

## Cuckoo's Nest Terms & Conditions of Membership and Play

Whenever you take part in a Cuckoo's Nest event, in any capacity, the most important regard you should have should be for the health and safety of all concerned, participants and non-participants.

As such, there are some guidelines to follow. Acting in breach of these guidelines is a serious business. You must take responsibility for following the guidelines, including checking all equipment you are personally using before play. Breaching these guidelines knowingly may result in your membership being suspended or revoked, or other measures may be taken as the committee decides.

Of course, the most important thing is to use common sense and your own judgement when it comes to deciding if a situation is potentially dangerous. If you are worried about a situation, even if it isn't covered by any of these guidelines, please express your concerns. You can always refuse to take part in anything if you feel that there is a risk involved, even if others disagree.

### Combat and Action

Periods of combat and action are the most obviously dramatic in LARP, but they are also when injuries are most likely to occur. We all share responsibility on such occasions to make the game safe for everyone, participant or not.

You may call "Time Out" whenever you feel safety is an issue, either to fellow players or a member of the public. You may call "Medic" or "Man Down" only when you believe that someone has become injured. Please *do not* call "Medic" or "Man Down" under any other circumstances.

When you participate in a scene that involves combat, the following guidelines must be followed:

1. No stabbing with any weapon that has a fibreglass core.  
*If a weapon with a fibreglass core is used to stab, the force of the blow can cause the core to tear through the foam that surrounds it. This means that the core will become exposed and can stab through flesh, causing serious injury.*
2. Stop **immediately** upon any "Time Out", "Medic", or "Man Down" call.  
*Even if the call isn't made by a GM, you must cease whatever you are doing immediately. After the reason for the call has been ascertained and you are told that it is safe to resume, wait for a "Time In" call to be made before resuming play.*
3. Pull your blows!  
*This can be difficult to judge. In the heat of combat it is possible to lose control and hit too hard. If your opponent asks you to pull your blows, respect their wishes and do so immediately. Persistent failure to pull your blows after being asked will be considered a breach of these guidelines.*
4. Avoid head hits  
*Again, this may be something that is unavoidable in the heat of combat. However, if you persistently aim for the head, after being warned, you will be considered in breach of these guidelines.*
5. Avoid any risk to, or any spill-over of the combat into, uninvolved observers.  
*Even if "Time Out" hasn't been called, if you notice someone not involved in play wandering into the battle, call "Time Out" yourself.*
6. Stop fighting **immediately** if you notice your equipment is unsafe.

*For guidelines on equipment safety, please see the section below. Your equipment may become unsafe during a battle: if it does so, you must stop straight away and call “Time Out” so the situation can be resolved. You should not use any equipment that is not LARP-safe in a combat for parrying or striking – including cloaks and other parts of costume, or any props not appropriate for combat.*

7. Respect your fellow players and their concerns.

*Even if you don't agree with another player's concerns, you must respect their wishes when it comes to matters of safety. You can complain to a GM or to the committee if you feel someone is abusing these rules to earn a game advantage.*

8. Watch your footing and surroundings, and stop fighting if the environment becomes unsafe.

*If the fight moves into an unsafe place, or you do not feel comfortable fighting in a particular location – on a hillside, for example – you have the right to stop the fight with a “Time Out” until the situation can be resolved. This also covers if it is too dark to fight safely. Most injuries in LARP are caused by falling over!*

9. Fire missile weapons in a safe fashion.

*This means that they must not be fired blindly (in darkness or into a whirling melee) – targets must be picked. Additionally, you should not fire at close range (5 feet is just about too close).*

10. Unarmed combat must be safe at all times.

*You may not grapple, push excessively, kick or do anything except tap someone to indicate a blow. These taps must be delivered in a safe fashion with an open palm – not jabbing with fingers or chopping with the edge of the hand.*

11. Do not drag latex across skin.

*This may come up in situations where you cut the throat of a helpless foe. Do not under any circumstances actually drag the weapon across the throat, as latex can cause burns and certainly hurt. Make the motion an inch or so away from the skin and use an appropriate call to indicate the damage.*

## **Equipment Safety**

**Cored Weapons** Cored weapons must be padded with foam to prevent injury. The tip of a cored weapon must have more foam than its sides to prevent the core becoming exposed in event of an accidental stab. If the foam is ripped or the core is exposed, the weapon is unsafe.

Cored weapons must not also be so unwieldy that they become “whippy” and therefore liable to be difficult to control. In the case of long two-handed weapons, they must be kept in control by wielding the weapon with both hands no closer than about two-feet apart. Wielding a large weapon by holding it with both hands at the far end is unsafe.

**Coreless/Throwing Weapons** Coreless weapons intended to be safe for throwing must be compressible and soft in all directions, with no hard edges.

**Arrows/Bolts** Arrows and bolts must be inspected closely after every shot to ensure that they have not become unsafe. You may not parry arrows or bolts except by simple blocking (such as with a shield). The arrows must have a solid shaft that is not splintered or marred in any way, flights that help control the motion of the projectile, and foam heads with at least 1/4 inches thickness of foam before the latex or gaffa tape begins. The foam head must be wider than an eye socket (50mm diameter

minimum). If there is any dirt or gravel in the head, this must be removed completely before it can be fired.

In general, arrows must be bought from a reputable LARP arrow supplier such as LARP Store, Arrow Caster or Skian Mhor. If you are using home constructed arrows, one must be supplied for a safety examination, which will destroy it.

**Bows/Crossbows** Bows and crossbows must have a maximum pull-weight of 30 pounds (at a draw of 28" for bows, or the maximum draw for a crossbow). They should not be fired at extremely close range (such as within five feet). They should not be aimed at the head or at the throat. Bows or crossbows should not be used to parry (tempting though that might be) as this can damage the weapon, ruining it or making it unsafe.

Crossbows should not be carried loaded, and the trigger mechanism should be carefully watched to avoid accidental triggering.

Always be certain that you have selected a target – don't fire blindly into a melee or a poorly lit situation. You might hit someone in the eye!

Before using a bow on an adventure, you should inspect it carefully for signs of fatigue or damage, including removing the wrappings periodically if necessary for inspection.

### **Dealing With The Public and the Site**

Feel free to deal with polite enquiries from members of the public in a polite and informative fashion yourself. If you do not feel comfortable answering their questions, direct them to a committee member or a GM who will deal with them for you.

If the member of the public is aggressive, suspicious, or is worried about the safety implications of LARP, please direct them to a committee member or GM to answer their concerns. Under no circumstances respond rudely or aggressively, and be polite *at all times*.

In a similar vein, show respect to the site that the Nest is using at all times by following rules that have been laid down by the site's owner or operator. Do not do anything that might damage property and ensure that you leave no rubbish.

Horses are a very special case. Many horses and riders use the site we do. Horses are skittish creatures, easily scared by a group of larpers. A scared horse is a scared large and powerful animal, that is capable of harming its rider or others. As a consequence, if you see a horse approaching, call a *time out* so that everyone can take the appropriate steps, which are:

1. Move off of the path, out of the horse's line of travel, by as much as possible.
2. Do not make loud noises.
3. Do not raise weapons, or allow cloaks to whip in the wind, or allow any motion which is sudden.

While dealing with the public may not be health and safety related, it is nonetheless something everyone should be aware can be a sensitive issue. Hence, it must be done with appropriate care and tact.

## **Summary**

The purpose of this document is to illustrate how we all have a responsibility to play in a safe fashion and to ensure that everyone playing is aware of health and safety issues. Of course, much of it is common sense, or things you will be aware of already.

Even so, be aware of these guidelines and follow them in play. They are not a replacement for common sense, and that is your most important tool when judging matters of safety.

The Cuckoo's Nest has a good safety record, with only one member in its history ever suffering an injury bad enough to require a hospital visit (a broken ankle). Let's make sure that record continues, and have lots of (safe) fun for a long time in the future!