper with a more realistic set of goals and timeframe to achieve them.

2.7.5 Stance

The trainee should already know;

- All the theory up to Advanced Combat.

What is to be taught;

- Various stances for two weapon use.

If the right-handed trainee is to be using their primary weapon to, say, practice control then the trainee should be leading with the right leg. If the trainee is using their off-hand weapon, they should lead with the left leg.

In general fighting, the trainee has three options that need to be discussed and developed:

Leading with the left foot (generally the off-hand side) will put the trainee's left side closer to their opponent, who most probably will be right handed meaning their own weapon will be very close so any attack by the opponent to this side will need a fast and strong block.

Leading with the right foot (generally the primary sidearm) will put the trainee's right side closer to their opponent, who most probably will be right handed meaning their own weapon will be in range of the trainee's right side

Some Two Weapons trainees have a much more square-on stance which does not offer either side as an easy target. They prefer to wait for their opponent to attack and then move in with a block and counter attack. Done properly, this is a very effective fighting style.

2.7.6 En garde

The trainee should already know;

- All the theory up to Advanced Combat.

What is to be taught;

- Various en garde positions for two weapon use.

How should the trainee hold the 2 weapons en garde?

If they are held side by side (Left-Right) then the trainee has 3 regions to defend: to the left, to the right and centrally between the weapons. It is the third avenue that the Two Weapon trainee's opponent should always



attempt to go for because here the trainee will always be sub-consciously favouring one weapon over the other as the blocking weapon and the good opponent can use that to their advantage with feints.

The alternative is to hold one weapon low and the other higher, virtually above it, in line (High-Low). This looks a little like the blades of scissors, with the hands close together. Either weapon can be in either position. This effectively reduces the regions to defend to two, removing the central target. The trainee then has the choice of blocking high (low) attacks with the higher (lower) weapon or perhaps still resorting to blocking any attack on the left (right) side with the left (right) weapon. We would recommend blocking shots on the left (right) with the left (right) weapon as this does not introduce twisting of the trainee's body.

2.7.7 Control

The trainee should already know;

- All the theory up to Advanced Combat.

What is to be taught;

- Same level of control as shown with the main hand.

The trainee is to practice control against a shield and then a body using their off-hand weapon. This is to be done first static – the trainee needs to get their fighting distance correct and understand which stance to be in – left or right foot leading.

The RTT needs to look for parity between the looks of the two weapons as they place the shots. The trainee should look equally at ease with either weapon. In the Assessment, the Thegn will be comparing both weapons.

2.7.8 Eights

The trainee should already know;

- All the theory up to Advanced Combat.

What is to be taught;

- Same level of fluidity as with the main hand.

The trainee should start with the Eights with attacks on the left done by the left-hand weapon. Once this is fluid and looks contained, the RTT should discuss the possibility of using cross over attacks: the left weapon attacking the right side. And vice versa.

The cross-over attacks will offer variety for the Two Weapons trainee. However, they must understand that crossing over the centre line will expose their side and back to their opponent with very little chance of defending an attack there.

The cross over shot is best saved for the counter attack once the opponent's weapon has been blocked and nullified since their attack will have opened a gap between their weapon and shield that the trainee can exploit.

The same process can be done for parries: any attack to the trainee's left side is met by a parry using the left weapon and vice versa. Once this is mastered, the RTT can introduce cross blocking to develop the opening of the opponent using good footwork. Usually, the simplest moves are most economical and the most effective for opening the opponent to a killing blow.

2.7.9 Parry-Ripostes

The trainee should already know;

- All the theory up to Advanced Combat.

What is to be taught;

- Effective blocking and killing ripostes with both weapons interchangeably.

Once a trainee has been learning the Eights attacks and parries with the cross-over technique too, then moving it a stage further on to parrying and counter attacking should be a lot simpler and the trainee will already have a good grasp of the possibilities with two weapons.

Further techniques - The basic theory of using Two Weapons is to block with one weapon whilst simultaneously attacking with the other, aiming for the diagonally opposite target area. So if the opponent attacked the trainee's left leg, the trainee needs to block that and attack from their right shoulder. Once these



basic diagonals have been taught and the muscle memory is acquired then speed and fluidity can be developed.

The trainee can then begin to develop nuances to their Two Weapons such as leg block – leg attack and shoulder block – shoulder attack and also feinting the attack.

2.7.10 Feints

The trainee should already know;

- All the theory up to Advanced Combat.

What is to be taught;

- Effective feints with the off hand and also combined.

The Two Weapons trainee is ideally suited to use feints: two weapons means two attacks. Those two attacks might be feints. This means their opponent needs to be considering the possibility of four attacks. Done well, the trainee should be able to bypass most defences this way.

Initially, the trainee should be taught easy, simple feints since these are usually the most effective ones as their speed can be developed a lot.

The RTT should endeavour to keep the trainee training slowly, letting them search out their own feinting style: everyone has (or should have) a favourite feint.

2.7.11 Circular Parries using the off-hand

The trainee should already know;

- All the theory up to Advanced Combat.

What is to be taught;

- Same level of fluidity for the off-hand as with the main hand.

This is the most technical part of the Assessment and one that will take the longest to perfect in the trainee.

Circular parries are very effective for controlling the opponent and moving them to allow a killing shot to be placed. Being able to perform a circular parry with either hand allows the trainee to greatly improve their chances of controlling their opponent and therefore killing them,

However, trainees find circular parries with the off-hand the hardest to perform well because they show up poor blocking technique and a weaker wrist which both lead to poor control of the opponent's weapon. This process needs to be taken slowly and any issues need to be discussed.

The trainee should be fluid with doing the circular parry with the off-hand whilst killing with the other weapon which is the purpose of two weapons.

2.7.12 Against Pole-arms

The trainee should already know;

- All the theory up to Advanced Combat.

What is to be taught;

- Effective use of two weapons against a pole arm.

The RTT needs to start back at basics with pole-arms because the trainee no longer has a shield and will probably never have faced a spear and especially a long axe without a shield.

Against a spear's speed and agility, the Two Weapons trainee is at a distinct disadvantage and needs to be very focussed on blocking the weapon quickly and maintaining that control as the trainee steps in for a kill. A scissor block is probably the best approach, at least initially, where the spear, once blocked can be moved to either side using one weapon, leaving the other weapon free to place the killing blow. Once the trainee's blocking has improved and strengthened, then using one weapon solely for blocking whilst simultaneously placing the killing blow with the other weapon is the ultimate goal of Two Weapons fighting.

Against a Long axe, the trainee is offered more chance as the Long axe tends to have two types of attacks:

- The thrust which can be parried and then the trainee steps in for a kill.



- The swing where the trainee needs to move quickly to step in and kill the exposed opponent – remember the Long axe opponent needs to be a shaft length away to kill the trainee. This is roughly the length of the sword directly or with a step in.

The RTT should be looking for a safe positioning of both weapons as the trainee advances on their opponent. There should be no trailing weapon pointing forwards at the opponent, putting them in danger of a thrust.

2.7.13 Tactical Considerations

The trainee should already know;

- All the theory up to Advanced Combat.

What is to be taught;

- Application of the theory into a coherent fighting method against one or more trainees.

All this training and theory is building up to better, faster competitive fighting where all the Two Weapons techniques are to be used correctly to the advantage of the trainee:

- Good stance and a solid en garde position will help to defend the trainee and offer a good base from which to attack.
- Effective blocking will control the opponent's weapon.
- Fast footwork will help to open up their opponent.

The trainee should always endeavour to keep control of their opponent's weapon once contact has been made: that contact will help to nullify their opponent's weapon, putting them on the back foot having to defend against the trainee's other, attacking, weapon. Note that blocking with an axe can be done using either:

- The head (with the hand lower down the shaft) to lock up their opponent's weapon and possibly disarm: a left-hand against a right-hand weapon does lend itself to disarming rather well.
- The shaft (with the hand closer to the head) which offers a lot of protection for against low shots.

Once the trainee is killing opponents well and looking the part of a Two Weapons trainee, the RTT can introduce two opponents. These should have various types of weapons with a shield to offer the trainee the opportunity to assessment their own style against both and see where their strengths and weaknesses lie. The RTT needs to keep an open discourse with the trainee offering their expertise and insights into what is working and what is not and more importantly why. Once the trainee is getting to grips with two opponents, a third should be introduced – a spearman to add further complexities to the fight.

The RTT will need to discuss the various tactical differences of fighting with Two Weapons over that of using/having a shield. Primarily the lack of a shield to hide behind means that all blocks need to be done with a weapon, solidly: the Two Weapons trainee cannot get away with weak blocks. However, once a block has been achieved, the trainee should be instantly on the offensive because they have an additional weapon. After practice, this whole process becomes second nature and the block and the counter attack will be one fluid movement.

Also, having two weapons means that the trainee will have to teach themselves which block to use for any shot coming down the middle, between the two weapons, as this is usually the weak point of any Two Weapons. A good opponent will know of this weakness and should always target it with feints to remove one of the two weapons. Altering the en garde position to be High-Low rather than Left-Right can help with this.



2.8 Long Axe

2.8.1 Introduction

The long axe is a two handed, dynamic, swinging weapon which offers scope for great fighting and tremendous injury. Its wielder must fully understand this and realise that it is not the best freestyle weapon for most people but it can look awesome as a show weapon given the best training, lots of experience and the correct opponent.

2.8.2 Phrasing

The trainee will have to become ambidextrous to use the weapon properly. As a result of this duplicating of movements on both sides of the body, so there is also a doubling up of the wording and the descriptions become unclear very quickly. There has been a concerted effort to minimise the descriptive wording to keep the content as simple as possible so phrases like "Advance the leg on the side of the body where the axe head is" have been simplified to "Advance the (axe head) leg" with the use of the axe head position in brackets.

There are also some pertinent figures to help the reader clarify the meaning where we think it is needed further but ultimately the RTT teaching the long axe must have worked through the weapon themselves, to fully understand the nuances and, more importantly, to offer guidelines for free fighting where the trainee may not have time to get into the preferred correct position before blocking or attacking.

2.8.3 General Rules

A few important initial points that pervade the whole of long axe fighting need to be mentioned now:

- The hand nearest the axe head should always be palm up.
- If the axe head starts on the left hand side, it strikes the opponent on the left hand side and vice versa. The implication is that the arms on the long axe should never cross. There are situations where the trainee does rotate the axe head from one side to the other but the hands still never cross.
- For balance considerations, every forward swing movement of the axe requires a step forward too to maintain the centre of balance.
- Once an attack is being made, the hands are locked on the long axe – we do not allow sliding grips (snooker cueing).

It must be made very clear to the trainee that the long axe, with its momentum generated from the swing, is potentially very damaging and so the trainee must take all instruction very seriously.

Before being taught the technical aspects of the long axe, the trainee needs to become comfortable moving forwards and back and then add in the swapping of the weapon between the hands whilst moving. These are the critical aspects of using the long axe – if the trainee does not spend time perfecting these initial exercises, then the more technical parts further down the line will not be correct and the trainee will fail the assessment because they will be unsafe somewhere in their stances, attacks and parries.



2.8.4 Cross Stance with Axe Static

The trainee should already know;

- How to hold the long axe.

What is to be taught;

- A basic movement with the axe static.

The RTT should get the trainee to stand square on to the direction they will be moving in. Legs should be bent at the knee so the trainee is in a slightly squat position with their feet more than shoulder width apart: an exaggerated horse stance which might feel ungainly but it does provide the balanced platform needed for combat with the swinging axe.

The trainee should hold the axe horizontally at a comfortable distance in front of their stomach. The hands should be no less than shoulder width apart on the shaft, so that the axe is balanced.

The trainee should step forward with one foot then the other, maintaining the open stance. Doing this, the body is forced to twist at the hips, which then produces the same movement in the hands (remembering to keep the arms locked in their position in front of the stomach). This way the axe head moves from side to side as the trainee advances. It is this twisting motion in the body that will generate a lot of the perceived power in the axe head when fighting.

2.8.5 Cross Stance with Axe Swapping

The trainee should already know;

- How to move in the widened cross stance.

What is to be taught;

- A basic movement with the axe swapped between hands.

The trainee repeats the stepping movement from the above exercise again with the axe shaft horizontal and locked in front of the stomach. However, as the (head) foot advances and the body moves and twists, bringing the axe head forwards, so the trainee then swaps hands in readiness for repeating the process with the other foot.

Overall, the trainee should be well balanced and never lean forwards.

2.8.6 Fighting Stance

The trainee should already know;

- Cross stance.
- Swapping the axe whilst advancing.

What is to be taught;

- The fighting stance position.

Once the above preliminaries have become a more natural process, the trainee needs to learn the fighting stance from which all usual attacks and parries start. Starting in the cross stance, one foot is moved back in the more typical L-shaped stance. The axe head moves back over this rear leg and the hands are still around the balance point with the correct width between them.

From this position, the axe head is ready to swing forwards in an attack (by sliding the hands towards the butt end of the axe) or the butt end can be used to parry or disarm (by sliding the hands up towards the axe head). Every movement from now on, comes from the fighting stance. The trainee needs to be equally comfortable in the left and right hand versions of this.

Once in the fighting stance, the trainee should move in a similar fashion as mentioned above already.

These initial exercises provide the basis for all the requirements within the long axe assessment. The sooner the trainee can become familiar with it all, the more it will help their learning as things become more technical. The RTT should reinforce the need for the trainee to become ambidextrous with the long axe, as the constant swapping from a left-hand to right-hand grip and back again is required practice.



2.8.7 Control & Eights

The trainee should already know;

- Cross and fighting stances.
- Body movement.
- Swapping of the axe between hands.

What is to be taught;

- Safe placing of standard 8 attacks.
- Fighting distance.
- Roundhouse swing.

Doing control and the Eights statically means that the shield person does not move: the trainee will always move whilst swinging the axe. Static therefore means a short movement is needed whereas moving means the trainee stands further away and has to advance to the shield before swinging, hence the need to get the correct fighting distance.

Teaching control with the long axe starts from the fighting stance and hearing the instruction to advance one step, the trainee should land the axe in a controlled manner on the shield mimicking one of the Eights. The hands need to be re-positioned on the haft, closer to the butt end. As the step is made to deliver the attack the foot must be planted firmly on the ground before the blow lands. During the attack, both hands should not move on the axe shaft. Once the attack has been made, either the trainee shuffles back or continues to advance (if moving). In both situations, the axe will have to be swapped in readiness for the next attack on the other side.

Fighting distance is a critical area to consider as it is very easy to either over-reach or be short of the target with a long axe. To develop their understanding of their own fighting distance, the trainee also needs to complete these exercises from at least three paces from the target so the RTT can gauge this part of the skill better. The trainee needs to understand that their opponent will not necessarily keep static and so their constant re-assessment of fighting distance will be required.

As with all combat, the trainee needs to add an element of lethal character to their use of the axe and the RTT needs to spend time reinforcing this. The trainee should be encouraged to twist at the hips when delivering a blow as the associated rotation of the upper body gives an impression of power.

After each blow has been delivered the trainee needs to retire back one pace into the fighting stance so as to be ready for the next attack. The RTT needs to communicate the various ways to do this and offer their insight into the pitfalls of each so that the student can come to an informed decision.

The round house swing (which involves the axe being swung around the head before the trainee takes the final attacking step to get in the correct fighting distance) also needs to be introduced here. The RTT should reinforce that it should only be practised for attacks to the shoulders and body. The hand at the butt end never moves during the roundhouse swing: the other hand does slide along the shaft but should end where it started. The swing finishes higher than it started so that the final blow to the shoulder or middle is always coming down and not up. The low shots tend to have the long axe coming up to meet the opponent which is not a safe thing for a swinging weapon, hence not done.

Throughout this whole process, the RTT needs to be looking constantly for the following correct things:

Weight of Blows	Very important for a swung weapon due to the added momentum of that swing.
Balanced Footwork	Very important for a swung weapon to stop overbalancing to avoid causing potential injury to others and to the long axe wielder.
Fighting Distance	Very important for a swung weapon due to the inertia of trying to stop a blow that suddenly needs stopping.
Lethal Character	As the most dynamic weapon on the field, the eye of the audience and the camera will be drawn to it. To have someone using the long axe badly is therefore easily spotted and recorded for posterity.

And the following incorrect things:

Snooker cueing	The axe should never be slid through the hands to land a strike: both hands should be in proper contact with the shaft at all times, around the balance point of the weapon.
Over-reaching	This will cause injury to someone, either directly or through a deflected shot.



2.8.8 Parrying

The trainee should already know;

- All basic aspects of the use of the long axe.

What is to be taught;

- Effective and safe blocking of attacks.

The axe should be held by both hands higher on the shaft, with the butt end pointing down. The attacking blow should be caught on the lower half of the axe shaft so that the weapon slides harmlessly away from hands. This will reduce the risk of injuring the hands or snapping the shaft.

To receive the Eights, the trainee needs to start from a wide stance with the axe across the body dependent on which side the attack is coming from: the axe head should be on the opposite side to the attack so that the butt end can be used for the parry. The parry involves lifting the axe, keeping the shaft across the body and pointing downwards so the butt end parries the attack. To add to the complications here, the trainee may not have time to swap the axe from one hand to the other to prepare for the parry, so parrying can be done from either hand in reality. The pro's and con's of parrying from both sides needs to be very clearly discussed by the RTT so that the trainee can make informed decisions and practice safely.

Parries can involve a step in or a step out but the step in does make a riposte more difficult because the fighting distance has been shortened.

The RTT should explain the need for quick changes to the holding of the axe depending upon the origin of the attack. Also, having the correct grip will prevent the crossing of the trainee's hands during any riposte.

2.8.9 Circular Parries

The trainee should already know;

- Effective blocking with the long axe.

What is to be taught;

- Skills to perform the top 3 circular parries safely.

Circular parries start from the fighting stance with the hands higher up the shaft near the axe head and the rearmost hand held high to keep the haft pointing forwards and down across the body. The weapon catches the incoming blow and circles over the top of it to rotate their opponent's weapon all the way round past the legs. Now a final flick to push the weapon away. The trainee should then be able to step in with a killing blow once their opponent's weapon has been moved away.

2.8.10 Disarms

The trainee should already know;

- Good blocking and correct stance.

What is to be taught;

- Safe disarm techniques.

Start from the fighting stance with hands at the axe head end. As the attack comes in, telegraphed, so the axe butt is placed on the inside of their opponent's arm and is then moved outwards to meet the incoming weapon on its forte. This motion is continued until the axe butt is clear of the line of the opponent's arm and is then accelerated rapidly towards the ground to avoid it flying off in a random direction.

In this manner, the axe is pushing the incoming weapon against the thumb thus weakening the grip and then the quick stab down effectively breaks the grip, thus disarming the opposition. Any weapon taken from the opponent must land safely without causing a risk to anyone.

2.8.11 Clear and Strikes

The trainee should already know;

- How to aim a shot and fighting distance.

What is to be taught;

- How to hook a shield away to place a killing blow.

The trainee needs to be in a fighting stance to then slide the axe shaft forwards in their hands (still being shoulder width apart). The axe head is aiming to come down at the 2 o'clock and 10 o'clock positions on the



shield, to pull it briskly away from the opponent thus exposing their chest to a thrust shot which must be delivered safely. Similar shots must be placed on the shield at the 4 o'clock and 8 o'clock positions.

2.8.12 Drawing a Secondary Weapon

The trainee should already know;

- How to

What is to be taught;

- How to dispose of the axe when needed and also use it as a parrying pole.

There are situations when the long axe needs to be disposed of on the battlefield – perhaps it is damaged or the conditions of the fight change so that both situations make it unsafe to use the axe. Once the decision to dispose of the axe has been made, it must be done quickly and safely.

To do this, the axe should be moved to waist height at the side of the warriors and the hand nearest the head releases its grip causing the axe head to drop to the floor. Once this has been done, the other hand can let go and the axe should drop safely to the floor.

If the axe man wants to keep the axe as a parrying tool then it can be placed butt end on the ground and the trainee will need to move around it, using it vertically as a parry of their opponent's attacks. Hopefully, the trainee can then draw a secondary weapon and then re-engage offensively.

2.8.13 Feints

The trainee should already know;

- How to move and attack using the long axe.

What is to be taught;

- How to use the body and weapon to make effective feints.

The basic premise of the feint is to make your opponent believe they are going to be hit then their body will react with a defensive movement that should create an opening for the trainee to exploit with the true attack. To aid in this trickery, lethal character or an impression of intent will aid in this, using the whole body as if you really mean to strike. If the (butt) hand is moved straight up or down significantly increases the speed with which the axe head can alter its direction.

The RTT needs to impress upon the trainee the following 3 things: control; safety and balance throughout their training and learning of the long axe as these will be looked for throughout the assessment but should be obvious conditions of any standard of warrior.

2.8.14 Fighting Styles

The trainee should already know;

- All the technical aspects of using a long axe safely.

What is to be taught;

- Application of the theory for effective battlefield fighting.

General fighting is where the trainee can demonstrate all the above acquired skills. There are a few different areas of fighting:

Show Fighting	The trainee needs to be used as an elite warrior and their opponent needs to react accordingly. Attacks are generally very basic with roundhouse swings bullying their opponent to make a mistake. Efforts must be made to work with their opponent to put on more of a show.
Competitive Fighting	Where the technical skills can all be used against their opponent.
The Assessment	The trainee should be looking for their opponent to help them to enable the show combat element to be seen. Also, in the competitive parts, the trainee will need to be more careful in their approach to avoid being killed too cheaply and thus run the risk of failing that part of the test.



Remember, in the assessment against three Frihals, the trainee requires just one strike/wound to one opponent to pass that part: more points will be gained if kills are made. The RTT should therefore try to instill in the trainee the ability to assess who they are fighting and to make quick decisions on who to attack first and from which direction to avoid the stronger or better defended fighters.

To help the trainee stay alive for a few seconds longer, the RTT should be offering their knowledge on things like keeping the axe head moving which will help to disorientate a warrior long enough for a killing shot to be found.

The trainee needs to keep their optimum fighting distance when competitively fighting since their opponent will be attempting to close them down, trapping the axe head against the shield and then attempting their own killing blow. The trainee must have fast footwork from a solid balanced stance to counter this.



2.9 Archery

The effective training of archers is paramount to the safety of other warriors since most arrows land without the victim knowing the arrow was coming. This means that they had little or no chance to defend themselves. As a result, any wayward arrow, in particular to the face, will strike with the full force of the draw and this can have devastating consequences to the warrior. It is for this reason that the Archery assessments are PASS/FAIL on every part – the Thegns demand only the best archers pass the test.

The discussions here are based upon a right-handed archer i.e. one who holds the bow in their left hand and draws with their right.

2.9.1 Stance

The trainee stands facing at 90 degrees to the desired target. They should then raise the arm nearest the target and point in that direction, without looking at the target. The trainee should then turn their head to look along their outstretched arm at the target. If the trainee is not pointing at the target, they need to turn their body accordingly.

2.9.2 Nocking

With the bow down, the arrow is slid into position and held against the bowstring lightly by two or three fingers. It is the finger pads that hold the bowstring and it is the light pressure from the finger on either side of the nock that holds the arrow in place. Too much pressure on the arrow from the fingers will cause the shaft to move off the bow.

2.9.3 Drawing

The fingers are there primarily to pull back on the bowstring but the effort to do this comes from the shoulders and back – the trainee should visualise breathing in and expanding their chest rather than just pulling the string with their fingers.

As the string is drawn back, so the bow is raised up and the arrow, front arm and rear elbow should all lie in a straight horizontal line with the arrow nock resting against the chin or lips. Remember that the drawing action should always be done to the same place for the archer.

Do not grip the bow, but allow the pressure of the bowstring being drawn back to pull the bow into the front palm.

The RTT(A) should explain about different draws depending upon the distance to the opponent and the trainee will need to practice these to perfect their knowledge of their own bow.

2.9.4 Loosing

The fingers should be relaxed off the bowstring as soon as the arrow is drawn – it is one fluid movement.

2.9.5 Aiming

Both eyes should be open and looking at the target along the length of the arrow. The aiming process will be different for every archer and is the part that conscientious practice teaches the trainee about their own aiming: no-one else can teach them this.

For distance loosing, the arrow will need to be elevated to generate more distance. This implies aiming for the head or above it to land a shot on the body. The distances and draws and wind conditions are all factors that will need to be assessed and this comes again from practice and experience.



2.9.6 Elevated Shots

If the archer wants to get distance then the arrow needs to be at about 45 degree to the horizontal. To achieve this, do not just keep the body upright and raise the front arm. Done properly, the whole body needs to move and the front arm remains horizontal in relation to the body. To achieve this, the rear leg is bent/lowered.

Once these basics are understood it is up to the archer to practice diligently to get to know their own style and their bow/arrows. The archer should practice at close range by not using a full draw and then stepping up the distances to practice aiming and learning at what sort of angle their body needs to be to get the desired range.



2.10 Javelin

The javelin is currently used by skirmishers against a shield wall. It is planned to have the front rank of a shield wall throwing javelins as the two walls approach as a precursor to engagement who then turn to their secondary weapons. The target warrior should always be aware of the javelins being thrown so some form of eye contact needs to be made. This is because the javelin has a lot of momentum focused on a small metal tip and it does cause nasty bruising or worse: shields can be penetrated by a javelin. However, everyone in the receiving shield wall needs to be aware in case of javelins not being aimed correctly or, more realistically, parried badly.

2.10.1 Holding the Javelin

Hold the shaft at or very close to the balance point. It is probably a good idea to move the javelin around in the hand to find the best position for you as you prepare to throw. Treat the javelin like a dart, using the pen grip rather than the modern javelin grip.

2.10.2 Body Stance

Face the target square on and keep your upper body square. Throw the javelin like throwing a dart so use the arm not the body. We are not trying to develop increased range but a true flight and accuracy and hence be safe using the weapon on the field. Remember to use sufficient force to throw the javelin so that it strikes the shield in the horizontal plane: if you throw weakly, the javelin will fall beneath the shield and into the target's legs.

2.10.3 Develop Accuracy

Get used to throwing the javelin at a target a few feet in front of you. Get used to the grip and practice your aim. Develop accuracy by grouping the javelins together. Make sure the javelin flies true and does not rotate in the air as this will be looked for in the assessment.

2.10.4 Increase Range

Gradually increase the distance of the aiming point, to develop arm strength and technique until you are throwing the javelin the recommended distance for the test. Even better is to practice further distances so that the test becomes an easier distance for you.

2.10.5 Common Faults

- If the body twists as you throw the javelin, so the javelin will develop that twist in flight.
- If you hold the javelin away from the balance point then the flight will be tumbling.



2.11 Sling

At present the skills required to use a sling safely and competently are very sparse in the Society. Here are the few guidelines we currently have in the use and practice of a sling:

Swings	The stone only needs to be swung through one complete circle. Spinning the stone gains you no advantage except to keep the stone in place whilst on the move where it is ready to use or to threaten an opponent.
Underarm technique	It is useful to practice throwing stones underarm to develop the sling technique and also develop the correct hand-eye co-ordination.
Stance	Similar to that for an archer but the feet and body should be offset by about 30 degrees. With feet and body facing the target, the stone tends to veer to the right or the sling gets caught in the seax.
Aiming	We are not skilled enough to be able to aim the sling at any precise object. We are aiming to get the general direction i.e. not heading off towards the crowd. As you loose more stones so you will be able to correct your posture to aim the stone better.
Loosing	The release technique we employ is very similar to that used when bowling under arm to a child. The release of the knot/bean should be done so that the stone prescribes an arc to the target, rising from the slinger and descending to the target.
Different arcs	An early release will flatten the arc making a bounce shot more likely. A later release will elevate the arc of the stone which could result in a foreshortened range.
Good Practice	Always adopt the same stance. Loose from the same point. Mark the position of their left foot toes on the ground and then adjustments to the stance should be made by moving their right leg which will change the line the missiles take. Note: very small adjustments can make a big difference in the trajectory.
Issues	If the sling is twisted you will get a poor release and you will hear a ripping sound as the down cord and release cord unravel. The amount of twist in the cords and other factors make the direction of flight of the stone unpredictable and in some cases the stone can land behind the slinger! Always check the sling for twist before loosing though this is no guarantee that a twist won't occur. Windy conditions affect the sling a good deal and make twisting more likely.
Loosing Rate	Much less than that achieved by an archer. However, accuracy improves as the slinger rate increases providing they do not rush. Getting 2 hits on a target within 10 seconds and thus a kill is a tall order!



2.12 Mace

To be used as a scripted weapon only and then solely against the shield in a glancing manner, brushing across the shield. As part of a scripted phase, the opponent should know to react to the simulated brute strength of the weapon, accordingly.



2.13 Cavalry

All cavalry information is contained within the Cavalry Document that exists separately to this main document. This was done to try to keep this document to a manageable number of pages but is also because the cavalry information is very specialised and most RTT(C)s will not need to know the information. Likewise, the RTT(H) will not be working on most of the infantry and missile information.

The Cavalry document can be found on the DocStore (EVENTUALLY!!)

It is important that an RTT who knows that cavalry will be at a show will have to remind their warriors of the protocols surrounding the engagement of cavalry: the cavalry are purely a show element so no warrior should be trying to land a killing blow on the rider. Every effort should be made to make the rider look as awesome as possible.



3 Group Training

3.1 Introduction

This section will highlight training techniques for Infantry and Missile Units. It will also offer some theory on how the infantry fight to then help improve their cohesion and effectiveness.

3.2 Group Fighters & Commanders

3.2.1 Combat Groups

It should be the aim of every combat Group within the Society to learn how to fight effectively together and to keep improving upon this. This process develops from the more experienced warriors leading by example through intelligent tactics and effective communication as well as solid fighting. These three aspects are key to the success of any Group's fighting.

As warriors gain experience through time on the battlefield, they should become more aware of where their strengths lie: some like to give commands and others are happy to take commands; some like to stay in the shield wall, fighting alongside their friends whilst others are more flexible and will move to where they are needed more or can make an individual impact.

Shield Wall Fighters	These are happy to be part of the shield wall, fighting those in front of them and given a command will act upon it. They also get frustrated when those around them do not respond to the commands which can result in a death that they see as one that could have been avoided.
Individuals	Those who like to keep separate from the shield wall so they can plug gaps or act at various points along the line looking for either a weakness to exploit in their opponents' line or a weakness to strengthen in their own line.
Flankers	Who try to force the battle by attempting to turn the opposition shield wall. Done quickly, this can be the crucial turning point of any battle but it will only work if everyone else in the shield wall is working together, defending well and pressing the attack.
Commanders	<p>These are usually effective fighters but they must be experienced to be able to see the bigger picture and issue quick, effective (i.e. heard) commands to those who need to do something specific.</p> <p>The commander does not necessarily need to be the best warrior but all too often the commander is the warrior with the strongest personality, irrespective of their own fighting skill. Here, more experienced warriors will choose to ignore this type of commander because they know the command is the wrong one, which would lead to a suicide mission.</p> <p>It is respect for the commander which is probably the most important quality that should never be overlooked by those wishing to have this role and the best way to get that respect is by time served turning up to shows and being seen as an effective warrior in their own right.</p>

From these four extreme types, there are warriors of every shade and colour in-between too: everyone has a role to fulfil on the field and everyone should get their enjoyment out of finding that niche: no one warrior is more important than any other. It is this truism that keeps all of us coming back for more.

Every Group should have someone who is in charge of their fighters. This job normally gravitates to the one who is willing to shout the most often and loudest. However, this person may not give the best commands nor at the correct time. It is up to the Group to manage their own structure as best they can to get the best person or people giving commands.

Ultimately, the person who should lead the Group in combat is the most experienced warrior who is then also willing to shout effective commands such that the rest of the Group trust them. This process needs to develop over time through Group training sessions and then against other units at shows. The Group should also develop its own working command structure beneath their field commander so that others can step up when the commander is killed or not at a certain show.



As a Group grows in numbers, they may want to split their warriors into pre-defined units so that these smaller bands of warriors can hone their collective fighting with commanders who then come together as a Group unit under a Group commander. This does develop some formidable fighting teams given time but at the other extreme can develop cliques that might eventually tear the Group apart. The allocation of new warriors to each unit should be done fairly with an overview to the strengths and weaknesses of the units. For example, if there is a centre unit in the Group, then typically these are the larger, stockier men who like to wear chainmail and are not interested in running after those fleeing before them. There is little point in putting a lanky 18 year old youth in with them who only has a short axe: better putting him on a flank unit where he can develop the skills of those more mobile units. If in time he is seen as a solid warrior who likes to stay in the line then move him over to the centre at that stage.

3.2.2 New Groups

If the Group does not have a Trainer (for example a splinter Group forms from a pre-existing Group), one needs to be found from within the Group's ranks who will then be expected by the Society to start working towards gaining RTT status i.e. they need to study this manual and take on board how and what we train and become known to the existing RTTs and get onto the RTT e-mail list. The trainer does not have to be the Group's field commander as these two jobs have very different skill sets.

It is rare for a completely new Group to start up from scratch but if it does, their members need to find one from within their ranks who will act as the Trainer. The Group will probably have to travel to another local Group to get Training, at least initially.

Initially the Group Trainer will probably be the most experienced warrior but this warrior may not be the best at training others: the Group needs to find the best person for the job as quickly as possible. The Group should be asking geographically local RTTs to come to their training or the Group needs to be pro-active and visit the RTT's Group's training sessions. In this situation, the external RTT needs to offer all the advice mentioned in this section of the Manual to get the Group working together to build their cohesion on the field.

If there is no RTT local enough then the Group needs to go looking for one at shows, either through word of mouth or by contacting the Head RTT or by asking on the RTT email list.

The bottom line is that there should always be at least one RTT willing to help with advice face-to-face, somewhere over the year.

3.2.3 Specialised Roles within the Army

There are a few specialised combat roles that a warrior can perform on the field. These are:

3.2.3.1 Hearth Troop

Those high class, mailed warriors assigned the role of Hearth Troop to a commander should be aware of their Historical role and responsibilities.

- Their role is to protect their Lord.
- Their main responsibility on the battlefield is to fight alongside their Lord. If he dies, they are to fight to the last man surrounding his body until they are victorious or die trying. There should be no attempt at leaving the field.

3.2.3.2 Skirmishers

The role of skirmishers is to harass the enemy. This is done either:

- As their army is being deployed, to act as cover.
- As the opposition army is being deployed, to try to harass and kill a few warriors.
- Just before the army engages the enemy, hopefully to create some confusion in their opposition's ranks so that the shield wall can take advantage of those areas.
- As the army is withdrawing, to stop the enemy engaging fully.
- To nullify the enemy skirmishers.



The way to skirmish is to rush at the enemy line, attacking quickly and then withdrawing and repeating until told to break contact. Not all skirmishers should engage at once: some should hold back until those engaged withdraw, which they then replace.

If an enemy warrior is drawn out of the shield wall, the skirmishers should focus on this warrior, hopefully killing him.

3.3 Theory of Fighting – Shield Wall

3.3.1 Introduction

Each fighting Group in the Society will have their own commander together with a natural command structure beneath them: there are no official recommendations on this structure, just whatever works well for the Group. However, at Major Musters, the Society-level commanders (the Hersirs) will run the scripted battles under the management of the Battle Captain and Assistant(s).

A Group should learn to fight as a shield wall. If the numbers of warriors within the Group are too small for this then find other local Groups to practice with. If too far away, then the onus is to find training at shows.

Whilst fighting as a unit, spears and long axes need to work the flanks as protection from the opposing unit. Under pressure, the flanks must not buckle thus giving ground: the unit needs to remain dressed on the Centre Man and locked together. Good communication is vital to ask for re-enforcements when required. If the opposition attempts to flank the unit by extending their own line, the defenders must match the manoeuvre without becoming too spread out: again, shout for help when required.

When fighting as more than one unit, there may be times when there are gaps between the units: spears and long axes again need to patrol this area and all warriors here need to act as skirmishers if numbers are small and defending a large space. If one block of fighting moves behind your unit then warriors need to be aware of the opposition there and turn to face them, either to engage or face off the enemy.

For training exercises to practice working effectively as a unit or shield wall, see later in this Chapter.

3.3.2 Working the Gap

The Group Training session could start with everyone using just primary side arms of roughly equal lengths so no-one has the reach advantage or disadvantage. In the first engagement some attacks go high and others go low. Hopefully one or more will get a shot on target and the opponent will step back. The wall then has at least one extra warrior who needs to be used effectively for the next 10 seconds, working that gap generated by the wounded warrior: there should be two warriors fighting one at this point. It only takes one shot for that warrior to take a wound and then a gap is forming. The warriors have to shout to their unit with basic communication like: "gap" or "push them" or something simple that the unit hears that they all recognise as the order to do together. The opposition will be struggling at that point because they know they are warriors down and will be retreating (if not physically, then at least in their heads). The secret to all this is having some quick shots land from the outset. If it does not materialise, then the fight will be a more drawn out affair but the essence of winning that longer fight is the same: get a shot then exploit that gap for the 10 seconds that the warrior is wounded.

Once a gap has formed that is large enough, the opposition have effectively become two separate shield walls unless someone very quickly spots the danger and plugs the gap. If that does not happen, the attacking unit will need to move through the gap and decide to go either left or right, as their lack of numbers initially getting through the gap will make it unlikely that they can go in both directions. Usually the opposition will force your hand and the unit ends up just going one way or the other. Groups can train such scenarios in training by walking through the different situations and talking it through. The end result should be that the warriors grow in confidence in performing such movements and will become more flexible on the battlefield as a result.

3.3.3 Flanking

To perform the classic flanking manoeuvre, the best way is for the unit to have a reserve of one or more warriors – the few the better really as they will be spotted less easily by the opposition before contact. As the shield walls hit and warriors start to fight, the reserve should then advance around the end of the line, not



trying to engage anyone but seeing what the opposition do. If the opposition army have experience and numbers to allow it, they too will have a reserve. If they do not have their own reserve unit, they should have at the very least one person being the commander who will be floating at the back somewhere, keeping an eye on the whole progress. If this person spots the flanking attempt then they will have to come out to try to block the flanking. Here numbers and swiftness will win. Once around, the flankers must make sure that they kill their opponents fairly i.e. two good kills which will take valuable time – please do not run along the line tagging everyone as this is not Lethal Character and is not what we should be training for. As the flanker kills a warrior from the rear (safely, as that warrior is not expecting someone to be there and may be swinging their weapon backwards) so the warrior they were fighting suddenly has no one to fight. That warrior has two options – to either attack the next person down the line which is probably not the best solution since the flanker is going to kill him next. The best solution is to become a flanker around the original flanker, offering support to them and guarding against anyone who realises what is happening and comes to try to stop the attack. Again communication is required to keep together and offer support. This process sets up a rolling wave effect and the added numbers weighing in on an exposed flank is usually too great for the opposition to contend with and it will be a short time before the opposition line is in disarray and then dead.

However, in a training setting you can set the rules to stop flanking or perhaps the arena itself can be contained to stop warriors running around easily. Now, “flanking” means treating the end warrior as the weakness in the opposition shield wall and singling him out like a hunting party quarry. Once wounded or killed you have numbers to attack further along the shield wall thus creating a knock-on effect that mimics a flanking manoeuvre. Remember, both ends of the shield wall are trying to do this.

The end warrior is the weakness because he has just one warrior supporting him rather than one on each side so he is more exposed to a killing blow. Warriors need to learn how to fight together properly to better isolate and exploit these weak positions in the opposition. Conversely your shield wall warriors need to learn how to defend your wall against their opposition attempting to do the same flanking manoeuvres.

RTTs need to be able to discuss this theory with the warriors and sometimes halting the fighting mid-attack as the pivotal moments happen to discuss what has just happened and why is very important.

3.3.4 Complications

The dynamics of the shield wall change drastically when we introduce good spearmen (and long axe men). Spears, working within a shield wall need to be defended by the warrior either side of the spear: called here *Felagi* (Old Norse: comrades). Whilst the spear works low on thighs, hips, buttocks and waists, the *Felagi* are working hard to fend off attacks aimed at the spearman whilst also defending themselves. It is a very stressful role and the spear man needs to find two warriors that they trust to do the job.

As the shield wall progresses by hitting one opponent, who steps back wounded, so the warriors need to quickly exploit that gap, widening it and then finally stepping through it when big enough as mentioned above.

If the Group have enough spears, they could look at concentrating them together to work as a sort of Spear Hunting Group within the shield wall. Done properly, this can be a very effective method of deploying spears, especially against a badly formed shield wall. In reality though, the army commander will requisition spears to the flanks as they offer greater power in turning a flank which then allows other fast light infantry to flank around them in the wave motion discussed above.

Another very useful tactic is to have a block of warriors wielding the single handed spear. They can work with long spearmen and/or axe men who are there to open up the opposition shield wall.

3.3.5 Defence against flanking

As warriors attempt to come round your shield wall, the flank needs to extend the line to match the position of these flankers. The only way this can be done against a concerted flanking attack is for very good quick and loud communication to extend the line because as soon as this communication stops, some warriors continue to extend the line but others do not and then gaps appear within the shield wall which can be exploited by the attacking unit.

Saying all this, at no point should the defenders just remain static and fold thus allowing the flanker around. The ultimate aim of extending the line is to force the flankers to fight through the shield wall rather than around it. Once attackers have to fight through, they will have to press the attack between two defenders and



they will not be able to easily defend two shots coming from two different directions. Hence the flanking manoeuvre peters out into a stalemate. If the flankers can be killed, the defenders will suddenly find themselves a distance away from the main shield wall with no opposition in front of them and no-one aware of their existence since everyone is engaged in their own localised fighting. They can then act as flankers themselves, doing what the opposition attempted to do just moments ago.

The ultimate lucky position to be in as defenders is to have, say, 3 flankers attacking you. Your shield wall extends the line well to match them, having perhaps three or more defenders facing them. However, in doing this extending of the line, what typically happens to the attacker's shield wall is that they stay rigid, fighting where they are part of their own shield wall. The critical point is that if those fewer defenders can maintain that defensive fight for just long enough, they should have some warriors extended out into a situation where they are facing no-one and they can then move through this gap to start to flank the opposition. Under such circumstances, the shield wall fighting can break up very quickly into a melee situation where it becomes every warrior for himself until someone manages to rebuild the shield wall structure, if possible or required.

A long axe is very good at scaring warriors and at hooking shield away for a spear or quick sword to get a first shot in. It is a weapon that warriors usually do not enjoy facing or being near and that can be used to your advantage.

Any RTT needs to be conversant with this basic analysis of shield wall fighting and be able to communicate it simply and clearly to their warriors so that every warrior understands their own role within the Group's fighting setup dependent upon their position in the shield wall.

Because the RTT is usually the person who knows this theory, they are the ones who tend to lead the units in free fighting. Multiplied up to the Society level, RTTs tended to control the battles. Historically this is why RTTs became the first Hersirs because it made sense for those with the knowledge to lead the scripted fighting too.

3.3.6 Hesitation

In our system it may seem unrealistic to watch several fighters hesitate when facing say just two defenders: any two should always be a massacre in the making but the psychology of what we are representing should not be overlooked: we hover on the edge of very deep human psychological insecurities and responses. No one wants to be first to engage in case they get there too quickly and everyone else is just too far away to help. In those few critical seconds you can get yourself killed as one against the two. This certainly seems a valid theory in real battles and can be applied to our system: no-one wants to travel for several hours, pitch a tent, get dressed and psyched up waiting for the battle to then die quickly because of some over-zealous stupidity. It does take the experience of many battles to get a cool enough head to remember half of what transpires never mind think clearly enough to arrive at a useful decision. The suspicion is that Viking Age berserkers were not foaming madmen but those at home in a very violent situation: stone cold killers who could keep a level head when everyone else was stressed to the hilt (to state it in the nicest possible words).

The question of fighters failing to exploit weaknesses in the enemy line or not reacting swiftly enough to the rapid changes that can happen on the field can be answered to a large degree by giving Trainers access to a "pattern book" of common situations which then offers guidelines on what to do under these situations.

3.3.7 Patterns

1. When two shield walls of equal numbers engage, you need to deliver a quick wound or kill. This is usually given by the longer weapons like the spear or by a sword when an opponent steps slightly out of the line, over-reaching or a cut to an exposed thigh. Once that warrior has stepped back, the resulting gap should then be quickly exploited by the now superior numbers even if this is only possible as the attackers shouting more and attempting to advance: it all gives the impression that they are winning and someone in the opposite line will hopefully panic and make a mistake which can then be exploited further before the first wounded fighter can return to the wall.
2. The strongest parts of the opposite shield wall need to be contained whilst the weaker parts are worked. Any shield wall is only as strong as its weakest part. The question then is: where do you place your strongest unit? Is it against the opposite strongest unit or against a weaker part with the chance that you can win your part of the battle before the opposition strongest unit wins theirs. This is a very fraught area and usually is where battles are won and lost.



3. Flanking manoeuvres should be swift and fluid. They should not get bogged down by the opposition defenders: keep moving and keep the defenders backs turned so they are constantly worried about who is potentially coming up behind them. Any freed-up warriors need to follow the flanking unit to create a wave effect that the defenders cannot withstand.
4. The ultimate ranged weapon is the archer as they can pick off individuals from a greater distance: the unshielded and the unaware. Having two archers working in tandem is a very difficult pairing to withstand especially working with a strong unit who can keep the pressure on the warriors in front who then cannot focus easily on the archers who continue to snipe and gradually whittle away the opposition unit.
5. Decisive and clear communication within a unit (built up through training together against other Groups) is a must. This is best developed at shows with the Hunting Party contests. Within the unit, someone has to see the bigger picture within their region of the battle. It is no good to think yourself the best unit if you are constantly being killed in the back because the opposition have punched through your line somewhere else. Someone needs to keep an eye on the moving line and spot pressure points, generated by either your side or the opposition, and they need to send enough of the correct warriors to that point at the critical time to make the difference: to stop or create the rout.
6. Every warrior should be engaged in fighting an opposition warrior at all times. This means either actively fighting or sometimes just standing off (especially if the opposition outnumber you: you conserve your own numbers and wait for help directly or for another part of the unit to break through that will divert those facing you somewhere else.
7. At no time should any warrior find themselves doing nothing. If there is no one to fight in front of you because of a gap, ask yourself "can you move into that gap safely and exploit it?" If you can, then try to go as a collective rather than an individual but whatever the situation... do it, do not dither. If you are not fighting because of warriors in your way, look around for any potential openings and attempt to exploit them: generate something positive for your side and that will keep the momentum going.
8. If a gap in front of you is not wide enough to step through without the opposition end warrior being able to attack you, then help your unit by focusing on that end warrior: push him back. Even better fold him, making that gap even wider where you (or someone else in your unit) can then go through it safely.
9. The unit should work as a shield wall rather than a collection of individuals stood next to each other: Some work high and some low. One shot will land eventually. Then exploit that gap.
10. If you are wounded, shout "I'm hit" or "Wounded" so that those immediately to your side know to close the gap once you fall back, acting wounded. Do not silently take a wound and meekly step back as that does not help your side defend your absence.
11. Keep moving forwards, as a shield wall. Do not advance as a unit and leave the rest of the wall behind as that generates gaps which can be exploited by the opposition. Someone needs to manage each region of the line and react to the localised changes. The warriors need to be aware of the commands and to know how to work together to achieve them. This is again honed through training.



3.4 Theory of Fighting – Hunting Party

3.4.1 Basics

A hunting party is usually 3 warriors (but can be slightly larger) working together with a fixed objective in mind: once achieved the warriors make good their escape or if the objective is not achieved quickly, the hunting party may wish to retire, reform and re-engage.

As part of shows, we often perform Hunting Party fighting so that warriors can test their skills against others. A good hunting party are warriors who communicate well and know when to engage and when to retreat. Hunting Party training is where a lot of battlefield awareness and good communication develops.

The Hunting Party should have a leader who communicates:

- The objective.
- The tactics to achieve this (which may change during the fighting).

It is also important that the flank warrior on both sides keeps alert to movement in their peripheral area of the battlefield. This way the Hunting Party should not be caught unawares from attack or from others corralling them into an unfavourable location such as between two Hunting Parties.

During engagement, the warriors should always have battlefield awareness by using head snaps to assess any additional worries and clear incisive commands need to be given.

3.4.2 Tactics

A Hunting Party should endeavour to have a long spear as this will give the potential for quick cross kills and thus allow the 3 to dominate the remaining enemy and thus finish them off quickly. The Hunting Party must learn to fight together rather than as 3 individuals.

There are many ways for a Hunting Party to work. Here are just a few considerations that the RTT needs to discuss with their trainees:

Spear location	Does the spear stay in the middle, protected by the other two warriors or does it move to the flank?
No spear	Having no long weapon, it is up to the Hunting Party to work to their strengths: Two Weapons? A left-handed warrior? A single-handed spear? Etc.
Splitting the Party	It may be advantageous for one of the three warriors to try to isolate an opponent – perhaps the opposing spear to stop them from dominating the fight.
Flanking	One or both end warriors attempt to flank the opposition, depending upon the situation.
Hooking	The Hunting Party might attempt to engage using two warriors and the third, left momentarily free attempts to rush either of the opposition's flanks

Different tactics will lend themselves in different situations: are you facing one/two, three or more warriors and what weapon combinations do they have? Also, if the fight is dishonourable, you are looking to manoeuvre other Groups such that their backs are turned to other warriors or you are trying to move your Group to attack others from behind – preferably when they are already engaged so that they do not notice your advance on them.

If the unit needs to turn quickly then use “About Turn”, which should look awesome!



3.5 Training Exercises - Infantry

The following example exercises are intended to provide ideas for Training Thegns to use within their sessions and training programmes. They are not intended to restrict the training and can be modified, ignored or added to as required.

3.5.1 Hunting Groups 1

To build up cohesive smaller units of fighters that can then be built into a shield wall.

A good way to train shield wall fighting is to start with three warriors fighting three warriors. These triples train, effectively as a Hunting Group and build up a collective identity to protect and work for each other. See the Section on Hunting Party tactics above for ideas on how to proceed there.

Two triples can then be put together to cement that cohesion against another two triples and so the process develops until all Group warriors are included. Obviously if numbers dictate then you can concentrate on fours initially. At a push, pairs can be used initially but there is a certain lack of tactical variety in two-on-two fighting.

If the Group does not have enough warriors to generate six-on-six fighting then they need to find another local Group to train against to develop this. If this is geographically impossible for regular and often training then it will need to be done at shows: the warriors should make it known that they want to train and someone somewhere will oblige. The onus has to be on them to do the looking.

3.5.2 Hunting Groups 2

To strengthen Hunting Party tactics and speed attacks on a particular victim.

Three warriors are given the mission of killing a fourth warrior who is part of another Hunting Party. They may use a tactic of their own or one suggested by the RTT.

When the RTT is satisfied that the trainees understand their role, more warriors should be brought in to start building up shield wall numbers. These additional warriors should be paired off and told to fight but ignore hits. The trainees are given a target warrior that they must kill. No other warrior is to attack the trainees.

3.5.3 Two To One, One To Two

To teach warriors how to approach a two against one fight, from both sides.

The RTT sets two warriors to attack one; both the pair and single warrior should be coached as to the correct techniques to be used. The Single warrior should try to move quickly around the pair so only one is engaged in fighting at any one time. The pair need to split up to try to funnel the single warrior between them. At no point should one be drawn into a one-on-one fight.

3.5.4 Multiple Attack

To increase blocking speed whilst improving both peripheral sight and hand-eye coordination in a fighting context.

Surround one warrior with three others at fighting distance. The three surrounding warriors should steadily make attacks upon the single warrior; this warrior should defend himself, turning to meet each attack.

This exercise should be repeated clockwise, anti-clockwise and randomly.

As the ability of the warrior improves they should riposte as well as parry.

3.5.5 Circle of Treachery

To teach battlefield awareness.



All the warriors stand in a large circle and on command start to fight each other. No warrior has a friend and the last one standing is the winner.

3.5.6 Shield wall

To teach confidence within a shield wall and also shield wall fighting techniques.

First place all of the trainee warriors in one shield wall and have another of experienced warriors who can be trusted to do as they are told. The trainees advance towards the experienced shield wall and halt at fighting distance. The experienced warriors then make clear attacks whilst the trainees only defend. Hits are acknowledged; the warrior steps back whilst counting to ten and then returns to the shield wall. Meanwhile, the remaining defenders have to cover the gap made by the wounded trainee. If the trainees survive a minute they win.

After the trainees have successfully defended themselves for a minute the next stage includes building up the pace of the attacks; allowing the trainees to riposte; allowing the trainees to initiate attacks; instructing them on teamwork and assisting others to make kills; introducing different weapon combinations for the trainees to face.

3.5.7 Parry/Riposte

To practice solid blocking and to develop basic fighting skills after learning the Eights but before being introduced to competitive fighting.

To be done first between the trainee and RTT with no shields. The RTT first attacks the trainee and after the trainee has parried they make a riposte. This is repeated by the RTT with random attacks. When the trainee can do this to the RTT's satisfaction the RTT should also parry the trainee's riposte and riposte himself. The trainee should then be coached to parry and riposte the RTT's riposte.

The aim is to build up the sequence of attacks, parries and ripostes until the trainee can no longer follow the sequence. Use direct and indirect ripostes.

Having developed a routine, the RTT can revise it on the next training session to then build a new one using the parries and ripostes in a different sequence.

The purpose of this is to teach the trainee to riposte any attack made upon them as this is often the moment when the attacker is most vulnerable. The exercise can also be used in a display combat situation.

Note: it is important that the trainee and the RTT make all their attacks to the target area and not to the shield or the weapon. If either fighter should miss the parry then a controlled hit should be made to the body.

If the parries are made correctly the weapons should make a lot of noise before the full effects of control become apparent.

If the attacks are not properly directed at the part of the target area that the attacker is trying to hit, then the defender may find that he misses the parry with all the possible consequences for an accident. All this should stimulate discussion on many topics.

3.5.8 Pile It On

Good for fairly experienced trainees to build up their speed.

Good for more experienced warriors if the time limit is set lower.

Set the trainee warrior to fight another warrior with the aim of killing them within 30 seconds. After that time another warrior joins in against the trainee. The trainee's aim is to keep killing the warriors sent against him before becoming overwhelmed. The time given can be adjusted to match the standard of the warrior.

3.5.9 Count to Ten

To develop faster kills and battlefield awareness.

Adaptation of "Pile It On" where warriors stand, forming a wide circle, with two warriors who start fighting in the centre. Whilst they fight, one of the circle counts loudly to ten and on completion steps into the circle: no-



one there has a friend. If the fighters get down to one warrior, the counting warrior just steps in and the next warrior in the circle starts to count.

3.5.10 Fatal Aisle

To teach good defences whilst moving through a set of warriors: battlefield awareness.

Set out two lines of warriors such that they are in extended order i.e. weapons just touch the tip of their neighbour's weapon and the two lines are separated by the same distance. Finally, stagger one line of warriors so no warrior is in line with another from the other line.

The trainee is then directed to move down the aisle between the two ranks at a walking pace with the aim of defending. The warriors forming the aisle are directed to attack the trainee as the trainee moves down the aisle. The warriors are only allowed to take a step from their starting point. The trainee must reach the end of the aisle without receiving a valid hit. If distances are too wide, shorten them. The attackers could be allowed to move further too.

As the trainee improves they should be directed to attempt to make kills upon the warriors forming the aisle.

3.5.11 Sequenced Attacks

To teach the trainee to think faster and to prepare them for competitive fighting.

The trainee is told to stand their ground and defend against all attacks. Warriors are then sent to attack the trainee. Each attacker has been instructed to make only two attacks. The trainee should attempt to block these attacks and only later to riposte.

Initially, the trainee performs this exercise with all attacks from the front. As the trainee improves attacks should be made from different directions. Attacks can be pre-defined by the RTT with the attackers. Later, the attackers can choose their own pairs of attacks including feints and indirect attacks.

3.5.12 On your Shield 1

To teach warriors who naturally retreat when under pressure to stand their ground.

Two spare shields are placed on the ground at a distance where both warriors are within effective range of their opponent. On a call from the RTT, they fight until one warrior lands a valid hit on their opponent, or until a warrior forfeits the combat by stepping off their shield. A warrior can advance onto the other shield.

3.5.13 On your Shield 2

To teach close-quarter seax fighting as it reduces warriors' options for running away.

Again, warriors stand on shields and just use seaxes. The shields are placed on the floor in a random pattern with various spacings between them but not too great to necessitate jumping as this can be dangerous. Warriors are only allowed to stand on the shields: stepping off is death.

3.5.14 On your Shield 3 (Lillypads)

To teach close quarters fighting, balance and awareness.

Five shields are placed on the ground in the shape of a cross. The outer four shields are occupied by fighters usually using just seaxes. The object is to reach the opposite shield. Usual combat rules apply. Death also occurs if a warrior steps off a shield. The shields may need to be spread slightly further for longer weapons.

3.5.15 At Close Quarter

To train close quarter fighting, getting used to moving around the shield quickly.

Two warriors stand toe to toe with their shield bosses touching. They hold a secondary sidearm placed against the back of their shield level with the boss. On a command from the RTT, the warriors attempt to kill



their opponent without stepping away. Many warriors find close-quarter combat difficult and therefore find it used against them regularly. Stepping back is death.

3.5.16 Serial Killing

It encourages the killer to develop their lethal character and it also develops good hit reactions for the victims.

Everyone stands in a circle and the RTT nominates the starter who runs around the circle killing everyone with a good, lethal characterful blow. The victims allow it and having received the blow should react appropriately. The first victim starts their own journey around the ring of doom after the starter has got two or three people further around.

3.5.17 Viking Bulldog

To develop battlefield awareness; putting in safe shots at pace and general fitness.

Played like British Bulldog, but with weapons. Each round starts with one person in the middle. Each person killed joins them in the middle. Use a single hit rather than the two hit rule. The last person to be caught starts the next round in the middle.

Each round has a condition set, such as "knives only", or "Pair up, one with weapon, one with shield".

3.5.18 Glorious Death

To encourage display combat and reduce the embarrassment when over-acting, as everyone gets to take a turn.

One on one display combat, where the "winner" is the one deemed to have given the most entertaining performance. This may or may not involve a death.

3.5.19 Tie-fighters

To teach team fighting and mutual defence.

Operating in hunting packs of three's or more (dependent on total numbers), you team fight but if one part of your team is killed, all of you die. The dead are resurrected at the recycling point and new teams go out. The fights are best conducted without honour.

3.5.20 Freya's Teats!

To build vocal confidence on the field along with learning some acceptable insults.

Divide participants into two teams facing each other. One person from each team faces off against the opponent and they trade authentic(ish), family-friendly insults with each other. When they start to struggle, they can tag the next member of the team to take over.

3.5.21 No Shoulder Shots

**To practice removing the focus from the high shots
(especially good when there are two-handed spears working).**

Whilst fighting in a shield wall, all shots over the shield are ignored. This forces everyone to concentrate on leg shots but also working together to open up shields for others to place a killing blow from the side.

3.5.22 Shields Touching

To reinforce good communication and close quarter shield wall fighting.



Shield wall fighting where valid hits only count when shields are physically touching. This stops flanking and melee fighting once the shield walls have engaged. More communication is required to tell people to keep shields together. Any pole arm needs to be within a sword blade length of their felagi to score a valid hit.

3.5.23 Slow Fighting

To improve muscle memory (akin to sparring in boxing).

To enable warriors to see openings better.

Slow motion attacks and parries to get warriors used to the dynamics of fighting. This method allows the fighters to concentrate on spotting gaps and having the thinking time to do something about it. With increased practice of spotting these gaps and getting a weapon there will improve your normal speed fighting eventually.

3.5.24 Winner stays In

To allow all warriors to improve by staying in the centre for longer.

Circle of warriors form around two fighters. The winner stays in and the next warrior in turn steps in to fight the winner. And so on until one warrior has defeated every other warrior in turn.

3.5.25 Loser Stays In

To give newer warriors more individual fights as they learn. The weaker warriors tend to fight for longer which is necessary for them to improve.

As above, but the loser stays in the centre. If there are particularly weak trainees, it is a good chance for the more experienced warriors to leave gaps to let them gain confidence. Must be done in a positive atmosphere.

3.6 Training Exercises – Missiles

STILL TO EDIT/ADD TOO – SUGGESTIONS PLEASE.

These example exercises are intended to provide ideas for training officers to use within their sessions and training programmes. They are not set in concrete, and can be modified, ignored or added to as required.

3.6.1 Audience Awareness

Designate a line to represent the “audience”. One or two warriors against one or two warriors and an archer. The archer must loose at their opponents without putting the “audience” at risk.

Factors to consider:

Where will the arrow go if the target moves?

Will arrow be safely deflected by shield?

3.6.2 Space Invaders 1

Three warriors stand at 30 metres from the archer, when the archer looses their first arrow they advance. If the archer hits a warriors shield they must return to the start line and advance again. If the archer makes a valid hit to the target area then the warrior is dead and out. Archers may loose at retreating warriors.

3.6.3 Time To Leave

Warriors advance on archers, ignoring hits. Archers must decide when to run away or draw a back up weapon.



3.6.4 Feel The Force

Warriors advance on archers, they ignore hits. Warriors advance within five metres and then retire to the start; they then advance again and close with the archers. Archers are commanded by a Thegn who controls volleys. The Thegn must decide which orders to use and when to run or fight.

3.6.5 Hunting Groups

Hunting group practise to include an archer

Factors to consider:

Hunting Groups

Archer doesn't have to loose to be effective.

Will arrow be safely deflected by shield?

3.6.6 Seek And Destroy

Set up battle and introduce archers to combat, warriors may not attack archers until told by the archery Thegn. The Thegn is to first designate priority targets and then allow the archers to choose own. When Thegn satisfied with performance allow warriors to kill archers if they can.

Factors to consider:

Can archer hit priority target with out risk to own side.

Can archer hit priority target with out risk to him/her self?

Will arrow be safely deflected by shield?

3.6.7 Moving Targets

Archer to loose at moving targets at various ranges and speeds. Repeat with friendly warriors blocking some lines of sight.

3.6.8 Through The Keyhole

Archers loose at various targets from behind shield wall.

Factors to consider:

All arrows must be aimed safely and not lobbed over the shield wall.

Can archer loose without hitting warrior in the back of their head.

3.6.9 Controlled Power

Set up a series of targets at different ranges and directions, as many as possible should be as for the control assessment. Archer must then loose at the targets and not dislodge any of the shield bosses.

3.6.10 Space Invaders 2

Four warriors advance from four different directions, when archer looses their first arrow they advance. If the archer hits a warriors shield they must return to the start line and advance again. If the archer makes a valid hit to the target area then the warrior is dead and out. Archer may loose at retreating warriors.

3.6.11 Space Invaders 3

Repeat exercise 11 but include friendly warriors advancing beside targets. Friendly warriors must not be hit.



4 Battlefield Drill

4.1 Introduction

All commands should come in two verbal parts: the first part gives the warning and the second part is where the warriors execute the command.

The warrior should remain in the order last given until told otherwise. At the start of any orders, warriors are expected to be at ease i.e. with shields by their side and weapons down.

The warrior has need of the commands on the field and be responsive to them instantly. This requires practice, done at the Group training sessions.

The warrior will be assessed on their knowledge of commands as part of the Basic Combat and Basic Formation Assessments. The warrior may meet them again in the Herred Assessment, if taken as part of a Lethang wishing to become a Herred of the Society.

The commands shown in this Section are listed as either:

Basic Commands	Those commands likely to be heard every time a group of warriors are commanded on the field.
Advanced Commands	More specialised and infrequently met commands. Hence the need for regular practice at the Group level.

4.2 Drill - Infantry Units

4.2.1 Basic Commands

Column of Two's	The unit forms up facing the officer in two columns. Mailed warriors are at the front, behind the standard bearer whilst skirmishers and archers are at the rear. If the unit needs to move quicker, the number of columns can be increased.
One Rank	The warriors line up, facing the opposition or their assumed location.
At Ease	Shields and weapons down by the warrior's side.
Centre Man	The unit commander should denote the centre man, especially for those warriors close to the centre of the unit. For warriors at either end of the unit, they only need to know roughly where the centre man is. The centre man should be a mailed, experienced and hopefully fairly stocky warrior.
Close Order	Warriors press in to the centre man, shoulder to shoulder so that no gaps exist between warriors.
Dress the Line	The warriors should match their position to the Centre Man such that the unit is standing in a precise line with no undulations along its length.
Dress Left (Right)	The unit may need to move to the left (or right) to re-align against the opposition or to remove bunching of warriors against the ropes or to close a gap formed between units etc.
Shield Wall	Left-handed warriors need to position themselves at the left –hand end of the unit. On "Shield" the shield arm raises to the horizontal pointing at the opposition army. The opposite leg steps back. The weapon is placed on the shoulder. On "Wall" the shield arm is brought in to the chest and all the shields overlap, locking in place: the hand pulls and the elbow pushes the shield.
Weapons	The weapon comes down from the shoulder and hits the shield rim.
Mark Time	The Centre Man starts beating the shield rim with his weapon. All warriors take up the set rhythm.



Advance/March On	Warriors walk forwards, keeping the shield wall locked. The pace is driven by the centre man but should be slow enough to keep everyone together.
Double Time	The pace is increased – usually just before hitting the opposition shield wall to increase the momentum of hitting the opposition.
About Turn	Shields unzip then drop down and swing behind the warrior who then pivots on the rear foot with the motion, to end up facing 180 degrees the other way. The warriors then zip the shield wall back into place.
Step On	The shield wall takes one step and attacks at the same time.
Give Ground	The shield wall steps back as one whilst still fighting.
Hold	The warriors stay where they are whilst fighting in good order.
Break Contact	The warriors step back and the unit disengages.
Retire (in good order)	The unit keeps stepping back as a shield wall until told to halt.
Halt	The unit stops moving.

4.2.2 Advanced Commands

On the Right/Left... Wheel	Given this way, the warriors have a few more seconds to think. On the right means the unit moves through 90 degrees by pivoting on the right-hand end of the unit. The unit needs to do this whilst staying in a locked shield wall so the warrior on the left has to march the furthest so the pace is set by this warrior and not by everyone else turning quickly, leaving the end to catch up.
Boarsnout	<p>From a shield wall, the centre man advances. At the first opportunity, the warriors on either side of the centre man tuck themselves in, pressing their shoulder into the back of the arm of the centre man. This process carries on down the line as the boarsnout is formed. Every warrior will then be pushing forward to the centre man: he will have to lean back as they advance to manage the pace. A few strides from the enemy shield wall, he needs to lean forwards to allow the pace to quicken and the boarsnout to punch its way through the enemy shield wall.</p> <p>Those warriors on the left-hand side of the centre man will need to reverse the overlap of their shields, to stop any enemy pole arms gaining access between the shields.</p> <p>Point of safety: Keep weapons high or behind your shield, away from your face because there are a lot of warriors in a confined space and accident can happen.</p> <p>Any addition warriors can fill in inside the V-formation, adding bulk to its momentum. DO NOT TRIP UP!</p>
Form 2 Ranks	The Centre Man takes 2 steps forward. The warrior on either side stay put. The next warrior on either side takes 2 steps forward. This process of unzipping repeats along the unit until half the warriors have stepped forward.
Extend the Line	Those warriors in the second rank need to move forwards to the end of the front rank, keeping the spacing as they go: it is best for the second rank to dress left or right until they can move forward together to extend the line. Warriors should now be in Open Order. If this is repeated again, the warriors will be in Extended Order.
Shield Burgh	<p>Designed to offer protection against sustained missile attack. The unit needs to be in 3 or more ranks. Front rank kneels and places shields vertically, with the edge resting on the floor. The second rank gets close behind the kneeling front rank and leans over, placing their shields over those of the front rank, leaning backwards at an angle. The remaining ranks continue this process: the more ranks, the more overhead protection it affords.</p> <p>The flanks should bend back slightly to offer protection there.</p>



Rally on...	Warriors break contact, turn and <u>run</u> to the specified place, usually the banner. To be effective, some skirmishers need to protect their backs.
Reform	Warriors adopt the previous held formation: usually a close ordered shield wall.
Run away	When a script requires a unit to flee the battle in disarray, causing a rout of those remaining and lagging behind.

4.3 Drill - Missile Units

A missile unit is one that acts autonomously from the main hand-to-hand units. It can comprise Archers, Javelineers and Slingers. The unit will have a leader in overall command but where there are significant numbers of each weapon type, each should have a sub-leader to coordinate that weapon type.

Before a missile unit goes into battle the unit leader must designate and make known the centre warrior. The unit leader should then take position on the left of the line (if right handed). This allows the leader to watch the entire unit at the same time as loosing.

Commands directed to all members of the unit start with the word "Missiles..." If the order is aimed at particular weapon groups, the command will start with the name of the group "Slingers...", "Javelins..." or "Archers..."

4.3.1 Basic Commands

Archers	Nock	Arrow is fitted to the string.
	Draw	Aim taken and string drawn back ready to loose
	Loose	String is loosed to launch the arrow.
Slingers	Load	Shot is loaded into the sling pouch.
	Make Ready	Sling arm is extended to the rear to prepare the launch.
	Loose	Shots are launched.
Javelineers	Aim	Javelins are raised to a horizontal position ready to launch.
	Loose	Javelins are launched.

4.3.2 Manoeuvres

Open Order	Warriors stand in a line facing the enemy an arms distance from the warrior on either side.
Loose at will	At certain times, warriors may move about the field, choosing targets and loosing individually.
About Turn	Warriors turn around to the right. Archers bring their bow upright to avoid striking other warriors.

For Archers only:

Rolling Volley, Left/Right... Nock, Draw, Loose	Warriors start in Open Order, at ease. On Nock every archer fits an arrow to their bow. On Draw , the archer at the end specified originally draws. On Loose , the end archer looses and the next archer draws and looses and then the next along the line. The end archer shouts " Gone " as they loose their arrow. This process continues until the command " Stop " whereupon every archer stops and awaits further instructions.
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	Any archer unable to loose their arrow shouts " Miss " and the rolling volley continues without them in that cycle.
Volley, Ranks Advancing... Nock, Draw, Loose	<p>The archers start at ease in 2 staggered ranks, each warrior is two arm-lengths apart from nearest neighbours.</p> <p>On "Nock" all archers fit an arrow to their bow. On "Draw" the front rank draws On "Loose" the front rank loose in unison and the second rank step forward to 2 steps in front of the old front rank. The new rear rank are nocking ready. Only "Draw" and "Loose" are shouted now for the front rank until "Stop" whereupon every archer stops and awaits further instructions.</p>
Volley, Ranks Retiring... Nock, Draw, Loose	<p>The archers start at ease in 2 staggered ranks, each warrior is two arm-lengths apart from nearest neighbours.</p> <p>On "Nock" all archers fit an arrow to their bow. On "Draw" the front rank draws On "Loose" the front rank loose in unison and then step back to stand 2 steps behind the old rear rank. The new rear rank are nocking ready. Only "Draw" and "Loose" are shouted now for the front rank until "Stop" whereupon every archer stops and awaits further instructions.</p>
