

Codex Martialis

Core Rules Version 24.001



C o d e x M a r t i a l i s

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"And five times, for my honour, I have had to fight in unfamiliar places without relatives and without friends, not trusting anyone but God and my art and myself, Fiore, and my sword. And by the grace of God, I, Fiore, kept my honour and I did not injure myself."

--Maestro **Fiore dei Liberi**, from the introduction to the Flos Duellatorum, 1409 AD



Quotations

Scattered throughout this text you'll find quotations from contemporary documents detailing personal accounts of martial combat.

Below are the sources for these quotes:

Extract from the Volsunga Saga (Old Norse / Germanic Saga 12th Century).

Extract from Kormak's Saga aka 'The Life and Death of Cormac the Skald' (Icelandic Saga, 12th Century).

The diary of the German knight Jorg von Ehingen, who fought with the Portuguese in 1467.

Extract from Grettir's Saga aka 'The Saga of Grettir the Strong' (Icelandic Saga, 12th Century).

Extract from Joachim Meyer's "Kunst des Fechtens", 1570 version (Germany 1570).

Extract from the Laxdela Saga (Icelandic Saga, 12th Century).

Extract from Saxo Grammaticus 'Gesta Danorum' aka 'History of the Danes'.

Extract from Go Rin No Sho aka "Book of the Five Rings", Miyamoto Musashi (Japan, 1645).

Extract from the Fechtbuch of Sigmund Ringeck MS Dresd. C 487 (Germany, 15th Century).

Codex Website

Codex Martialis has an active website where user feedback has a real impact on the development of this project. Many Codex fans have become credited contributors to the Codex or one of the Codex supplements. For more information about the Codex, as well as free extras and additional material:

www.codexmartialis.com

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Introduction

Codex Martialis Combat Rules System

The Basic Philosophy

The idea of the Codex Martialis is to slightly retool the basic 3.5 combat system in a way that enhances the immersive and dynamic aspects of combat without adding layers of complexity. Most other "realism" oriented RPG combat systems tweak the damage model.

We wanted to take a different approach. In Codex Martialis we have analysed the mechanics of real-world medieval martial combat in an attempt to give players more tactical and strategic options.

Our goal is to make combat into more of a 'game within the game' without having to rely on the elements of spells or magical powers to make combat interesting. By borrowing manoeuvres from Historical European Martial Arts as well as Budo (Samurai) traditions and other martial arts from around the world, Codex Martialis imbues a more nuanced and internally consistent feel to the fight. We believe this allows players to better enjoy the combat experience while contributing to a better feeling of immersion in the gaming environment.

Combat in Codex Martialis is fast and bloody and often unpredictable. The individual Player's strategy has a major impact on the outcome of any fight. Codex Martialis seeks to promote player involvement in combat rather than increasing the level of detail for its own sake. While Codex Martialis does not create a more realistic wound or injury system it is designed to be modular so that a variety of existing damage models can be easily integrated.

Tactical options without the need for Magic or Miniatures

3.5 allows for some combat options, such as fighting Defensively or using feats such as Power Attack and Expertise. Codex Martialis builds on this by adding a variety of basic offensive and defensive combat options. With more combat options available the player is able to take a more active role in how their character fights. New Martial Feats are also designed to be simple to understand and visualize without relying on numerous charts or requiring the use of miniatures, cards, chits, maps, or counters.

Thanks to the unique weapon characteristics the choice of weapons becomes a major tactical consideration rather than a cosmetic adornment for a character. Weapons are not just rated for damage, but also for reach, defensive value, speed in follow-up attacks, effectiveness against armor and suitability for different types of attacks. The selection of weapons becomes another major aspect of the basic combat strategy.

How to Use the Codex Martialis

The Codex Martialis is a resource for people interested in expanding their combat options. Many of the rules in the Codex are deliberately listed as optional. This allows the DM and players to choose those rules that best suit their campaign and their playing style. Codex Martialis is designed to work both as a self contained system and as a kind of a-la-carte menu of crunchy combat options which you can use as you please in your games.

With this approach in mind there may be balance issues if you pick some options but decline to use others. Players who prefer a tightly balanced system or do not like to adjust the rules may not wish to take advantage of all this flexibility. If that is the case for your gaming group then the best approach is to implement the Codex Martialis in its entirety.

Dice Pool vs. D20

A Dice Pool lends a lot of flexibility to combat, but a 20 sided die allows a wider range of probability. Codex Martialis gives you a little of both by combining aspects of a dice pool with the 20 sided die. Multiple 20 sided dice can be rolled in a single attack or defense roll, but only the highest die is counted. This keeps it simple and allows players and DMs alike to overcome the dreaded 'flat curve'. This way you can make your own luck, literally.

Do you prefer rolling defense against an attack or simply requiring your attacker to defeat a target number? Codex Martialis allows both options. Defense can be either Active or Passive. Armor acts as DR as in many other systems now, but armor can also be bypassed or attacked itself. Having trouble piercing that iron breast plate or those tough dragon scales? Strike around the hard parts and into the soft

underbelly with a bypass attack. No luck piercing that brigantine? Maybe it's time to start taking it apart with a few well placed cuts.

Character skills combine with choice of weapons to open up a variety of tactical options and personal strategies. Do you select a staff for its excellent defensive value, a military pick for its enhanced armor piercing features, or a longsword for its versatility in attack and defense? A spear or a pole-arm has a terrific reach in the opening attack but it is relatively slow in the followup attack. A dagger is a very dangerous weapon at close range because it allows the wielder to perform rapid followup attacks. To use it effectively, mount a cautious defense until your opponent makes a mistake allowing you to rush in and stab stab stab. Most beasts such as lions and wolves will attempt to engage in close-fighting or grappling by preference.

Martial Feats allow personal combat strategies to take on considerable depth. For example, a spear-fighter may take the **Stop Thrust** Martial Feat which

makes it easier to impale folks with daggers attempting to rush into close range. A Samurai will usually choose the **Nukitsuke** Martial Feat allowing a sheathed weapon to be instantly deployed into a cut or a flowing block which confers a bonus to defense and opportunities for counterattack.

The possibilities are actually limitless. Codex Martialis allows combat to feel like combat; you can try out ideas you see in movies, know from martial arts, or think up yourself. This system is designed to allow you to have fun with the fight without getting bogged down in it. Precision vs. speed, strength vs. finesse, attack vs counterattack... the outcome of combat is decided by each Character's specific abilities and each individual Player's personal style.

Our goal is to present the player and DM with a range of new tactics which bring a far more dynamic feel to combat, by adding numerous options without adding a great deal of complexity. We invite you to try the system out and let us know what you think of it.



Parco Di Monstri, Bomarzo Italy, built 1552

The Martial Pool

Changing Range

You can change range one step (from grapple to melee or melee to onset or vice versa) for the expenditure of one Martial Pool Dice. Move equivalent actions ((any actions which could draw an Attack of Opportunity) may require expenditure of one to two Martial Pool Dice at the GMs discretion. Entering or leaving Grapple range may trigger an Attack of Opportunity, though some Martial Feats trump this (See Martial Feats).

Weapon Characteristics

The characteristics of the weapon you wield plays a role in the strategy you use in a fight. Large weapons have better reach, small weapons are faster. Piercing weapons are more effective against armor, while slashing weapons are better against unarmored opponents.

Reach To Hit Bonus

Each melee weapon has a **Reach To Hit Bonus** (RTHB) which comes into play in all opening attacks. Longer weapons such as spears, staves, lances, and pikes all have excellent reach. Initial attacks use the RTHB. See Basic Combat, Attack.

Speed To Hit Bonus

Each melee weapon has a **Speed To Hit Bonus** (STHB) which comes into play in all follow-up attacks. Daggers, hatchets, knives and short-swords have good speed. Weapons balanced by an iron pommel, such as broadswords or arming swords, have better speed than those which don't, such as a hatchet or a mace. With certain Martial Feats, double-edged weapons can have a speed advantage as well. Any time you attack for the second time in a given round, and any time you make a Counterattack or an Attack of Opportunity, you use the STHB of your weapon. See Basic Combat, Attack.

Weapon Defense Bonus

Each melee weapon is rated for defense. Shields and weapons which are of a substantial size but well balanced have a good **Weapon Defense Bonus** (WDB). Most swords, maces, and certain daggers have good defensive characteristics, as do staves, spears, and pole arms when used with two hands. Weapons with extra hand protection also have a higher WDB. See Basic Combat, Defense.

Damage Rating

The **Damage Rating** value represents the normal damage done for any attack.

Armor Piercing Bonus

Certain weapons are designed specifically to pierce armor. These weapons receive an **Armor Piercing Bonus**. This bonus lowers the **Damage Reduction** value from your opponent's **Armor** (see **Armor**).

Attack Types

Each weapon has one or more **Attack Types**. The different **Attack Types** are Chop, Slash, Bash, and Pierce.

Primary Attack

The **Primary Attack** is the **Attack Type** which is used for **Critical Hits**. For example a dagger may be able to **Slash** and **Pierce** but the **Pierce Attack Type** is considered the **Primary Attack type** as it is the one that may cause a **Dynamic Critical** (see **Critical Hit**).

Martial Pool

In the *Codex Martialis* you don't get a fixed number of attacks per round. Instead you have a **Martial Pool (MP)** which consists of a number of dice. These dice may be used to make multiple attacks, to enhance the effectiveness of one or more attacks, or for **Active Defense** (see **Basic Combat**). The value of the MP reflects the number of 20 sided dice you can use in combat in one round. You can literally hold your MP in your hand at the beginning of each round.

The **Martial Pool** accrues at the rate of one die per **Base Attack Bonus** or **BAB**. The minimum is 1, the maximum MP is 4. For example a 3rd Level Fighter has a **BAB** of 3 and therefore 3 MP. A 12th level fighter has a **BAB** of 12 and an MP of 4 (the maximum). A first level Wizard with a **BAB** of 0 would have an MP of 1.

How you spend the dice in your **Martial Pool** is part of your individual strategy. Assuming you have an MP of 4 (**BAB** of 4 or better), do you make 4 separate attacks? Do you make one enhanced attack with all four dice (see **Basic Combat, Attack**)? Do you use one die for attack and save three dice for **Active Defense**, or use one and save the rest for a counter-attack? It's up to you to decide. You create your own strategy to suit your Character's fighting style and the circumstances of the moment.

If you prefer not to use the **Martial Pool**, you can substitute a +4 **To Hit** bonus for each **Free Dice** or **Extra Dice** recommended for a **Martial Feat** or a **Counterattack**.

Natural 20 and Natural 1

When rolling multiple dice a natural 1 is ignored so long as another higher die roll was also rolled, and a natural 20 is always considered a critical hit since you take the best die roll.. when rolling only one die a natural 1 is always considered an automatic fumble.

Saving Throws

Dice in the Martial Pool may be applied to Saving Throws as well as attacks or Active Defense. They are used the same way except that any Pool dice expended on a Saving Throw are added to the normal Saving Throw roll. In other words you always get at least one die for any Saving Throw; adding MP dice gives you a way to improve your odds

Martial Pool and the Full Attack Option

If you use **Martial Pool**, it takes the place of Fighting Defensively and using a Full Attack option. When using the Pool it's simply a matter of choosing how many M.P. dice you wish to put into moving, attacks, and **Active Defense**,

and this can be all attack or all defense or anything in between as you see fit.

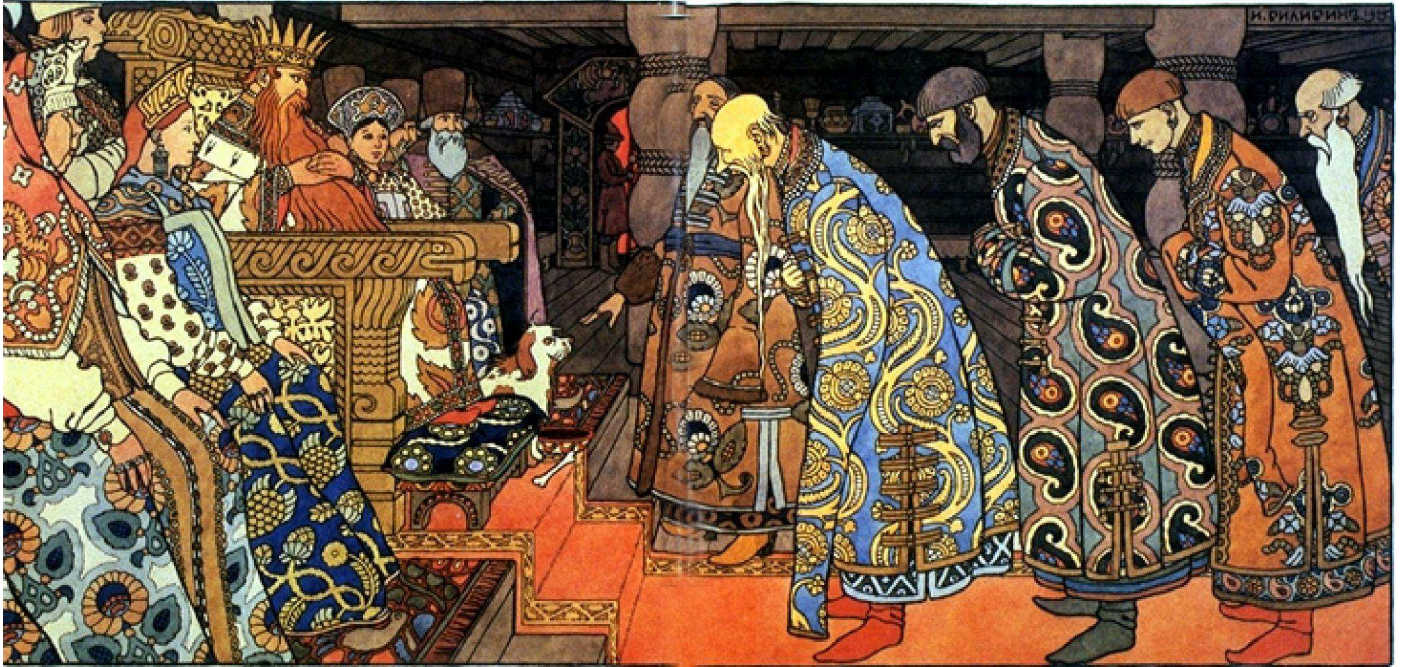
Martial Pool and MOVEMENT

Using the Martial Pool also requires a slight change to the standard 3.5 movement rules. We allow one free movement per round up to each PC or NPC's movement rate (i.e. 15'-30'). Each subsequent movement after the initial move requires the expenditure of 1 MP, up to a maximum of 3 movements (this is separate from changing combat range in a fight, for that see Changing Range). To Run (4 movements) the PC must expend all available MP (i.e. none can be assigned for Attack or Active Defense)

Entering or exiting combat range (anywhere threatened by an Attack of Opportunity) also costs 1 MP. This makes PCs and NPCs (and Monsters) a bit more mobile which should be kept in mind, it also allows more natural range from no movement / total combat (the Full Attack option) to all movement / no combat.



Viktor Vasnetsov "Bogatyrs" (Boyas) 1898



Ivan Bilibin, *The Merchants visit Tsar Saltan*, 1905

Thorstein the Black and Svein, son of Alf o' Dales, stood before the door. The rest of the company were tearing the roof off the dairy. Hunbogi the Strong and the sons of Armod took one end of the beam, Thorgils, Lambi, and Gudrun's sons the other end. They now pull hard at the beam till it broke asunder in the middle; just at this Hardbein thrust a halberd out through where the door was broken, and the thrust struck the steel cap of Thorstein the Black and stuck in his forehead, and that was a very great wound. Then Thorstein said, as was true, that there were men before them. Next Helgi leapt so boldly out of the door so that those nearest shrunk aback. Thorgils was standing near, and struck after him with a sword, and caught him on the shoulder and made a great wound. Helgi turned to meet him, and had a wood-axe in his hand, and said, "Still the old one will dare to look at and face weapons," and therewith he flung the axe at Thorgils, and the axe struck his foot, and a great wound that was. And when Bolli saw this he leapt forward at Helgi with Footbiter in his hand, and thrust Helgi through with it, and that was his deathblow. Helgi's followers leapt out of the dairy forthwith, and Hardbein with them. Thorleik Bollison turned against Eyjolf, who was a strong man. Thorleik struck him with his sword, and it caught him on the leg above the knee and cut off his leg, and he fell to earth dead. Hunbogi the Strong went to meet Thorgils, and dealt a blow at him with an axe, and it struck the back of him, and cut him asunder in the middle. Thord Cat was standing near where Hardbein leapt out, and was going to set upon him straightway, but Bolli rushed forward when he saw it, and bade no harm be done to Hardbein. "No man shall do a dastard's work here, and Hardbein shall have life and limbs spared."

-Volsunga Saga

Basic Combat

Initiative

Initiative determines who strikes first in a fight, a critical factor in any fight and in the strategy a Player implements in combat. (For more on initiative see optional rules)

Attack

Codex Martialis gives the PC and DM alike several new options for the Attack. The To Hit bonus is based on the BAB plus either a Reach or a Speed bonus from the weapon itself. An unarmed attacker is considered to have Reach bonus of 0 and Speed bonus of 6.

Using Multiple Die Rolls for One Attack

You can use two or more dice from your Martial Pool on the same attack in order to increase your odds of a hit or a critical hit. To do this simply roll all the dice selected; keep the highest roll and discard the rest. For example, you may choose to use all four dice in a single attack. You roll a 4, an 11, a 6 and a 17. You would keep the 17 as your roll and discard the others, and you have now expended your entire MP for this round.

Multiple Attacks

Alternately you can split your Martial Pool into multiple attacks, in any combination you like. For example you could put 3 dice on one attack and save one for a follow-up attack, do two attacks of 2 dice each, or four single-die attacks. You can also keep dice in reserve for Active Defense, for a counterattack, and for an Attack of Opportunity. In fact it is often wise to do so.

Combat Ranges: Onset, Melee, Grapple

We can think of combat as taking place at three ranges: onset, melee, and grapple. All missile combat takes place in the onset range. The first melee attack of a round also takes place in the onset range. All attacks made in the onset range gain a To Hit bonus based on weapon reach. Attacks in the melee range are based on speed. Subsequent attacks in the same round are considered at melee range unless you are Maintaining range (see below):

First Attack

Your first attack in a fight is almost always in the onset range. In the **Onset Range**, your weapons to hit bonus is based on reach.

Follow-up Attacks and Melee Range:

Your second and subsequent attacks in the same round are usually considered to be in the **Melee Range**. Weapon

bonus is based on speed. All counterattacks are also based on speed.



*The various ranges used in the codex system are clearly apparent in this 15th Century painting depicting the brutal reality of Medieval combat. In the center of the painting, one knight in bronzed plate harness kills another similarly equipped with a lance strike, attacking at **onset range**. At the top, cavalry fight with swords at **melee rang**. At the bottom, dismounted knights fight desperately on foot with daggers at **grapple range**.*

Maintaining Range.

As long as you make no followup-attacks or counterattacks you are considered to still be in **Onset Range** at the beginning of each round. Once either combattant has made a second attack in the same round you are considered in melee (or grapple range). The only exception to this rule is that it is possible to execute two attacks while maintaining range by committing two dice to each attack (thus leaving none for Active Defense). Normally this would mean that you will have no MP remaining for Active Defense.

Grapple Range

To enter Grapple range one must make a successful attack either unarmed or with a size S or T weapon. Once the PC announces their attack and intention to enter Grapple, their opponent may first make an Attack of Opportunity (AoO) if they have dice remaining in their Martial Pool. If there is no AoO or the PC survives the AoO and the PC hits with their attack, they are now in Grapple range. Note: it is possible

to be at grapple range with one opponent and onset or melee with another.

While at Grapple Range, Weapon Defense Bonus no longer applies for active defense and Weapon Reach does not apply to attacks, but Speed does. Being at Grapple range does not mean that grappling is necessarily taking place. Exiting from Grapple range requires the expenditure of one die from the Martial Pool, and provokes a potential AoO.

Fighting in Grapple Range

Once in Grapple Range, there are four special effects:

- 1) The **Weapon Defense Bonus** no longer applies.
- 2) Weapons sized M or larger cannot be used to attack (except for special cases).
- 3) Shields confer passive defense only (see Shields).
- 4) All weapons receive their **Speed To-Hit Bonus** instead of their **Reach To-Hit Bonus**.

Counterattacks

Any time the Defender rolls a natural 20 in **Active Defense** then they may perform an immediate counterattack with any remaining dice in their **Martial Pool** (see **Defense**). In the event that you roll a 20 in Active Defense and the attacker also rolls a 20 you can still Counterattack. Any resulting hit would be considered to have occurred simultaneously with the attacker's hit. A Counterattack is also triggered if the attacker rolls a natural 1 against any Active Defense. A natural 1 against a passive defense is a fumble (usually meaning a dropped weapon or equivalent mistake at GM's discretion)

Attacks of Opportunity

Are not automatic extra attacks in Codex Martialis. Executing an Attack of Opportunity requires that dice be available in your Martial Pool.

Defense

You can engage in Active or Passive defense with the Codex Martialis.

Defense Bonus per BAB

Your Base Defense value is equal to your BAB plus your Dexterity bonus. Both Active and Passive Defense are based on your Base Defense value. All PCs and NPCs receive a Defense Bonus based on their Base Attack Bonus. For example a third level fighter with a BAB of +3 also gets a Defense Bonus of +3.

Active Defense

Active Defense means that you are paying special attention to actively trying to defend yourself. When you are attacked any dice available in your Martial Pool can be used for

Active Defense. You roll a d20 and add that to all of your defensive bonuses for Dexterity, Weapon Defense, BAB, Feats, and so on where applicable. If you roll a natural 20 you are eligible for an immediate Counterattack if you have dice remaining in your MP (see Counterattack).

Generally speaking the odds are slightly better for Active Defense. Also you have extra opportunities for a Counterattack with an Active Defense. However there is also considerably more risk.

The Tie that Binds

On a tie your opponent has potentially damaged your weapon (see Damaging Weapons). This is considered a "**Bind**", and can trigger certain Martial Feats (See **Martial Feats**)

Passive Defense

Passive Defense means you are relying on your reflexes, distance and training to react appropriately to enemy attacks. For Passive Defense you simply add 8+ all applicable defensive bonuses. The attacker must roll higher than your Passive Defense score. For example an unarmed 1st level fighter (BAB 1) with a 13 Dex (+1) would have a Passive Defense of 2+8= 10. Normally weapon defense does not apply to Passive Defense (some Martial Feats trump this, see Martial Feats), but Shield Defense always does apply.

Undefended Targets

Undefended targets have a Passive Defense value of 1 vs melee weapons (roll dice for Critical) and are considered to have a Passive Defense value of 8 against missile weapons.

Shields

Shields are treated like special defensive weapons; they have a Defense bonus like weapons do which can be applied to Active or Passive Defense. Some feats allow shields to be used offensively as well. Normally when fighting with a shield, either the weapon's defense value OR the shields defense value is used to calculate Active Defense (whichever is higher). Keep in mind that a shield always gains a "Free Dice" in any Active Defense roll. The DB of a shield is also automatically added to Passive Defense, unlike the weapon's DB. Certain Martial Feats allow you to combine the DB of your shield with that of your weapon (see Martial Feats).

Extra (Active) Defensive Die Roll for Shields.

If used for Active Defense shields automatically generate an extra defensive die roll *every time they are used*, but this must also be matched by at least one die from the shield bearer's Martial Pool. This can be combined with any other

Active Defense die rolled normally. It does not have any effect on passive defense. Using a shield Actively always forces the allocation of at least one MP die.

Shield Damage

On any tie against an Active Defense roll with a shield the shield has been potentially damaged. Roll damage for the attacking weapon, subtract Toughness value as a DR, and apply damage to the shield appropriately. A shield used for Passive Defense may also be targeted for attack like Armor (see Attacking Armor).

Damage

This is the standard damage inflicted by this weapon during a normal attack. Basic damage is sometimes lower for weapons which can cause multiple forms of critical hits. Bludgeon weapons tend to have higher basic damage since Bludgeon critical hits do not cause extra killing damage, and because it (arguably) takes less finesse to cause damage with a blunt instrument than with an edge or a point.

Critical Hits

Critical Hits represent extraordinary damage caused by any attack. A natural 20 is always considered a Critical Hit. Critical Hit damage is special for Bludgeon Weapons (see below). Crit Damage is a D6 for Bludgeon and Piercing, a D8 for Chop attacks, and D10 for Slash attacks, regardless of the weapon. Basic damage and Critical Hit damage is always combined for purposes of Damage Reduction. Alternately, if you prefer a simpler system simply make all critical hits cause D10 damage or double damage.



"Take two aspirin and call me in the morning."

Dynamic Criticals

When attacking with the Primary attack type for your weapon, and using multiple attack dice in a single attack, damage is one die per MP rolled. So a critical scored in a 3 dice slash attack with a Katana would cause 3d10 damage, a 2 dice chop attack 2d8 etc. (Note: this rule makes combat very bloody at higher levels, in earlier versions Dynamic Criticals was an optional rule, we liked it so much we elevated it to a Core Rule but if you don't want to use it

just revert to default Crit rules with no multi-die crit damage.)

Attack Types and Critical Hits

The Primary Attack type(s) listed by weapon represent the attack types for which the weapon is most suitable and the only means by which the weapon can cause a Dynamic Critical. For example, a sidesword is capable of the attack types Slash, Chop, and Pierce but only Pierce and Slash are listed as the Primary Attack types. So you can Chop with this weapon but if you make a multi-die Chop attack and a natural 20 is rolled your Critical Hit will only cause 1D8 Damage. If a Critical Hit is indicated in a Piercing attack however, it is considered a Dynamic Critical.

Bludgeon Damage and Bludgeon Critical Hits

Bludgeoning weapons are more likely to cause basic damage as less finesse is required to break bones or crush organs than to properly cut or pierce an opponent. Critical Hits from bludgeoning weapons are handled differently. A Critical Hit from a Bash attack is treated as a potential Knock Out (KO). This can be handled one of two ways:

Nonlethal Damage

Critical Hit damage is rolled normally, and is applied as nonlethal Damage per standard OGL rules.

Knock Out Threat (Optional Alternative)

Critical Hit damage is added to Basic Damage and the two values are combined into a Knock Out threat. This becomes the TN for a Will save (see **KO table, Appendix 3: Weapons**) If the target fails the save they may be knocked out or stunned.

Fumble

A natural 1 in an attack die roll is automatically considered a fumble and may indicate a counterattack by your opponent. (see counterattack). A natural 1 on an active defense die roll means an automatic hit by the attacker. The only time a natural 1 can be ignored is if you rolled multiple dice in the same roll (using the Martial Pool), in which case it can be discarded in favor of a higher die.

Armor

Armor works as Damage Reduction. Armor does not affect Defense except detrimentally by reducing the Maximum Dexterity bonus (Max Dex).

Armor Bypass

Armor can either be penetrated (by overcoming Damage Reduction) or bypassed. Bypassing an opponent's armor means striking them in such a way that the blow slips past their armor. To bypass armor the attacker must apply the

Bypass Penalty for the particular armor type. Depending on the type of armor this can be anywhere from -2 to -10. Natural Armor is always -10 to bypass. If a hit is scored in spite of the Bypass Penalty no Damage Reduction is applied for the armor. See Armor for more information on the Bypass Penalty.

Attacking Armor

In some cases, when using certain types of weapons against certain types of armor, armor which cannot be

penetrated can be ablated. You simply announce your intent to attack the armor instead of the person or creature wearing it. This can be done against natural armor as well. Any hit does damage to the armor. Hardness is deducted as Damage Reduction and any remaining damage is applied against the armor's Hit Points. Once the armor has been reduced to 0 or less hit points it offers no further DR until it is repaired. Repair requires the skill of someone with suitable expertise and equipment.



Viktor Mikhailovich Vasnetsov, "A Knight at the Crossroads" 1878

*"Tóla had this stone raised
in memory of her son Haraldr,
Ingvarr's brother.
They travelled valiantly far for gold,
and in the east gave to the eagle.
Died in the south in Serkland."
- Gripsholm Runestone, 11th Century, Sweden*

*"These brothers were
the best of men
in the land
and abroad in the retinue,
held their huskarls well.
He fell in battle
in the east in Garðar
commander of the retinue,
the best of landholders."
- Turinge Runestone, 11th Century, Estonia*

Optional Rules

The following rules are optional. They may enhance your combat experience but they may also make it more bloody, and can require a bit more book-keeping.

Armor vs Spellcheck (Optional)

The Armor Check penalty can be applied against spellcraft checks if using the Spell Failure / Success rule (see **Appendix 1. Magic Rules**).

Attack Types vs. Armor (Optional)

Bludgeon and Piercing weapons cause damage vs armor normally. Chop weapons suffer double the normal DR and hardness, and Slash weapons triple (unless vs all-cloth armor). So for example A brigantine doublet (DR 4) would remain a DR 4 vs Bludgeon or Piercing, would be DR 8 vs Chop, and DR 12 vs slash.

Damage to Weapons (Optional)

During Active Defense if a tie is rolled the defending weapon has been solidly hit and may suffer damage. Apply attack damage normally and deduct weapon hardness. An attacker may also intentionally target an opponent's weapon. The attack is conducted normally and a hit means damage is done to the target weapon. A tie in this case however means the attacker's weapon is damaged.

Desperation Defense (Optional):

If you are attacked when using Active Defense, and your opponent scores a hit, you may expend any additional MP you have any remaining to make another Active Defense roll. If you have the initiative advantage you must then swap initiative values with your enemy (effective next round). If you do not have the Initiative, you lose one MP on your next round.

Forcing Criticals (Optional)

A player can 'force' a critical by announcing the attempt before their attack roll and applying a -10 To Hit penalty. If they are successful they have scored an automatic Critical Hit in all respects. Furthermore Forced Criticals can cause Critical hits for any attack type the weapon is capable of, not just primary attacks. The penalty for Armor Bypass and the penalty for Forcing a Critical stack.

Hit Point Ceiling (Optional)

Codex Martialis can be adapted to high level play, but it was originally designed to be a grim system; combat is meant to be dangerous and never routine. To this end a Hit Point ceiling is recommended; 3x constitution for fighters, rangers, and paladins and 2x constitution for all other classes or multi-classed characters. For example a fighter with a 15 constitution would have a maximum of 45 hit points, whereas

a cleric with a 15 constitution would have a maximum of 30 HP.

Initiative Bonus by BAB (Optional)

Individuals more experienced in combat tend to have a better sense of timing which can trump faster reflexes. You can reflect this by granting a Free Dice on initiative rolls to the player (or NPC) with the highest BAB.

Reach and Measure (Optional)

In real life, a longer reach gives a major advantage in the opening stages of a fight. To represent this, grant a Free Dice during any initiative roll to whoever has the longest weapon or reach To Hit bonus. This overlaps with the Initiative Bonus by BAB rule if you are using that. (Note this rule used to be a Martial Feat but has been made back into an optional rule because we felt that it was pretty universal and did not require any special training or experience, the person with the longest weapon usually has the option of striking first.)

Pressing the Attack (Optional)

If you hit with two or more attacks against the same opponent in the same round (including counterattacks), you gain one point on your initiative roll. So if you had previously rolled a 10 and your opponent a 14, but you hit them twice in the same round, your initiative would increase by one point to 11.

Reach Init Bonus for Ready Weapon (Optional)

Add the reach bonus of your weapon to your init roll. This bonus is based upon the Reach Bonus of the individual weapon type and it is also circumstantial. In advance of combat being initiated the Player must announce that their character is readying their weapon. For example, "I ready my sword and prepare to cut the head off the first thing which comes through that hole!" or "I knock an arrow to my bow and enter the chamber, and I'm ready to shoot..." However, the bonus is not awarded automatically. If the opponent also has their weapon ready and is expecting combat then neither combatant gains the bonus. If used with Reach and Measure both rules stack.

Weapon breakage (Optional)

Any weapon with a hardness of less than 8 takes damage when it makes a *multi-dice* critical hit, and any time a weapon with any hardness makes a *multi-dice* critical hit against armor with a higher DR than the weapons hardness (including natural armor) unless making a bypass attack. Damage is equal to the critical hit damage caused by the weapon. You may also want to degrade the effectiveness of a damaged weapon with a damage step-down (D6 becomes D4 etc.), up to the GM's discretion.

Repairing Weapons (Optional)

A broken sword must be re-forged, requiring a swordsmith and costing about as much as making a new one. A broken spear, halberd or axe can be simply re-hafted which is a fairly simple process any blacksmith and most ordinary soldiers could do in theory – provided suitable material and tools are available. It would still be advisable to get a professional woodworker to rehaft the weapon, Swiss arsenals had specialized ‘woodsmiths’ to haft weapons. Intermediate levels of damage can be repaired at the GM’s discretion, some damage to a sword blade can be ground away with a whetstone, more serious problems require a visit to the forge. Another alternative is that a broken sword can be somewhat more easily (less expensively) made into a smaller sword.

This is actually what apparently happened with many Scottish weapons, which started out as two-handed Claymores (*claidheamh mòr*) were later re-forged (or re-ground) into single handed swords, with or without a basket hilt and also called claymores, then remade again into dirks (long daggers) and then finally into skein dubhs (knives) sometimes three or four hundred years later. No point in letting good steel go to waste even if you aren’t Scottish.

Grappling from a distance (Optional)

Each Weapon has a **Grapple Bonus** which takes effect during any attempt to grapple using the weapon (either at short range or from a distance.) Any weapon with a Grapple Bonus may be used to Grapple from a distance, can make Grapple rolls including to make Trip or Sunder (disarm) attacks, or pulling someone off of a horse for example.

Seizing weapons (Optional)

Any time you are at grapple range, or get into a bind (tie die roll on Active Defense) you may attempt to seize your opponent’s weapon.

If your opponent still has MP remaining they may interrupt you with an AoO when you try this, after the AoO, you simply roll a contested Grapple Check to grab the weapon, (or your Grapple vs. their Base Defense if they have no MP remaining). Of course the Ringen MF gives you a free dice on any roll to initiate or avoid Grapple so that could apply here for either party. This also works for Natural weapons (grabbing a monster’s paw or throat to keep them from biting etc.)

If you have grabbed a weapon it cannot be used against you either this round or the next round or thereafter until it has been freed (which will require another contested grapple check.) If your weapon is being held you can let it go yourself as a “free action” of course and do something else (like seize their weapon, or draw a dagger, or go to grapple or whatever). If you have grabbed your opponent’s weapon and are wielding

a Hand and a Half (HH) Weapon you may still attack them in this round (only) with no penalty / adjustments for one-handed use, their own weapon will not apply to their defense.

Disarm weapons (Optional)

Once you have seized a weapon, if you have any MP remaining, you may make a second contested Grapple check to take it away (Disarm). If your opponent has no MP remaining this is against their Base Defense per above. If neither of you have any MP remaining you can still hold on to their weapon and they will not be able to attack you with that weapon next round until they manage to free it ... unless the weapon is a sword or a dagger (see below).

Slash the Hand (Optional)

But if at the start of your round your weapon being held is a sword, knife or dagger of some kind with an S (Slashing) attack type, you may automatically cut them with a Slashing attack (you must expend at least one MP but no to-hit die roll is necessary - you automatically cut them for full Slashing damage). The only defense for this are mail-lined gloves (which is why mail lined gloves became very popular during the Renaissance.)

This makes it dangerous to grab a sword and try to take it, but still quite tempting so long as you don’t hold on too long! These rules make it considerably *more* tempting to grab any kind of hafted weapon if you are close enough or have the opportunity due to a bind. And this is the real advantage of a sword over an axe or a mace. Just like in real life.

Twist the blade (Optional)

Any time you score a Piercing critical hit with a weapon capable of P primary attack type, you may throw one or more extra MP to cause one extra die of Crit damage for each MP you expend. This makes thrusting weapons a bit more dangerous!

Fighting indoors (Optional)

Keep in mind cutting with an axe or a greatsword is not something easily done indoors, in a castle or a church, in a cave or a catacomb, in the forest, on a ship etc. where shorter weapons generally have a big advantage. To simulate this you can set a “reach ceiling” of a certain weapon size, and take one or more MP away from anyone wielding a weapon that size or larger. On the other hand, thrusting can work just fine in some circumstances, depending on the layout of a given space, a thrusting weapon with a reach advantage can dominate a tight spot like a corridor, so you may want to add a Free Dice for thrusting attacks only. You have to give some thought to when to apply the penalty and when not to so there is always some subjective aspect to this.

The infidel threw his shield in front of him, and laying his spear on his arm he ran swiftly at me, uttering a cry. I approached, having my spear at the thigh, but as I drew near I couched my spear and thrust at his shield, and although he struck at me with his spear in the flank and forearm, I was able to give him such mighty thrust that horse and man fell to the ground. But his spear hung in my armor and hindered me, and I had great difficulty in loosing it and alighting from my horse. By this time he also was dismounted. I had my sword in my hand; he likewise seized his sword, and we advanced and gave each other a mighty blow. The infidel had excellent armour, and though I struck him by the shield he received no injury. Nor did his blows injure me. We then gripped each other and wrestled so long that we fell to the ground side by side. But the infidel was a man of amazing strength. He tore himself from my grasp, and we both raised our bodies until we were kneeling side by side.

I then thrust him from me with my left hand in order to be able to strike at him with my sword, and this I was able to do, for with the thrust his body was so far removed that I was able to cut at his face, and although the blow was not wholly successful, I wounded him so that he swayed and was half-blinded. I then struck him a direct blow in the face and hurled him to the ground, and falling upon him I thrust my sword through his throat, after which I rose to my feet, took his sword, and returned to my horse. The two beasts were standing side by side. They had been worked hard the whole day, and were quite quiet.

When the infidels saw I had conquered they drew off their forces. But the Portuguese and Christians approached and cut off the infidel's head, and took his spear, and placed the head upon it, and removed his armour. It was a costly suit, made in the heathen fashion, very strong and richly ornamented...

-from the diary of the German knight Jorg von Egingen, who fought with the Portuguese in 1467.



Martial Feats

Martial Feats are a new type of Feat introduced in the Codex Martialis. Martial Feats confer specific tactical options for combat. It is recommended that Martial Feats be conferred to players at a rate of one Martial Feat per BAB. It is up to the DM's discretion as to whether to apply Martial Feats at the same rate to NPCs or Monsters. Martial Feats can be used as another way to distinguish the unique abilities of PCs and/or special NPCs, or they can be viewed as being universal.

Martial Feats allow players to customize the fighting style of their character and take full advantage of the nuances of different types of weapons. Players are given a greater range of tactical options in order to balance the increased lethality of the system (especially if the recommended Hit Point Ceiling option is used).

Most Martial Feats have prerequisites including key normal feats such as Dodge, Combat Expertise, Mobility, and so on.

Free Dice

Many Martial Feats confer a special advantage in the form of Free Dice. This means from one or sometimes two dice added to a single attack or defense roll without any cost to your Martial Pool. For example, a fighter with 4 dice in his MP decides to execute a Counterstroke. He waits for his opponent to attack and then strikes with a 2 die attack.

Due to the Counterstroke Feat he gains a bonus third die for his roll. Thus he retains 2 dice in his MP while rolling 3 dice for his Counterstrike. Free Dice must be used in the same round and in the same action which invokes the Feat. They cannot be held in reserve or used later.

Counter Attacks and Counterattacks.

The Counterattack has a specific meaning in the Codex Martialis (see Basic Combat). This is different from the more general meaning of a counter attack simply being some kind of followup attack. For example, the Counterstroke feat allows you to attack after your opponent attacks. This is a counter attack in the sense that you are attacking after your opponent has tried to strike, but it is not a counterattack unless it follows the rolling of a natural 20.

Basic Martial Feats

Abzug

You are skilled at the art of exiting Melee range.

Prerequisites: Sidestep

Benefit: Any time you are performing Active Defense with your last die in the round you may make a 'free' move from melee to Onset range.

Contra Tempo

Contra Tempo is kind of a reverse feint or spoiling attack in which you threaten to quickly wound your opponent to keep them from effectively attacking. It can be a particularly good option if you have lost initiative.

Prerequisites: Weapon finesse, Sense Motive Skill 3 ranks, weapon speed bonus at least 3, weapon reach equal to or greater than the reach of your opponents weapon.

Benefits: Any time you are attacked in onset range, once per round you may expend a single martial pool die (only) to make a special attack of opportunity. This is considered a 'spoiling attack' which takes place before their attack is executed, but stepped down one die in damage, (so that D8 becomes D6 etc.) If your opponent chooses to they can change their attack die-roll to Active Defense die-roll on the spot, or they can opt to just continue with their attack anyway in which case your 'spoiling attack' is rolled against their passive defense. If they have announced a multi-die attack they must switch all committed dice to Active Defense or keep all of them in the Attack. (See also **Mezzo Tempo**)

Cooperative Fighting

Exploit the assistance of your allies to defeat your enemy.

Prerequisites: Situational Awareness M.Feat, must have fought along side partner through the entire period since attaining the previous level. Partner must gain the same feat.

Benefit: Gain a Free Dice once per round when attacking any single opponent that their partner has attacked in the same round. This feat is only effective if two or more participating attackers have the feat.

Counterstroke

Interrupt the attacks of your opponent with an immediate counterattack.

Prerequisites: Dodge, Weapon Focus with weapon to be used

Benefits: Gain an automatic counterattack against a designated opponent. You must announce that you are using Counterstroke and designate an opponent as your Dodge target. Once attacked by the selected target (assuming you survive the attack) you may immediately counter attack as a special Attack of Opportunity. Only the first attack can be responded to in this way. Once the Counterstroke is executed if the original attacker survives the Counterstroke then they may continue their attacks for the round. This can be very useful when you have lost initiative.

Special: If you generate a Counterattack when executing a Counterstroke you gain a Free Dice for your counter attack, even if you have no pool remaining.

This feat can be used in conjunction with Nukisuke, Riposte, or the Main Gauche MF. In this case the off-hand weapon can still be used to defend. Those who have the Florentine Defense feat may use the Florentine Defense with the Counterstroke feat

Changing Through

This is called *Durchwechsell* in German fencing.

Prerequisites: Weapon focus with any type of sword with a speed of 2 or better, and capable of P attacks.

Benefit: After your initial attack you may make a followup attack (which must be a thrust) against your opponents last defensive die roll. So for example you cut, rolling a 10, the defender rolled an 11 in Active Defense. You elect to try Changing Through and throw in another die, this new die roll is applied to the defenders original roll of 11, they cannot issue another Active Defense. The second attack must be for piercing damage only. On any bind (tie roll), you gain a Free Dice for this attack. This attack can be trumped by the **Winden** Martial Feat.

Danse De La Rue

Use your feet to make unarmed attacks. *Danse De La Rue* means literally “dance of the street” and was one of the slang terms for a French underworld unarmed combat system which was one of the predecessors of Savate. Needless to say this art of fighting with your feet also exists in Japanese, Chinese, Korean, and Filipino Martial Arts systems as well (among many others).

Prerequisites: Movement 20', Dexterity 13+

Benefits: You can spend two dice to make a long-range unarmed attack at Onset range, with a reach bonus of +4 To Hit and a minimum damage of 1-4. To make the kick you must be at onset range and you must have at least two MP remaining. Iron-shod or spiked boots or shoes confer +1 damage. This MF *does* work with the **Bind and Batter** MF, **Morstrosse** MF, and the **Sucker Punch** MF. The +4 reach bonus also applies to init roles.

Distance Fighting

You may make a 5' step away from your opponent to void (dodge) your enemies attacks more effectively.

Prerequisites: Sidestep feat, Movement 20'

Benefits: Whenever you are attacked in Onset range, you receive a Free Dice for any void. A void means an Active defense using no weapon or shield bonus (only your Base Defense). This MF can be used with the *Nachriesen* MF.

Special: you must make a five foot step either sideways, diagonally, or backward relative to your opponent each time you use the Feat. You can use it over and over as long as you have space to move. The Five foot step is ‘free’ and does not cost any extra MP but you must have room to move This MF does not work unless you are at Onset range.

Fahlen

“Next time with fahlen!”

This is the ability to sense pressure of your opponents weapon during a bind so that you can react accordingly.

Prerequisites: Charisma 12 or better.

Benefit: You may add your Charisma bonus to any die roll related to executing or opposing any MF triggered by a bind, including but not limited to **Winden**, **Mutierin**, **Durchlauffen**, and **Sprechfenster**.

False -edge Cutting

This Martial Feat allows the character to cut with both the true and the false edges of the sword without rotating the blade. This in turn allows faster follow-up attacks.

Prerequisites: Weapon Focus with the weapon in question, only works with double-edged swords, large daggers, sword-like weapons with a partial false edge, and staff-like bludgeon weapons with a speed of at least 3.

Benefit: +2 to the speed bonus for cutting attacks only from hand-and-a-half or two-handed weapons with full double edges (longsword, jian, greatsword, bastard sword, zweihander etc), +1 to the speed bonus for the weapon for single-handed two-edged weapons (arming sword, katzbalger, akinakes, gladius, broadsword, and so on), clubs, bata or other light bludgeon weapons, or for two-handed weapons with a partial false edge (falchion, langen messer, bagua dao, and so on), thus improving the To Hit bonus for follow-up attacks.

Feint

Prerequisites: Bluff or Intimidation skill 2 levels.

Benefit: You expend one or more Martial Pool die to roll a contested skill check, your Bluff or Intimidation vs. your target's Sense Motive. If you succeed you draw off one of your opponents Martial Pool. If you roll a natural 20, you draw off up to 2 MP. This can be used in conjunction with many other maneuvers.

Special: A Feint can draw off a Counterstroke or Miesterhau-counterstroke.

Formation Fighting

You and your mates are trained to protect one another when you fight.

Prerequisites: Profession Soldier skill 1 rank

Benefit: +4 to Defense when fighting in formation with at least 4 other allies who also have this Martial Feat.

Frenzied Attack

Prerequisite: None

Benefit: Make one extra attack if you make no Active Defense. Gain a Free Dice for attack only but you may make no Active Defense die rolls in the round.

Half-staff

Prerequisites: Poll-axe Fighting M. Feat if using a spear or pole-arm, or Weapon Focus: Staff if using a staff of any kind.

Benefits:

- 1) Weapon Defense Bonus (including bonus for Poll Axe fighting if applicable) applies even when in Grapple, unless pinned or prone.
- 2) While in Grapple your weapon can still be used to make Piercing, Bludgeon, and Slash attacks only but not Chop attacks, (with no speed bonus). Bash damage for a spear butt is equivalent to a club.

Half-sword Fighting

Special sword fighting technique for use with most swords which allow the weapon to be used in close combat (that is, at Grapple range). The technique involves grasping your sword blade with your hand

Prerequisites: Weapon Focus with any sword which can cause Piercing damage (or equivalent sized staff weapon).

Benefits:

- 1) You retain your weapons Weapon Defense Bonus while in Grapple.
- 2) While in Grapple your weapon can still be used to make Thrust, Bash, and Slash attacks but not Chop attacks, regardless of the weapons size. Bash damage of a sword pommel is equivalent to a light mace.

Rolling a natural 1 while using half sword techniques without heavy gauntlets or mail lined gloves causes the wielder to injure herself (D4 Damage) and she must roll a Reflex Save DC (15) or she will drop her weapon.

Improvised Defense

This is the ability to utilize mundane objects for defense.

Prerequisites: Situational Awareness.

Benefit: May use a variety of mundane objects for defense. A shield bonus of +1 or +2 is conferred, depending on the DM's judgement as to the nature of the object used. A cloak, hat, or dinner knife would confer a +1 bonus while a stool, candelabra, fireplace poker, or torch would confer a +2 bonus. The object is held in the off-hand. Just about any object may be used (a hat, a cloak, a chair, a candlestick, and so on). This technique was taught in many historical fencing schools going back to the Middle Ages.

Inscrutable Countenance

Prerequisites: Persuasive or Charisma 11+.

You have a fantastic game face or poker face. Your excellent control over your facial expressions and body language enable you to mask your intentions and trick your opponents in combat. In laido this is perhaps best expressed by the concept of chakugan, or eye contact. Chakugan is a critical feature of basic combat training. The wise fencer uses what is known as enzan no metsuke, or "distant mountain sight" to

watch their opponent slightly out of focus, taking in their eyes, their stance, their hands and the position of their weapon simultaneously, without giving away intentions or reactions.

Benefits: Gain a Free Dice on all Bluff Checks and the ability to Bluff or Intimidate with the eyes (without speaking).



Lunge

A special thrusting attack developed for the rapier or cut-and-thrust sword during the Renaissance. A leap forward is made in coordination with the thrust. This enabled the attacker to reach an opponent who thought he was out of attack range. It also allowed the attacker to concentrate power and energy and to attack with remarkable speed. Once gained the technique can be applied to any finesse weapon.

Prerequisites: Weapon Finesse with the weapon in question (must be a single handed weapon with a speed of 3 or better, capable of P or B attacks.)

Benefit: You may conduct a single thrusting (piercing) attack, and gain a free dice on the attack. You can take an additional 5' step in your attack if necessary.

Restrictions: A Lunge attack cannot be initiated unless you are in Onset range. It cannot be executed as a followup attack. Can only be used once per round. You may not perform an Active Defense on the same round as a Lunge. That is, all of your Martial Pool dice must be applied to attack(s).

Main Gauche

Two weapon fighting style which allows the off-hand weapon to be used defensively.

Prerequisites: Weapon focus with both weapons, off-hand weapon must be a Size S or T weapon.

Benefit: Add the off-hand weapon's full Weapon Defense Bonus to Defense against melee attacks for the entire round (max combined +8).

Restriction: The off-hand weapon may not be used to attack for the entire round.

Meisterhau (Master Cut)

Another ancient fencing technique for two-handed swords, this was taught in Japan, in Europe, and in the Philippines. A Meisterhau (master-cut) is a cut in which the fencer simultaneously defends against any attack as they cut their opponent. This is done either by cutting through the opponent's potential avenue of attack (a single time counter, in effect defense through complete concentration on attack) or by controlling the opponents weapon to set up a rapid follow-up attack (double time counter).

Prerequisites: Weapon Focus feat with two-handed cutting weapon.

Benefit: Once per round when you have a higher initiative roll than your opponent you may attempt to make one 'perfect' strike. You select a designated target for that round, and make a single focused cut (Chop or Slash attacks only). Whether you hit or miss, your modified Attack roll is used in place of your Defense roll against the next attack by this same opponent if that attack is made within one round. For example, a Meisterhau is attempted with a die roll of 17 including all modifiers. When the defender attacks next they must roll 17 or better to get a hit.

All Meisterhau must be made with at least 2 dice from your Martial Pool.

Mezzo Tempo

Prerequisites: Weapon finesse, weapon speed and reach at least 3

Benefits: You get an extra quick slashing or piercing attack once per round with a single Free Dice, at onset only, but you can't throw any other dice into it. This attack does not put you out of Onset range even if it is your second attack. Damage for these attacks is stepped down one die, so D8 becomes D6, D6 becomes D4 etc.

Special: Stacks with Contra Tempo. If you have both Contra Tempo and Mezzo Tempo MS, you can use up to two dice in your Contra Tempo spoiling attack.

Missile Parrying

Prerequisites: Dexterity of 13+.

Benefit: Bat javelins and darts out of the air with your weapon. May apply your Weapons Defense Bonus to Defense against thrown missile weapons. Does not apply against crossbows, slings, or bows.

Mutieren / Duplieren ('Mutate'):

"Be like water making its way through cracks. Do not be assertive, but adjust to the object, and you shall find a way round or through it. If nothing within you stays rigid, outward things will disclose themselves".

- Bruce Lee

Prerequisite: Weapon focus with any type of sword or staff with a speed of 2 or better, Weapon Finesse.

Benefits: Similar to Durchwechseln. Can be used either offensively or defensively.

1) On any bind (tie roll) in an attack, you can throw another die in for a second attack against their original Active Defense die roll, except that your new attack must be a different type from the last.

2) On any automatic counterattack, your Attack die roll will be applied to their previous attack die roll instead of a new roll (similar to Miesterhau). You can do any type of attack except the type you already made (so a cut must be followed by a thrust or a slash or a bash, a thrust by a cut, etc.)

Nukitsuke

Cut your enemy or defend from a blow as you draw your weapon in a single movement. This is a fundamental principle of the martial arts practiced by the Samurai of Japan. It is also similar to the Guardia Prima of Italian Renaissance fencing.

Prerequisites: Quickdraw feat. Can only be used with a sword or other cutting weapon capable of causing Slash Critical Hits.

Benefits:

1) Attack your opponent or defend yourself as you draw your weapon. Gain a Free Dice for your initial attack or defense (or mastercut / miesterhau) when you start with a sheathed weapon. The attack (if any) is always a Slash. For defense your weapon is considered instantly deployed and can be applied to your Active Defense (against the next attack only) with your Free Dice.

2) Before rolling Initiative, if your sword is still sheathed you may announce your intention to make a Nukitsuke attack and you gain a +1 bonus to your Initiative roll.

Special: Curved, single-edged swords have an advantage in Nukitsuke attacks. With strait swords you may gain a +2 bonus to either Slashing Attack To Hit roll or Active Defense instead of the Free Dice. This is called Ukenagashi - "Flowing Block" in Iaido, and is very similar to the opening guards in German and Italian fencing, often used as the precursor to a counterattack in all three systems.

Even if you are attacked unexpectedly, with a successful Reflex Save vs. DC 15 you can draw your weapon and still receive a Free Dice (or +2 bonus) for the first attack only. The Nukitsuke technique is often used in combination with other feats such as Meisterhau, Miesterhau-Counterattack, Steal Initiative, Riposte, Sucker-Punch, and Counterstroke, with many possible variations. It is also frequently used in attempts to force Slash Critical Hits.

It is worth noting that in cultures where the Nukitsuke are known and prevalent, people are naturally highly aware of the potential danger posed by a sheathed sword and a careful etiquette is established over which way the blade is facing, whether blades are tied with 'peace knots' etc. If the weapon is kept upside down, the Reflex Save DC to instantly draw your weapon for defense is raised to DC 20.

Point Control

Prerequisites: Combat Reflexes, Dodge

Improved Attacks of Opportunity with a thrusting weapon. This feat can be used with any weapon with a primary attack type 'P' and a Speed of at least 3

Benefits:

- 1) By keeping the thrusting weapon's point leveled at your target you prevent a single opponent who has been designated as your Dodge target (see the Dodge feat) from rushing you and entering into Grapple range. You gain a Free Dice for all Attacks of Opportunity against a single designated opponent when using a thrusting weapon.
- 2) Also gain an Attack of Opportunity against any designated opponent which attempts to close to Grapple but has Improved Grab, Improved Grapple, or some other feat which normally confers immunity from AoO when initiating Grapple. This feat works with any primarily thrusting weapon but not with weapons with a secondary thrusting capability. The AoO is always considered a thrusting (Pierce) attack.

Poll-axe Fighting

Special pole arm technique in which user wields a hafted weapon such as a spear, pole-arm, or staff, attacking from both ends at the half-staff and utilizing defensive techniques.

Prerequisites: Weapon Focus with pole arm or staff.

Benefits:

- 1) +2 Weapon Defense Bonus (max 6)
- 2) +1 Weapon Speed Bonus (max 6).

Ringen

Ringen is the German term for no-holds barred grappling, called jujitsu in Japanese fencing or "abrazare" (Grips) in Renaissance Italian fencing, it was known as Pankration by the ancient Greeks, and by many other names in many other cultures around the world. This is an unarmed martial art involving striking, wrestling, grappling, throws, arm locks and grips. This MF represents the basic skill level and is the gateway to many other specific techniques.

Prerequisites: Weapon Focus: Grappling

Benefit: This is a grappling / unarmed combat feat.

- 1) Add a Free Dice to any attempt to initiate or avoid Grapple once per round.
- 2) Gain the ability to strike with hands or feet for 1d3 Damage.

Riposte

You may counter attack by thrusting when your opponent makes a mistake.

Prerequisite: Dodge, Weapon Finesse. Can only be used with a single handed weapon with a primary attack type of P or B and a minimum speed of 3.

Benefit: At the beginning of the round you must designate a Dodge target for counterattack. If your Dodge target attacks

and you score a counterattack or they fumble, you gain a Free Dice in your counterattack. If you have not already attacked in this round then your counterattack is still considered to be at Onset range.

Special: Can be used in conjunction with the Counterstroke and Steal Initiative feats. The Free Dice effects stack.

Rollout

Prerequisites: Mobility

You can recover from Prone status more quickly than normal.

Benefit: You can recover from Prone status as a move-equivalent action, drawing no Attack of Opportunity. Recovering from prone does require using up one Martial Pool die.

Sidestep

Step aside as your opponent attacks, avoiding engagement.

Prerequisites: Speed 20', Dodge.

Benefit: Evade by moving aside instead of making an Attack of Opportunity. You have the option of expending one die from your Martial Pool and taking a five-foot step instead of making an Attack of Opportunity. This feat can be used to move multiple 5' steps. In addition, sidestep grants a Free Dice for any Grapple check for purposes of avoiding Grapple only. If evading a Grapple attempt, the Sidestep Feat can be used multiple times against the same opponent.

Each Sidestep requires spending one die from your MP. If your MP is empty, you may not Sidestep.

Situational Awareness

You are not distracted by the chaos of battle.

Prerequisites: Combat Reflexes or Charisma 12

You may defend against multiple attackers.

Benefit: Gain a Free Dice for Active Defense or Reflex Saves only when attacked by two or more opponents in the same round. Situational Awareness kicks in with the second attack but can be used in any subsequent attack in the round, including by missile weapons, spells, magic items or magical effects. It can be used only once per round.

Shield Fighting

Prerequisites: Shield proficiency, Weapon Focus: shield

Benefit: The Defense Bonus of the shield can be combined with the Weapon Defense Bonus of any S to M sized weapon (including axes, maces, and so on), for a maximum combined Defense Bonus of +8.

Shield Grab

Grab the opponent's shield and tear it out of their hand or twist it and the attached arm. Your opponent loses their shield bonus for the rest of the fight.

Prerequisites: Shield Fighting M. Feat

Benefit: Make a grapple attempt (this draws an Attack of Opportunity if not already in Grapple). For center-grip shields a

success indicates their shield is twisted out of their hand. For strapped shields a success indicates that they will be thrown and must make a contested reflex save against your grapple roll or be prone.

Shield Slap

Prerequisites: Shield Smash M. Feat

In a fight where both you and your opponent have a shield, you may attempt to strike their shield with your own in an attempt to get it out of the way. This is the Shiltschlach from the famous I.33 manuscript.

Benefit: Attack their shield with no weapon bonus. If you hit, your opponents Defense (Active or Passive) does not benefit from their shield Defense Bonus for the remainder of the round as you have pushed it aside with yours. On a critical hit (a natural 20) you have either knocked the shield out of their hand (if it is a center-grip shield), or knocked it so far out of the way that it is useless for the next round as well.

Shield Smash

Prerequisite: Shield proficiency, Shield Fighting M. Feat

Strike your enemy with the boss or edge of your shield. On any melee round in which you are in Grapple range with an opponent but not currently pinned or grappled, you may attempt to strike your opponent with your shield as if it were a club as a move equivalent action.

Benefit: Attack with the shield at +2 To Hit in Grapple range only. Bash damage is 1 for wicker or leather shields, 1-4 for wooden shields, 1-6 for iron or bronze shields. Shields with a spike can also attack for 1-6 Pierce damage with a D6 Pierce critical.

Shield Wrench

Prerequisites: Shield proficiency, Shield Fighting M. Feat

Benefit: This was a technique often employed by the Vikings. Catch your opponent's cutting or thrusting weapon in your shield, and then wrench it out of their hands by twisting the shield. Designate a single attacker using a thrusting or chopping melee weapon. If your opponent attempts to strike your shield but fails to destroy it, if you enter a Bind (tie roll), or if you roll a natural 20 in defense, then you may immediately make a contested strength check with a Free Dice. If you win the strength check then they are disarmed.

Slip-thrust

A special thrusting attack, similar to the Lunge, but used with two-handed hafted thrusting weapons (only) which are not normally reach weapons, including most spears, staves and pole-arms. This technique allows the wielder to attack targets normally out of range, and to concentrate power and energy while attacking with remarkable speed. Functionally, the wielder pushes the weapon forward with one hand while letting it slip through the other.

Prerequisites: Weapon Specialization with the weapon in question.

Benefits:

1) This technique allows the weapon to function as if it were a reach weapon in the attack, Attack any target within 10' (i.e. outside of normal range), instead of the normal 5'.

2) Gain a free dice in your attack once per round against any target at onset range.

Special: Once gained, this technique can be applied to any applicable weapon for which the user has the Weapon Specialization Feat.

Restrictions: Attack must be made from Onset range. Slip-thrust requires at least 2 dice be used from the Martial Pool. This technique can only be used by two-handed thrusting hafted weapons which are not normally reach weapons. A slip-thrust cannot be used in an Attack of Opportunity.

Steal Initiative

Take the momentum in a fight.

Prerequisites: Combat Reflexes, Dodge, Dexterity 13+

Benefits: At the beginning of the round designate a Dodge target. If you generate a counterattack against this opponent, or you enter a Bind (tie roll) or they fumble (they roll a natural 1) you may immediately swap initiative values with your attacker. All subsequent attacks by this enemy in this round and hereafter take place at your former initiative turn. So if they rolled a 16 and you rolled a 6, you are now considered to have rolled a 16 initiative and they a 6. Can be used in conjunction with **Counterstroke** or **Miesterhau Counterstroke**, but it is only triggered by a 'natural' counterattack (i.e. generated by your 20 or their 1 die-roll).

Übergriffen

Prerequisites: Combat Reflexes, Dodge

Called "Übergriffen" (overgrabbing) by Meyer and taking or stealing the sword by Tallhoffer, this is a technique for seizing or controlling an enemies' weapon with your off -hand while striking with the other or closing to Grapple. Designate a Dodge target at the beginning of the round.

Benefit: If you enter a Bind (tie roll) or generate a counterattack against this opponent you may try to seize their weapon with your free hand (if you have one). To do this make a Grapple check (Attack of Opportunity does apply). A success means you have seized hold of your opponent's weapon. If you do successfully seize your opponents weapon then it is considered immobilized for the rest of the round. You may either go to Grapple with it to attempt a disarm or make a single attack with your free (armed) hand. In either case they may not make an Attack of Opportunity with the seized weapon nor apply its Defensive value to their Defense. In the latter case you are considered to have released their weapon and are at Melee range as soon as you initiate the attack. Übergriffen can also be done against animals and monsters. It is possible to seize an animals throat or paw to prevent their biting or clawing for

example. Whether this can be done on a specific animal is entirely at the DM's discretion.

Special: If you roll a natural 1 in the contested Grapple check you have been injured by the weapon if it is capable of causing Slash or Pierce damage. Roll damage normally.

Unflinching

Prerequisites: Inscrutable Countenance or Iron Will or Wisdom 13+.

Due to your hardened nature and combat experience you are unsusceptible to feints, bluffing, or intimidation.

Benefit: Gain a Free Dice on any Sense Motive rolls vs. Bluff or Intimidate attempts and when making skill checks versus

all Feint attempts. Gain a Free Dice on all Saving Throws vs. any Fear effect, magical or mundane. Stacks with Inscrutable Countenance and the various counterattacking feats.

Volley Firing

You are trained to fire missile weapons at area targets.

Prerequisites: Formation Fighting

Benefit: Gain +4 To Hit when firing missile weapons in unison in a group containing at least 4 other marksmen. Targets must be at a distance of 2 or more range-categories away. Only half the number of missiles fired get to attack. The others are assumed to hit the ground harmlessly near the target area.





Viktor Mikhailovich Vasnetsov "The fight of the Scythians and the Slavs" - 1888

"...At that moment Grettir returned, and taking his halberd in both hands he thrust it right through Thorir's body just as he was about to descend the steps. The blade was very long and broad.

Ogmund the Bad was just behind pushing him on, so that the spear passed right up to the hook, came out at his back between the shoulderblades and entered the breast of Ogmund. They both fell dead, pierced by the spear. Then all the others dashed down as they reached the steps. Grettir tackled them each in turn, now thrusting with the spear, now hewing with the sword, while they defended themselves with logs lying on the ground or with anything else which they could get. It was a terrible trial of a man's prowess to deal with men of their strength, even unarmed.

Grettir slew two of the Halogaland men there in the enclosure. Four of the serving-men then came up. They had not been able to agree upon which arms each should take, but they came out to the attack directly the berserks were running away; when these turned against them they fell back on the house. Six of the ruffians fell, all slain by Grettir's own hand; the other six then fled towards the landing place and took refuge in the boat-house, where they defended themselves with oars. Grettir received a severe blow from one of them and narrowly escaped a serious hurt.

The serving-men all went home and told great stories of their own exploits. The lady wanted to know what had become of Grettir, but they could not tell her. Grettir slew two men in the boat-house, but the other four got away, two in one direction, two in another. He pursued those who were nearest to him. The night was very dark. They ran to Vindheim, the place spoken of before, and took refuge in a barn, where they fought for a long time until at

last Grettir killed them. By this time he was terribly stiff and exhausted. The night was far spent; it was very cold and there were driving snow-storms. He felt little inclination to go after the two who yet remained, so he went back home..."

The Saga of Grettir the Strong (Icelandic Saga, 12th Century).

But when he was on the way back again, out came Bersi and Halldor to meet him. Bersi had a halberd in one hand and a staff in the other, and Halldor had Whitting. As soon as Vali saw them he turned and hewed at Bersi. Halldor came at his back and fleshed Whitting in his hough-sinews. Thereupon he turned sharply and fell upon Halldor. Then Bersi set the halberd-point betwixt his shoulders. That was his death-wound.

Then they set his shield at his feet and his sword at his head, and spread his cloak over him; and after that got on horseback and rode to five homesteads to make known the deed they had done and then rode home. Men went and buried Vali, and the place where he fell has ever since been called Vali's fall. Halldor was twelve winters old when these doings came to pass.

-Kormak's Saga (Icelandic Saga, 12th Century).

We swung our sword;
that was ever so long ago
when we walked in Gautland
to the murder of the dig-wulf.
Then we received Þóra;
since then
(at that battle when I killed the heather-fish)
people called me Furry-pants.
I stabbed the spear
into the loop of the earth

-Ragnar Lodbrocks death-poem, **Lay of Kraki**

“...Fencing is based on two prerequisite parts, namely first on the Strikes which you initially put against your opponent, with the other being displacement, which is how you judge and work off of your opponent’s Strikes, and you do not do this weakly. How you accomplish the Strikes and the elements of striving has already been sufficiently clarified, because displacing, or how one properly meets every opposing strike with your weapon and therewith put them away at need so as not to have your body injured, cannot be learned without first learning the Strikes.

Because you have now learned the Strikes you can approach the subject of how you displace those Strikes, and come to learn and understand these just as the Strikes have now been heeded and cannot be dismissed, and will be solidified from noting and treating the basics with special care. Be first aware that the parries are twofold, the first is without any particular advantage and is resorted to only for blocking parries from which you cannot do more with your weapon in that you oppose

your opponent’s strike to avoid being damaged, but then seek not to damage him, but only to withdraw as you wish without being injured by him.’

The second Art of displacing is when you parry and injure your opponent with one strike, which the ancients undertook with special praise, from which these spoken words grew: a proper fencer parries not, as his opponent strikes so he too strikes, as his opponent steps so he too steps, as his opponent stabs so he too stabs.’

Place yourself into the Wrathful Guard, if you are then struck from above, then step with the right foot forward against your opponent’s side, and strike with a traverse to that side, short cut a high traverse to close in with it, thus that you take his strike onto the strong of your blade, catching it near your quillons and, with the farther end of your sword, hit his left ear, thus have you thus closely displaced and hit with a second...”

Joachim Meyer’s Kunst des Fechtens, 1570 version (Germany 1570).



Advanced Martial Feats

The following feats all have the additional prerequisite of a BAB of 6 or better (if you are playing using E6 rules, change this to a BAB of 4 or better).

Advanced Cooperative Fighting

Prerequisites: Cooperative Fighting M. Feat, BAB of 6 or better

Benefit: When attacking any single opponent that the fighter's partner has already attacked in the same round the attacker receives a Free Dice for their first attack on the same opponent. This Martial feat is only effective if two or more participating attackers have the feat.

Advanced Half-sword Fighting

Use the full repertoire of half-swording techniques, including special defensive guards and locks within the grapple.

Prerequisites: Half-Sword Fighting M. Feat, BAB of 6 or better

Benefits:

1) You gain a Free Dice when halfswording which can be used once per round in any Grapple check, or any attack you make with your weapon while in grapple range.

2) Morstshlag "Murder Stroke". While in Melee or Onset range you have the ability to make one strike with your sword's quillions as with the beak on a war-pick. The attack is at +2 AP for D6 Damage, Pierce Critical.

Rolling a natural 1 while using half-sword techniques without heavy or mail-lined gauntlets causes you to suffer an injury (D4 Damage) and you must roll a Reflex Save DC (15) or drop your weapon

Advanced Point Control

Prerequisites: Dodge, Point Control M. Feat, BAB of 6 or better

Benefit: Designate a Dodge opponent at the beginning of the round. If you are in Onset range with the longer weapon (based on weapon reach bonus), and your opponent attempts to make any attack in Melee range, you may make a special Attack of Opportunity against their first attack only.

Advanced Poll-axe Fighting

Prerequisites: Poll-Axe Fighting M. Feat, BAB of 6 or better

Benefit: Gain a Free Dice for a single extra attack once per round when attacking with a pole arm at any range. To qualify the weapon must have a beak or spike (1-6 piercing damage, +2 AP) weapon haft (1-4 bludgeon damage) counterweight* (1-6 bludgeon Damage) or butt-spike (1-6 piercing damage, +1 AP) depending on what extra attacks are available with the given weapon. The normal speed

penalty applies (as modified by the Poll-axe Fighting feat where applicable).

* if counterweight exists on weapon type, such as with a counterbalanced spear

Kampfringen

This is the martial art of wrestling, an ancient tradition going back aeons. These martial arts were taught in monasteries and warrior fraternities in many cultures. This feat is also the prerequisite to the extremely powerful Grapple and Pin feat.

Prerequisites: Ringen M. Feat, 2 ranks in Tumble Skill, BAB of 6 or better.

Benefits:

1) Ability to cause 1d4 damage from open hand (or feet).

2) Throw Aggressor. When an opponent is attempting to enter into a grapple, a defender with this feat may make a Tumble skill check in opposition to the attacker's Grapple skill check. A success means the attacker is thrown: they must now make a Reflex Save against the modified Tumble die roll or take 1d6 damage. Whether they fail or pass they are now prone.

They are considered to be 5' away in the same direction they had been moving (depending on surroundings) and not in contact with the defender.

3) Body Shield. When an individual is in Grapple, and is attacked by a third party, they may make a contested Tumble check against their opponent's Grapple skill. If successful they have turned their opponent's body to face the attack and their opponent has been hit instead of them.

Bind and Batter

Make a special attack or counterattack with a punch or a kick.

Prerequisites: Ringen OR Weapon Focus: Unarmed feat, BAB 6 or better.

Benefits:

1) If you are in melee range, just made your final attack on an opponent (i.e. used the last die in your Martial Pool), and your opponent actively defends and blocks your attack, you may gain a 'Free' additional attack die with your fist or foot, for normal open-hand damage, (+2 damage if in full armor due to gauntlets).

2) When you have expended the last die of your MP in active defense, but scored a counterattack (natural 20), you may gain a Free Dice with your fist or foot, per above.

Can be used in conjunction with shield smash for an attack with the shield instead of the fist, can be used in conjunction with the Morstrosse feat or the Dance De La Rue MF..

Special: With Dance De La Rue this MF may be initiated at onset range (with a kick).

Durchlaufen

Durchlaufen, a German term meaning “passing through” or “running through” is a basic principle which was frequently cited in the German 14th-16th century Fechtbuchs. It simply means to pass beside or through your enemies’ attack, and can be an excellent way to cope with an aggressive closing opponent by using timing to bypass their defense as you counterattack. A similar principle was discussed by Musashi in the Five Rings, related to the concept of “Suki” or a gap in the opponent’s concentration.

Prerequisites: Dodge, Sidestep M. Feat, BAB of 6 or better. At least two dice remaining in your Martial Pool.

Benefit: This is a means to attack while passing through grapple range.

1) After a successful Active Defense against any attack from your designated Dodge target while in melee or grapple range, you may immediately change range (including entering or exiting grapple range without provoking any Attack of Opportunity). You may change one range category (from onset to melee to grapple etc.) for every MP you expend in your Active Defense. So for example if you spent one MP on Defense you could move from melee to grapple without any further cost. If you spent two MP you could move from melee to grapple to melee again (or grapple to melee to onset)

2) Attack with your weapon Speed bonus while at grapple range even if your weapon is sized M or L. This can be very deadly since at grapple range most opponents have no weapon defensive value (unless they have half-swording or half-staff M. Feat) and may not be able to attack with their own weapons.

Florentine Defense

Two-weapon fighting style which allows both weapons to be used defensively, together. Note: The use of the term ‘Florentine’ to describe this type of fighting is not an historical term, it was invented by the SCA in modern times.

Prerequisites: Main Gauche M. Feat, BAB of 6 or better.

Benefit: You may combine the Defense Bonus of both weapons being used for a combined maximum of +8 to Defense while still attacking with both weapons if you wish to do so. This stacks with Combat Expertise.

Gioco Stretto

These are armlocks and disarms, part of the system of abrazare or ‘grips’. This concept is from the Italian Master Fiore though it’s also all over the German manuals and was part of Japanese fencing as well. The Germans called it Schwertnemen (“Sword taking”).

Prerequisites: Dodge, Ubergriffen or Kampfringen, must be at Grapple or Melee range.

Benefits: Designate a Dodge target at the beginning of the round.

1) Any time you generate a counterattack (natural 20 on Active Defense) or a bind (a tie in an Active Defense roll) against this target while at Grapple or Melee range, you may make a contested Grapple check against your opponent, if you succeed they are disarmed and you have temporarily immobilized their weapon hand for the rest of the round. If you score a Critical you have taken their weapon while retaining your own.

2) If your opponent has run out of MP and you have MP remaining at the end of the round, you may attempt the Grapple check per above.

Special: If you have the Gioco Stretto MF and are attacked with an Ubergriffen or Gioco Stretto you can attempt to take your opponents weapon as they are attempting to take yours, with a contested Grapple Check. If you both succeed you have both disarmed the other. If you both get a Critical hit, you have taken each others weapons.

Graceful Rush

The Graceful Rush is the art of slipping in past an opponent’s defenses and reaching Grapple range without being effectively counterattacked. Also known as ‘shooting’ in some martial arts circles. Many animals do this by instinct.

Prerequisites: Dodge, Base move 30’ or better, Weapon Focus: Grapple or Improved Grapple, BAB of 6 or better.

Benefit: One opponent is designated as a Dodge opponent. Gain a Free Dice for Active Defense against any Attack of Opportunity from this opponent only when you charge or attempt to close for grapple. This works with any bonus from Spring Attack. Graceful Rush can be used in conjunction with Nachreisen.

Grapple and Pin

These extremely powerful wrestling techniques allow the dominant wrestler to cripple an opponent and/or render them unconscious by using joint locks and holds which cut off the circulation of the blood.

Prerequisite: Kampfringen M. Feat, BAB of 6 or better.

Benefits:

1) Pin to Submission. Once you have had an opponent in a pin for at least 2 rounds you may make a new contested Grapple check. A success by a margin of four points or more means that you are inflicting excruciating pain and may attempt to force a surrender or some other concession (at the DM’s discretion). To attempt this your opponent must make a Will Save with the DC equal to your modified Grapple roll. Failure means at least temporary submission from pain followed by unconsciousness in 1-4 more rounds (for creatures susceptible to falling unconscious). Once unconscious any creature with a susceptible physiology must make a Fort Save vs continued Grapple rolls or suffocate.

2) Pin to Maim. Once you have had an opponent in a pin for at least 3 rounds, you may make a new contested grapple check. A success by a margin of four points or more means that you are causing permanent damage to joints, bones, or muscles and may attempt to cause permanent damage. To attempt this

your opponent must make a Reflex Save with the DC equal to your modified Grapple roll. Failure triggers a Will save for submission from pain (per above) followed the next round by the permanent loss of one point of Strength, Dexterity, or Constitution (determine randomly).

Advanced Distance Fighting

By backing away to maintain distance you enhance your defense.

Prerequisites: Distance Fighting, Mobility

Benefits: Free dice for any active Defense while at Onset range.

Special: you must make a five foot step either sideways, diagonally, or backward relative to your opponent each time you use this MF. You can use it over and over as long as you have space to move. The Five foot step does not cost any extra MP but you must have room to move in order to execute it. This MF does not work unless you are at Onset range. If you are at Melee range for example you will have to expend an MP to move to Onset before making your Active Defense roll.

Missile Catching

Prerequisites: Missile Parrying M. Feat, at least one free hand, BAB of 6 or better

Benefit: Catch javelins and other thrown weapons with your hand. Roll a contested Dexterity check against the To Hit roll of any one opponent attacking with a thrown missile weapon. If the Dexterity check roll is equal to or higher than the opponent's To Hit roll then the weapon has been caught. Can only be used against one thrown missile attack per round. Does not apply against crossbows, slings, or bows.

Meisterhau Countercut

Prerequisites: Meisterhau MF, Counterstroke MF with two-handed cutting weapon. At least 2 dice remaining in your Martial Pool.

Benefit: A Meisterhau (master-cut) can also be used as a counter attack. In this case, as with the Counterstroke feat, you must wait for the designated Dodge target to attack you. With the Meisterhau Countercut your counter is simultaneous, your defense is also your attack roll, and you attack immediately (whether they have MP remaining or not). When using this feat you must commit at least two dice to your attack. As with the Mastercut, your modified die roll is used as your Active Defense against the attack, with both attacks taking place concurrently. Whoever has the higher roll has actually hit. If the modified die rolls are equal, both attacker and defender are hit simultaneously.

Special: A Meisterhau Countercut can be defeated by a successful feint. If a feint is successful and you no longer have enough dice in your Martial Pool to execute the attack, the Countercut is used up and cannot be executed this round. This MF replaces the Counterstroke feat. If used in

conjunction with Steal Initiative feat, a successful hit in your Countercut attack allows you to Steal Initiative.

Morstrosse

Murder Strikes. Blows with the hand or feet used to stun or cripple an opponent, often deployed before a grapple. These strikes are based on a knowledge of human anatomy

Prerequisite: Improved Unarmed Strike, BAB of 6 or better.

Benefit: Cause D6 Damage (or gain primary attack B for KO threat) when making a special unarmed strike with at least two MP.

Nachreisen

From a German term used in the Fechtbuchs meaning "following after".

Prerequisite: Dodge, BAB of 6 or better, base movement of 30'.

Benefit: First one designates a Dodge opponent. You must defend against their next attack by dodging (voiding) only, without any Defense bonus applied from shields or weapons (that is, use your Base Defense value). If the designated opponent misses in their attack you can make an immediate counter attack and receive a Free Dice for this attack only. If you score a natural 20 in your defense you gain 2 Free Dice. A risky gambit which can be very deadly. Useful for very agile fighters, well armored fighters, and those wielding weapons with poor defensive characteristics. Nachreisen can be also used to initiate a Grapple, but does not bypass the defenders Attack of Opportunity.

Sprechfenster

The "speaking window". This is a technique by which you can intentionally seek the bind.

Prerequisite: Fahlen MF

Benefit: You may expend one MP to make an attack, which, if successful, automatically results in a Bind, which can trigger various other feats including but not limited to **Winden**, **Mutieren**, or **Durchlaufen**.

Winden (Winding)

Prerequisite: Mutieren M. Feat, BAB 6 or better

Benefits:

1) Like the Zucken MF, Winding can effectively increase the speed of your longsword dramatically. If you have Winding MF your speed for any Hand and a Half or Two Handed sword capable of causing piercing damage increases by two points. This does stack with the bonus for Zucken up to a combined total of Speed 5, and no higher.

2) If you enter a Bind while attacking or defending, or are attacked with a **Meisterhau**, **Meisterhau-Countercut**, **Durchwechseln**, or **Mutieren** attack, and you have MP remaining you may immediately counter your opponents attack (even if it is itself a counter) by making a **Winden** attack. If you hit, it means they also missed, if you tie you both hit each other

simultaneously. When you announce a **Winden** attack your opponent can roll **Active Defense** if they have MP remaining or attempt another **Miesterhau Countercut** or **Mutieren** etc. if they still have MP remaining.

So for example, if your opponent tries to cut you, rolls a 10, you defeat him rolling an 11 Active Defense. He attempts a **Durchwechseln** and rolls a 14 which qualifies as a hit against your original 11. You still have 2 MP remaining however so you throw in two die as a counter, rolling a 12 and a 16. If he has MP he can try to beat your 16, if he doesn't he has been hit and must take damage.

Zucken ('Twitch Cut')

Prerequisites: False-edge Cutting M.Feat, a two handed cutting weapon, BAB of 6 or better.

This is a method known as zucken in German. It was taught in 14th -16th century Long Sword Fencing manuals. The fencer follows up a long-edge cutting attack immediately with a second false-edge cut (or vice versa), normally at the opposite side of the body. For this reason the technique only works with double-edged swords, or swords with at least a partial false-edge. This technique requires some training and practice to master, but properly executed it allows extremely rapid follow-up attacks. For example, a cut to the right side of the head might be instantly followed with a cut to the left side of the head. A cut to the top of the head might be followed with a cut to the groin or lower legs, or a cut to the left shoulder might be followed with a cut to the right knee. Very experienced fighters can execute rapid combinations of several true-edge / false edge cuts.

Benefit: Gain a +3 Speed Bonus for cutting (Chop or Slash) attacks only with double-edged swords. Gain a +2 Speed Bonus for partial false-edge weapons. Effectively there is no bonus for the initial attack but quite a bit on all subsequent attacks. This feat does not confer extra attacks. Effects replace and do not stack with False-edge Cutting.

The Sucker Punch (Special)

The Sucker Punch feat is essentially a Bluff / Attack with gains the attacker a Free Dice. This is a feat which Thieves (or "Rogues" to the weak kneed) and streetwise Fighters, Bards, Monks and Rangers use for initiating a surprise attack when still standing face to face with an opponent. A player possessing this feat may initiate a Sucker Punch attack by first moving to within 5', and making a contested Bluff Skill Check, against the defenders Wisdom Bonus.

It is considerably harder to successfully fool someone into relaxing their guard for a sucker punch if carrying a weapon in hand, therefore if the attacker is armed the defender gets

a +4 to their die roll. If the attacker places a weapon in easy reach first, the defender gets a +2 to their die roll. If however a weapon happens to be in easy reach but was not recently placed there by the attacker there is no die roll bonus. It is possible therefore to have an accomplice place a weapon nearby.

If the attacker loses the original die roll then the defender senses something suspicious and may act by either moving away, taking some other action, or attacking. The defender may make a Sense-Motive roll to determine that the attacker intended them harm. If the defender chooses to attack at that point initiative is rolled normally. If the attacker wins the contested die roll then the Defender must make a contested reflex saving throw against the Attacker's Reflex saving throw. If the Defender wins the roll then normal combat

begins and no surprise has occurred. If the Defender fails the save then the Sucker Punch has been successful and the attacker gains a Free Dice. The Attacker then has several choices, some of which are based on other class features, skills, or feats.

Prerequisite: Dex 13, Wis 10, 2 ranks in Bluff Skill, BAB of 6 or better.

Thief Surprise Attack

A thief may attack unarmed causing his bonus attack damage as nonlethal damage. An experienced thief can often ensure a knockout in this way.

Strike With an Object Or WEAPON

An attacker may use a beer mug, a bottle, a helmet, a rock, a lantern, a frying pan, or any other suitable hard or heavy object at hand to attack the defender. The DM must decide damage but the base Damage range will be from (1d3)-4 (a light tin cup) to (1d6)+1 (a heavy iron bar). A Thief's surprise attack damage bonus would be added to any successful attack. If a weapon was in reach or in hand, the attacker may attack normally. A Thief's surprise attack damage bonus would be added to any successful attack.

Concealed Weapon and Quickdraw

If the attacker concealed a Tiny weapon such as a strait razor or a sap it can be used to attack the defender. A Thief's surprise attack damage bonus would be added to any successful attack (as either nonlethal or normal damage depending on the weapon used). An attacker with the Quickdraw feat may draw their weapon normally and attack. A Thief's surprise attack damage bonus would be added to any successful attack.

Trip Attack and Grapple

After a successful Sucker Punch the attacker can attempt a trip at +4 on the die roll. A trip is the Attacker's strength opposed by the defender's Strength or Dexterity mod roll (whichever is better). Once Prone (tripped) the victim gets -4 To Hit and may be attacked at +4 To Hit. After a successful Sucker Punch the attacker can attempt a Grapple at +4 on the die roll.



'Thorstein the Black and Svein, son of Alf o' Dales, stood before the door. The rest of the company were tearing the roof off the dairy. Hunbogi the Strong and the sons of Armod took one end of the beam, Thorgils, Lambi, and Gudrun's sons the other end. They now pull hard at the beam till it broke asunder in the middle; just at this Hardbein thrust a halberd out through where the door was broken, and the thrust struck the steel cap of Thorstein the Black and stuck in his forehead, and that was a very great wound. Then Thorstein said, as was true, that there were men before them. Next Helgi leapt so boldly out of the door so that those nearest shrunk aback. Thorgils was standing near, and struck after him with a sword, and caught him on the shoulder and made a great wound. Helgi turned to meet him, and had a wood-axe in his hand, and said, "Still the old one will dare to look at and face weapons," and therewith he flung the axe at Thorgils, and the axe struck his foot, and

a great wound that was. And when Bolli saw this he leapt forward at Helgi with Footbiter in his hand, and thrust Helgi through with it, and that was his deathblow. Helgi's followers leapt out of the dairy forthwith, and Hardbein with them. Thorleik Bollison turned against Eyjolf, who was a strong man. Thorleik struck him with his sword, and it caught him on the leg above the knee and cut off his leg, and he fell to earth dead. Hunbogi the Strong went to meet Thorgils, and dealt a blow at him with an axe, and it struck the back of him, and cut him asunder in the middle. Thord Cat was standing near where Hardbein leapt out, and was going to set upon him straightway, but Bolli rushed forward when he saw it, and bade no harm be done to Hardbein. "No man shall do a dastard's work here, and Hardbein shall have life and limbs spared."

-Laxdela Saga



The shield maiden Hervor dying after battle with the Huns, Peter Nicolai Arbo, 1852

...Meanwhile, the Jutes and Skanians were kindled with an unquenchable fire of sedition; they disallowed the title of Ragnar, and gave a certain Harald the sovereign power. Ragnar sent envoys to Norway, and besought friendly assistance against these men; and LadgerPa, whose early love still flowed deep and steadfast, hastily sailed off with her husband and her son. She brought herself to offer a hundred and twenty ships to the man who had once put her away. And he, thinking himself destitute of all resources, took to borrowing help from folk of every age, crowded the strong and the feeble all together, and was not ashamed to insert some old men and boys among the wedges of the strong. So he first tried to crush the power of the Skanians in the field which in Latin is called Laneus (Woolly); here he had a hard fight with the rebels. Here, too, Iwar, who was in his seventh year, fought splendidly, and showed the strength of a man in the body of a boy. But Siward, while attacking the enemy face to face, fell forward upon the ground wounded. When his men saw this, it made them look round most anxiously for means of flight; and this brought low not only Siward, but almost the whole army on the side of Ragnar. But Ragnar by his manly deeds and exhortations comforted their amazed and sunken spirits, and, just when they were ready to be conquered, spurred them on to try and conquer.

LadgerPa, who had a matchless spirit though a delicate frame, covered by her splendid bravery the inclination of the soldiers to waver. For she made a sally about, and flew round to the rear of the enemy, taking them unawares, and thus turned the panic of her friends into the camp of the enemy. At last the lines of Harald became slack, and Harald himself was routed with a great slaughter of his men. LadgerPa, when she had

gone home after the battle, murdered her husband.... in the night with a spear-head, which she had hid in her gown. Then she usurped the whole of his name and sovereignty; for this most presumptuous dame thought it pleasanter to rule without her husband than to share the throne with him...

-from Saxo Grammaticus 'Gesta Danorum' aka 'History of the Danes'. 9th Century

There was a hill between them and Grettir, who had turned back along the footpath. Now he had no others to reckon with in making the attack. He drew his sword Jokulsnaut and tied a loop round the handle which he passed over his wrist, because he thought that he could carry out his plans better if his hand were free. He went along the path. When the bear saw a man coming, he charged savagely, and struck at him with the paw that was on the side away from the precipice. Grettir aimed a blow at him with his sword and cut off his paw just above the claws. Then the creature tried to strike him with his sound paw, but to do so he had to drop on the stump, which was shorter than he expected, and over he fell into Grettir's embraces. Grettir seized the beast by the ears and held him off so that he could not bite. He always said that he considered this holding back the bear the greatest feat of strength that he ever performed. The beast struggled violently; the space was very narrow, and they both fell over the precipice. The bear being the heavier came down first on the beach; Grettir fell on the top of him, and the bear was badly mauled on the side that was down. Grettir got his sword, ran it into the heart of the bear and killed him. Then he went home, after fetching his cloak which was torn to pieces. He also took with him the bit of the paw which he had cut off.

-from the saga of Grettir the Strong 12th Century

MARTIAL FEATS FROM THE FMA

Filipino Martial Arts MF from Arnis, Kali, and Escrima. Developed by Thom Jason.. These should all be considered optional.

Defanging The Snake

Prerequisites: Weapon Focus with the weapon in question,

Restrictions: Requires at least two dice remaining in Martial Pool. You are aiming at the hands or wrists, so effectively this means you must make a bypass attack if they are wearing any armor. This attack must be made at Melee range, if you want to make a 'Defanging the Snake' attack and are at Onset range, this must be part of a counterattack or your second attack in the round.

Benefits: You make a targeted multi-die attack which may cause your opponent to drop their weapon. Damage from a Defanging the Snake attack is stepped down one die, so D10 becomes D8, D8 becomes D6 etc. If you cause any damage however, your target must make a Fort save vs. your To Hit die roll or drop their weapon.

If you score a critical hit during an attempt at Defanging the Snake, in addition to normal critical hit damage you cause 1d4 permanent Dexterity damage, and they automatically drop their weapon. Defanging the Snake may be used in conjunction with the Counterstroke MF or with automatically generated counterattacks.

Gutting (Scissors) (Advanced Martial Feat)

Prerequisites: BaB 6 or better, Two-weapon Fighting feat, Defanging the Snake MF, Miesterhau MF or Miesterhau Countercut MF, weapon speed 3 or better and weapon capable of Slashing or Chopping primary attack. Attack must be made at melee range.

Benefits: May attack with each of two weapons simultaneously in an attempt to do a Meisterhau against an opponent's attacking limb. If the attack hits, both weapons do damage to the limb. This may sever the limb if using at least one cutting weapon or disable it if using blunt weapons or empty hands.

You must attempt two- simultaneous Meisterhaus, so this uses up an entire four-die pool. The attack has to be done at Melee range and must be a bypass attempt if they are wearing any armor or have natural armor.

If you hit with both weapons, it is counted as an automatic critical hit and your opponent is automatically disarmed. If your opponent is reduced to zero or fewer hit points, you have permanently severed their hand or equivalent limb. If you scored two natural 20's (with both Meisterhau) you sever their hand automatically regardless of their remaining hit points.

Hand Checking

Prerequisite: Weapon Focus: Unarmed. This feat only works at Melee Range.

Benefits: If you are not using a weapon in your offhand you may use it to check your opponents weapon when in close range, giving you a special 'Free Dice' to any Active Defense rolls any time your opponent attempts a counterattack or counterstroke feat. If you roll a 1 during this Active Defense roll you were automatically hit (in your off hand) regardless of any other defense die you rolled. If you have the MF Limb Destruction or Mortrosse you may make an immediate attack of opportunity with your off-hand instead of an Active Defense roll.

Limb Destruction (Unarmed)

Prerequisite: Morstrosse, Weapon Focus: Unarmed, ability to cause at least 1d4 unarmed damage.

Benefits: You are proficient in striking your opponents limbs to disable them. You attempt to strike your opponents limbs (if they are wearing armor this requires a bypass attempt). Any successful unarmed attack which causes maximum damage (the highest possible on your die roll) forces your opponent to make a Fortitude save vs. your modified attack dice or lose 1 die from their dice pool (cumulative) for the rest of the fight. May be used in conjunction with the counterstroke feat.

Two Weapon Disarm

May use an offhand weapon in the second hand in conjunction with your primary weapon to disarm an opponent without drawing an attack of opportunity.

Prerequisites: Two-weapon fighting feat. Florentine Defense martial feat.

Restrictions: requires at least two dice remaining in Martial Pool, you must be at Melee Range to attempt this.

Benefits: If you have two weapons and your opponent only has one, you may attempt a Two-weapon disarm. Attack with your first weapon, if your opponent successfully makes an Active Defense roll, you may attempt to disarm with your offhand weapon without drawing any Attack of Opportunity.

Scabbard Break

Prerequisites: Special scabbard

Benefits: Your weapon is kept in a loosely tied wooden scabbard that is designed to break open and free the blade the first time you strike the opponent. This is an alternative to the Nukitsuke Feat

If you hit with the scabbard it causes 1d4 bludgeoning damage and then the weapon is considered drawn.



The 13th Century Crusader Fortress, Krak Des Chevaliers, built by the Knights Hospitaller, Homs Syria, today



Appendices

The previous sections cover the complete Codex Martialis combat rules system. From here on out, the Appendixes which follow contain information and resources designed to ease integration of your game into Standard Third Edition OGL, and also as the basis for integrating with a variety of other RPG systems. The following Appendix sections contain information primarily oriented toward integrating the Codex with OGL systems.

Appendix I: Magic Rules

These rules will be expanded further in another supplement, they are not part of the combat system per se but may be helpful to make this combat system work, so they have been included strictly as an option. Feel free to take any elements of the Magic rules outlined below to adapt to your own campaign, or ignore them.

Rules for Certain Spells in Combat

Shield provides +4 bonus to both Active and Passive Defense.

Mage Armor acts as Damage Reduction.

Barkskin acts as Damage Reduction.

TrueStrike confers +10 to attack rolls. It can be used in attempts to bypass armor or force critical hits, but remember penalties for forcing criticals and bypassing armor stack.



Ivan Bilibin, Illustration to Alexander Pushkin's *Ruslan and Lyudmila* circa 1898

The Spell Failure Rule

DC for casting spells

10 + 3 x spell level memorized spells

10 + 4 x spell level reading spells out of a scroll or book

10 + 5 x spell level spells over level

This is an optional rule for spell success / failure based on a Spellcraft or Concentration check (depending on DM's preference) for casting each spell. If the skill check is a success, the spell works, if not it fails (or optionally, backfires.) This rule is included here because it can be used in conjunction with the Armor Check penalty for casting spells while in Armor (apply the Armor Check penalty to the Spellcraft or Concentration skill roll).

Level	Memorized Casting DC	Reading Out of Book	Casting Spells Over Level
0	10	10	-
1	13	14	15
2	16	18	20
3	19	22	25
4	22	26	30
5	25	30	35
6	28	34	40
7	31	38	45
8	34	42	50
9	37	46	55

When wearing armor, the Armor-check penalty applies to the casting DC of all spells with somatic components.

Memorized Casting DC

This is the DC for casting a spell which has been memorized normally.

Reading out of Book

In the Codex system it is possible to read a spell that was not prepared directly out of a book, this just has a higher chance of failure.

Casting Spells Over Level

This is the DC for casting a spell which has been memorized but is over the normal casting level allowed for this Character or NPC. In the Codex system is also possible to cast a spell over the normal casting level allowed for this Character or NPC, but you must make two Spellcheck rolls, one when memorizing (which the GM keeps secret) and one when casting. If either roll is a failure the spell fails and may backfire. Not recommended for Demon Summoning.