



# Durham Medieval Combat Academy

Web site:

<http://www.durhammedievalcombatacademy.org/>

Facebook:

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/MedievalCombatAcademy/>

The aim of the academy is to provide a study, learning and practice environment for people interested in medieval HEMA, initially using longsword but extending in the future to one-handed sword, sword and buckler and poleaxe.

The academy is designed as a study group. It operates with a rather flat structure to reflect this ethos, being as flat as possible in terms of hierarchy, making all members equally valued and capable of contributing to the activities. The academy therefore operates with only three “ranks”: squire, sergeant and knight. A squire is a prospective student (duration: 4 lessons) who has not yet joined the academy as a full member (i.e. pay a subscription for the insurance). A sergeant is a full member who is a novice in HEMA and therefore does not yet have the basics that allow them to run a class as instructor. A knight is a member who has the capability of taking the lead in running a class and therefore to operate as instructor. That involves preparing teaching material, demonstrating it to student and providing feedback and guidance to other students. There is no pressure for a knight to take part as instructor, they simply have the capability to do so. At times, the instructors may even decide to step into the shoes of fencing masters: instead of teaching dogmatically, we will allow ourselves to experiment from the basics and discover what techniques make sense martially in situations not covered by original manuscripts. This is after all the way medieval masters originally discovered their wonderfully efficient and graceful techniques in the first place.

The academy is simply run by enthusiasts for the benefits of other enthusiasts and is setup as a not for profit organisation.

The academy’s practice should appeal to people interested in medieval combat in its wider sense, for example to people who are reenactors (medieval period), LARPer, stage combat enthusiasts, sport fencers, etc. The academy will provide teaching whatever your level of competency, from total HEMA beginners to established practitioners.

Like any other martial art, the classes cover basic and advanced techniques that require numerous hours of practice to master. Nobody is going to become a competent practical swordfighter with only ten hours of practice. Nobody is going to learn the theoretical ins and outs of the martial art with ten hours of attendance.

If you have a Facebook account, it is recommended that you join the group for the latest info, to ask questions to students and to view some pictures and videos of training:

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/MedievalCombatAcademy/>

## **Frequently Asked Questions**

### What is the cost?

The cost of the session is £10 per person if we are fewer than 10 people, reduced to £7.50 if we are 10 or more.

After the 4 sessions probation, students are requested to pay £15 per year as membership fee to help cover the insurance cost.

### Do I need to own some equipment?

No, not at first. We have some spare swords and protective masks. However, when too many people do not have their own, sharing will be required (as full students have priority using the spare equipment), that can of course negatively impact the experience.

Students who become full members are encouraged to buy their own equipment, the priority being a sword and a fencing mask.

Be careful not to buy any sword. A lot of cheap so-called "sword" are actually nothing more than fantasy wall hangers and not safe for HEMA. Check our web site for a list of reputable suppliers of HEMA/Reenactment swords.

### What shall I wear and bring?

As the "art" involves some intense physical activity, sports gear is preferable. Bring something to drink as you can get dehydrated.

### Where/When do you train? Do you train at other times?

We train regularly, most of the time twice a month on Saturday mornings in Durham. Check the location, dates, timing and location on FB or our web site:

<http://www.durhammedievalcombatacademy.org/Training.html>.

We cannot train more often or at other times during the week because we are all hobbyists with jobs and families to attend to.

In order to allow the instructors to focus on members for a sensible portion of the time, beginners are only accepted to come for their first induction session on the first session of the month. These dates are marked on FB and on the web site.

Extra sessions are organised by the co-instructor (Zak R.). Beginners are not allowed to these extra sessions until they are full members and they have been cleared by the instructors.

What weapon do you study?

We are currently studying longsword. We only use steel weapons (and wooden swords as backup). In the future, if demand is high enough, we may study sword + buckler or poleaxe.

What is the level of physical activity in a class?

During training, the level of physical activity is low to moderate. Members who are experienced are allowed to engage in free competitive fights and the level of activity becomes very high.

What is the age limit?

We accept students from 15 years old onwards. If you are a minor, a parent or guardian must accompany you during classes (they do not have to take part in the training).

Do I need insurance?

The instructors are insured for their activity but students are not. Coming to train with us implies that you accept the risks associated with a martial art. If you do not understand the risks, please get in touch. Even if injuries are very rare, this martial art is not devoid of them. Personal insurance is highly recommended.