

# INTRODUCTION



## TABLE OF CONTENTS

[Core Rules and Code of Conduct](#)

[Combat Rules](#)

[About Us: The Leadership Team & FAQ](#)

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# Introduction

Vassal is a Live Action Roleplaying Game (LARP) set in a fictitious setting referred to as “the Known World” which strongly resembles Europe and Asia during the late 14th, 15th, and 16th centuries. It is a game of people—be they monarchs, knights, merchants, or peasants—and their lives, hopes, and struggles.

The primary objective of Vassal is to provide immersion using a consistent, historically-inspired aesthetic. The use of a fictional setting allows for wide-ranging storytelling; although events may mirror those that happened in the real world, the game is not beholden to those events and may allow players’ choices to alter the Known World’s history and progression. This constantly growing narrative amongst the players, where decisions have weight and influence the future, is a core element of Vassal’s experience.

Vassal is a consent-based LARP, meaning that while your character may be faced with a number of circumstances and consequences, your character cannot die or be

permanently altered without your consent. As a player, you should feel that you are able to take action without fear of irreparable damage to your character within the game.

## Important Links

**Contact the Leadership Team**     [vassallarp@gmail.com](mailto:vassallarp@gmail.com)

**Character Application**     [Submit Your Character](#)

**Incident Reporting Form**     [Report an Incident](#)

In addition to the online version of this handbook, links are available to download the following as PDF files. The Core Rules and Combat Rules are optimized for e-reader/accessible format (PDF/UA).

**Core Rules**     [Pending Upload 9/8]

**Combat Rules**     [Pending Upload 9/8]

**Lore Book/Kit Guide**      LoreGuidebookv03.26.pdf

**World Map**      Vassal\_World\_072126\_6k.jpg

**Detailed World Atlas**     Coming Soon...

# Accessibility Info

## *Site*

The event site is generally flat and has a mix of paved and gravel-surfaced access roads. All buildings and camp sites can be accessed from these roads via short unpaved trails, although other unpaved trails provide more direct connections between some areas. The main building and tavern are approximately 400 feet apart. Most areas of the site where outdoor activities are located are grassy, dirt-surfaced, or forest-floor, and the condition of these surfaces will depend on the weather. The tavern area is illuminated with lanterns at night. Other outdoor areas are unlit after nightfall.

## *Building Access*

The main building (including the kitchen, bunk rooms, Respite Room, and restrooms/showers) is accessed at-grade and all facilities are on a single floor. Electrical outlets are available to participants in the bunk rooms and the Respite Room. There are two 10-person bunkrooms with double-decker bunks, separated into “masc” and “femme,” and one additional all-gender sleeping room (this room does not contain bunks but may be used for personal cots). Players may select whichever bunk space best fits their gender. The main building has six all-gender, single-user restrooms that each contain a toilet, sink, and shower; two are ADA-compliant. Additional latrines are located adjacent to the tavern and southern decorum camping area.

## *Accommodations*

Vassal welcomes the use of accessibility aids and participants are in no way obligated to disguise or hide items such as eyeglasses, mobility aids, and medical devices. Vassal Larp LLC is committed to providing reasonable access and participation opportunities for members and participants with disabilities, consistent with applicable law and the nature of the event.

Vassal will consider reasonable accommodation requests on an individual basis and, when appropriate and feasible, may make reasonable adjustments to policies, practices, or procedures. Accommodations are subject to the circumstances of the event, the available facilities and resources, and applicable safety considerations.

The event takes place at a natural outdoor site with existing terrain, structures, and facilities that may present accessibility challenges. Participants are encouraged to review the **Site Terrain and Building Access** information provided above when determining whether the site and event are appropriate for their individual needs.

Participants who have accommodation needs are encouraged to contact Vassal staff in advance whenever possible at [vassallarp@gmail.com](mailto:vassallarp@gmail.com). Requests will be considered respectfully and on an individual basis.

# GAME RULES



# GAME RULES

## Rule Zero

The most important rule in Vassal is Rule Zero—what we refer to as “the Spirit of the Game.” Vassal is a collaborative game rather than a competitive game, and no player or faction can “win.” Instead, our primary goal is to create and nurture a fun, safe, and fulfilling experience for all those involved. This means valuing other people's experience just as much as your own and understanding that the larger story is the only “main character” in the game. We expect that all players will participate in a way that upholds that vision. While the Code of Conduct and other rules are intended to provide a clear framework for players, Rule Zero is the underlying principle that governs all that we do. If players engage in activity that is not expressly forbidden but that violates the spirit of Rule Zero, the leadership team reserves the right to prohibit this activity.

## Play to Lift

“Playing to Lift” goes hand in hand with Vassal’s Rule Zero and players may hear this phrase frequently. What does this mean? While everyone wants to enjoy their own scenes, no one roleplays alone, and “playing to lift” is about creating these memorable scenes by helping one another. **When roleplaying, look for opportunities to create an opportunity for the players around you.** Sometimes this means allowing your character to fail or shifting the spotlight to another player. Sometimes this means encouraging another character, believing in their abilities, or even just listening to them. Overall, by “playing to lift,” we recognize that LARP is a shared experience, and that by helping to create an inclusive environment we can become a highlight of someone else’s experience.

**Beyond these two concepts, all players are expected to:**

- **Be respectful** to your fellow players, game staff, and the event site
- **Observe the rules of decorum** while in game space.
- **This means:**
  - **Wear approved kit** at all times
  - **Conceal modern items** other than accessibility aids (such as eyeglasses, mobility aids, or medical devices)
  - **Refrain from out-of-character conversation** except as needed to negotiate gameplay
- **Read, understand, and abide by the following Code of Conduct**

# CODE OF CONDUCT

## CONSENT

Vassal is a **consent-based** LARP. This means that **you** are in control of your character's actions at all times. You cannot be killed, injured, robbed, or restrained without your consent. It also means that you cannot force another player or character to participate in any roleplay scene or scenario. Consent may be obtained through out-of-character (OOC) negotiation or through the use of [hand signals](#) during in-character (IC) gameplay, and may be revoked at any time.

While some actions are never allowed under any circumstances, certain basic aspects of LARP are considered to fall under “assumed consent” (see below). If you want to initiate or engage in roleplay that goes beyond what is covered by “assumed consent,” it is **your responsibility** to obtain that consent from the other players involved. The following sections provide additional information about assumed consent, basic game content warnings, and how to give and obtain consent.

### ASSUMED CONSENT

- Occasional casual or incidental touch of shoulders or upper arms (e.g. congratulations, getting someone’s attention)
- Raised voices/disagreement
- Witnessing simulated violence
- Combat participants may be struck with foam weapons at low impact

### ALWAYS PROHIBITED

- Strikes with weapons outside of [negotiated combat](#) scenarios
- All combat after dark
- Unwanted physical contact
- Unwanted sexual advances (verbal and/or physical)
- Sex acts in public areas (in-game or out-of-game)
- Hate speech (in- or out-of-character)
  - includes racism, transphobia, ableism, sexism, homophobia, or religious extremism

## Core Content Warning

All players must be aware that the game sometimes simulates violence, involving **combat, injury, kidnapping, and death** (note that player death is always voluntary, but some combat scenarios may include defeated players/NPCs briefly roleplaying death). If you choose to attend a Vassal event, you accept that such things will occur within the game, even if you do not participate in them directly. Intense or dramatic

scenes may also include **shouting or strong language**. Players may choose not to engage in these scenes (either in-character or by using [hand signals](#)), but you should expect to witness such things as a bystander from time to time. Players are also always free to opt-out of touch that falls under “assumed consent,” but are responsible for communicating this to those around them. Please note that **alcohol** is permitted in moderation and may be present in-game, but that no player may cause you to consume it against your will.

## Off-Limits Content

- **Rape or other sexual assault** may not be roleplayed, implied, or referenced as an event that happened in the game world
- **Slavery** is not a part of the Vassal game world and may not be roleplayed or referenced
- **In-game religion exists solely for flavor and immersion** and may not be used as a tool or justification for conflict (i.e. there are no “holy wars,” forcible conversion, or religious persecutions)

## Negotiable Content

Many aspects of roleplay occur in the space between the baseline “assumed consent” and prohibited actions. Most of Vassal’s default gameplay is improvised and organic, and consent is obtained on-the-fly through the use of [hand signals](#) and brief out-of-game discussions. However, there are some roleplay activities that should **always** be discussed between the parties involved ahead of time and **may not occur spontaneously** without prior consent. The examples below are not meant to be an exhaustive list, but should give you some ideas about what you need to obtain consent for **before** starting to roleplay it.

- Theft of another character’s in-game personal property
- Sexual content (including propositions, gestures, flirting, or physical contact)
- Rough physical contact such as shoving, grabbing, or restraining another player

- Tampering with another player's food or drink, including roleplaying "poisoning" (for health and safety reasons, you must notify the leadership team as well)
- Initiation rituals for factions or sub-groups (note that such roleplay may never include prohibited actions)

In order to create a natural, improvisational flow without risking an unsafe environment, some players may also [pre-negotiate scenes](#) of intense conflict. These may also include physical rough-housing, restraint, or other violence that would otherwise be prohibited without prior consent. Players who unexpectedly witness such actions should **always** assume they are seeing a pre-arranged interaction and should **NEVER** assume that they are invited to join in physical roughing. The same goes for sexual/romantic touch between two players--unless you have explicitly negotiated it ahead of time, **NEVER** assume you have permission to engage in sexual contact, flirting, propositions, etc. with a player just because you witness them doing this with another player.

**If you are uncertain whether you are witnessing a consensual situation, feel free to speak with a member of the leadership team at any time. If another player violates your consent, please speak to the leadership team immediately.**

## IN-GAME COMMUNICATION

Understanding consent is a core part of Vassal. To ensure safe and enjoyable roleplay, all participants must be able to communicate clearly during the game to obtain, give, or revoke consent. To achieve this, Vassal uses a system of Hand Signals. Any player may use these signals to voice a concern, respond to a check-in, or clarify confusion without breaking the immersion of a scene.

**The use of Hand Signals is highly encouraged in any moment where clarification is needed.** For example, hand signals can help you show another player that you are comfortable with their roleplay even if your *character* might seem frightened or uncomfortable. Check-In signals also have a verbal equivalent that may be used when a gesture is not possible (e.g. in darkness or while carrying an item in both hands). Deliberate failure to acknowledge a hand signal will result in disciplinary action.

## The Check-In System

The list below shows what these Hand Signals look like and how they are used. All Hand Signals should be displayed at chest level (where possible) or another easily visible location. In addition to the Check-In system outlined below, all Hand Signals can be used to spontaneously communicate a player's consent level and well-being at any time, regardless of whether someone has initiated a Check-In. **If you need to "tap out," you can always use the thumbs-down/"red" signal to end roleplay immediately.**

### Initiating a Check-in

|                                                                                                                  |                                                                                                                                                                                 |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Check-In / "Green?"</b><br> | At any time, a player can initiate a Check-In using the "Thumbs up" signal or saying "Green?" This is a way to check the well-being, consent, or safety of anyone at the event. |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|

### Responses to a Check-in: Visual & Verbal

|                                                                                                                  |                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Thumbs up/ "Green"</b><br> | <b>This means "I am ok"</b><br><br>A player responding with this hand signal is consenting to what is happening <b>at that moment</b> . Roleplay may continue. This does not mean "anything goes" or "increase intensity." |
| <b>Level hand/ "Yellow"</b>                                                                                      | <b>This means "I don't know" or "I am not sure."</b>                                                                                                                                                                       |

|                                                                                                               |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|                              | <p>A player responding with this hand signal is uncertain whether they are comfortable with what is happening. While roleplay does not need to stop, <b>it may only proceed at a slower pace or at lower intensity.</b> Players should pause to have an Out-of-Character conversation to figure out how to proceed in a way that is more comfortable.</p> |
| <p>Thumbs down / “Red”</p>  | <p>This means “Please stop,” “I am not ok,” or “I need help.”</p> <p>A player responding with this hand signal <b>does not consent</b> to what is happening. Direct roleplay must stop. This can be for any reason and no explanation is required. Ask them if they would like to be escorted to an out-of-game area and disengage from roleplay.</p>     |

## Negotiation Hand Signals

In addition to the three “Check-In” signals, the gestures below may be used for further communication and navigating complex roleplay scenes.

|                                                                                                                                                          |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <p>“Out of Character”</p>  <p>*Fist on forehead, palm facing out*</p> | <p>Used to initiate a conversation or question regarding anything out-of-character or out-of-game.</p> <p>If a player approaches you with this signal, you must return it. The gesture must be held until out-of-character/out-of-game communication ends. If someone does not return the “Out of Character” signal, find a</p> |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|

|                                                                                                                                                             |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|                                                                                                                                                             | member of the leadership team to assist you.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |
| <p><b>“Disengage”</b></p>  <p><b>*Shielding eyes from sun or view*</b></p> | <p>Used to avoid or leave roleplay that you do not wish to participate in. It may also be used as a means to “pass through” a scene without interrupting.</p> <p>Players who use the “Disengage” signal will not be acknowledged or addressed. If a player disengages from a scene, treat them as if they were never present at it.</p> |

### Calling a stop or game hold

In the event of an emergency or other situation that requires an immediate pause to all gameplay in your vicinity, call out “**STOPPAGE.**” If you hear someone else call this out, echo it to make sure everyone around you hears it. All roleplay must immediately halt until the leadership team can assess the situation and take appropriate action. Gameplay may not resume until the leadership team calls “game on” again.

### Out-of-Game Areas and Respite Room

At every Vassal event there will be designated Out-of-Game (OOG) areas and a Respite Room. These locations are **off-limits to any active roleplayers**. OOG areas are intended to be a place to go for those who wish to exit roleplay for any reason. **All restrooms and bunkrooms/player sleeping spaces (other than private camps) are always considered OOG areas.** Any additional areas, including a Respite Room, will be clearly marked and announced before every Vassal event.

A Respite Room is intended to provide a quiet space for players to decompress and relax after an emotionally, mentally, or physically taxing scene. Players may use this space to deal with:

- Overstimulation

- Social/roleplay burnout
- Feeling mentally, emotionally or physically unwell
- Feeling unsafe
- LARP Bleed

**Please notify a member of the leadership team if you are concerned for your health and safety, as this room is otherwise unmonitored for your privacy.**

The Respite Room will be stocked with water and snacks, and the etiquette is similar to that of a library: respect others' mental and personal space, and silence all personal phones or electronic devices. You are welcome to bring other people to the Respite Room if you need support, and if additional quiet/private areas are required for any reason, the leadership team will designate them.

## PRE-NEGOTIATED SCENES

Some roleplay moments require more planning and discussion ahead of time, either to advance the plot or to allow for more complex emotionally- or physically-charged scenarios. Pre-negotiation is especially important in these cases to make sure that the scene can unfold naturally without risking an unsafe situation. Depending on the complexity or level of detail, this may need to go beyond simply obtaining consent from the other party for X, Y, or Z things to happen in the course of roleplay.

At the most basic level, **if two or more players wish to decide on a specific set of actions or define a set outcome, this constitutes a pre-negotiated scene.** Remember that you can always withdraw consent at any time, even if you and another player agreed to something ahead of time. You are never obligated to follow through on a scene that makes you uncomfortable in the moment just because it was pre-negotiated.

The following types of roleplay scenes must ALWAYS be negotiated ahead of time:

- Combat (if the action is scripted or will occur too quickly for brandishing/consent)

- Strikes to unarmed characters or non-combatants (e.g. an assassination attempt or kidnapping)
- Any **potentially** violent or disruptive scenes occurring in a crowded or high-traffic area: these **MUST** be discussed with members of the leadership team ahead of time

## Unplanned Participation

If your scene will occur in a public place where other characters are unaware of what has been negotiated out-of-game, be prepared for them to engage in roleplay and **remember that the default rules regarding consent will still apply to them.** For example, if your scene involves the pre-negotiated stabbing of an unarmed character as part of a robbery, you may not strike any other players who attempt to intervene unless they have brandished a weapon in response, indicating that they consent to combat.

**Be aware that other players may not react the way you expect them to.** It is your responsibility to adapt and improvise unless their reactions stray into prohibited behaviors. Keep in mind that NO pre-arranged aspect or outcome of a scene is guaranteed unless each participant understands that it must happen to advance the story. Unwillingness to adapt removes other players' agency and turns a group roleplay into one player's personal cutscene, which goes against the “Play to Lift” concept.

If you do **NOT** want other players to join in spontaneously, **you** are responsible for working with the leadership team to find a way to avoid this. For example, you could have “guards” posted who can use hand signals to discourage intervention, or you could make an in-character announcement that a solemn ceremony is about to begin.

## ROLEPLAYING CONFLICT

Conflict is an inherent part of the Vassal game world. Characters represent many nations and ideologies and may have opposing views and goals. Character backstories are varied and represent a wide spectrum of wealth and power (or lack thereof). Players should not expect that everyone’s characters will automatically “get along” and you may eventually encounter disagreements or other sources of conflict

or friction with other characters. By mutual consent, this friction may be a fruitful and rewarding avenue for roleplay. But when only one party is enjoying it, it can easily diminish the game for the other party and/or those around them. **Your immersion and personal narrative is not more important than that of your fellow players. Always “play to lift.”**

**When roleplaying conflict, it is your responsibility to:**

- **Obtain consent** from the other party and ensure that it is maintained
- **Remain aware** of whether this friction has an impact beyond the other party or parties involved
- **Refrain from engaging** in prohibited actions (this includes roleplay that targets another player’s gender, sexuality, or appearance)
- **Restrict roleplaying** antagonism to in-game spaces on the site (see [map](#))

**Failure to follow these guidelines will result in disciplinary action.**

**Examples of conflict and friction may include:**

- Roleplaying a power dynamic where a wealthy noble is condescending towards a humble farmer
- Accusing another character of a crime or spreading rumors about their character in-game
- Threatening to harm a character or their family in order to coerce them into cooperating

Some players may enjoy this type of roleplay, but others may prefer to avoid certain types of friction or conflict. Both are valid viewpoints, and to ensure that all players have the experience they desire, the leadership team does not prohibit friction as **long as it occurs within the bounds of consent as outlined above**. The leadership team’s primary duty is to the game as a whole, and if a few players’ consenting friction begins to negatively affect many other players’ experience, they may be

asked to stop or find ways to roleplay it in ways that minimize impact in public spaces or on group dynamics.

If you find that other players are rarely/never open to your roleplay attempts or frequently disengage from interactions, or if you witness something similar occurring with another player, you are encouraged to alert a member of the leadership team. The leadership team will be happy to work with players to adjust their roleplay approach.

### **LARP Bleed**

One important aspect of managing conflict in LARP is making sure that your real-life feelings do not have a negative impact on your roleplay. “LARP Bleed” is a term used to describe what happens when your *character’s* experiences (in roleplay or combat) and your own real-life feelings begin to blur or “bleed” together. If you feel like your feelings as a real-life person are starting to negatively color your in-game interactions (or vice-versa), please take a moment to address the reasons why—and consider taking a break in the Respite Room! Feel free to speak to someone from the leadership team at any time about how you’re feeling. We have to remember to keep our characters’ beefs in-game and any real-life disagreements civil and out-of-game. **The use of roleplay to carry out real-life personal grudges or punish other players is prohibited.**

## **SAFETY and INCIDENT HANDLING**

Our rules and policies are designed to reduce the risk involved to all players, but they cannot fully eliminate it. Combat is unpredictable and its risks can include, but are not limited to, harder hits, crowds, trips and falls, and stray arrows. While we at Vassal LLC strive to create as safe of an environment for our players as we can, we cannot be everywhere at once. Look out for one another and if you see unsafe behavior, call it out or find a member of the leadership team. And remember that while Vassal occurs within a fictional setting, **all applicable real-world laws and regulations are also in effect at any Vassal event and players are prohibited from illegal activity.**

**If you’d like to bring up a complaint or concern**, you can reach out to any member of the leadership team. During an event, you can make an in-person incident report directly to any leadership team member and it will be referred to a designated incident response group. If you wish to file an official incident report (either during

or after an event), please fill out the [Incident Reporting Form](#). The leadership team retains a confidential record of all incident reports and corrective actions. For additional information on incident reporting, incident investigation, and how the leadership team handles corrective measures, please see [this document](#).

## **Ban Lists**

The Vassal leadership team maintains a public [Banned Player list](#) that includes the name of the banned player and the reason they were banned but keeps other incident information confidential. Players will also be notified via a Discord announcement in the event of a suspension or ban of a current player; this will not include specific details of offenses but will include the name of the player, the reason for the ban or suspension, and the suspension/ban status, including the beginning and end dates of a suspension.

The Vassal community prioritizes player safety above all. If any member of the community is found to be on the ban list of another LARP community/game, those bans will carry over to Vassal immediately. If any member of the community is found in violation of this, they will be banned from Vassal events. If these non-Vassal bans are subsequently lifted, reinstatement of the player is at the discretion of the leadership team.

## **DRUG, ALCOHOL, and TOBACCO USE**

**All Vassal LARP LLC in-person events are subject to the laws of the State of Indiana regarding the use of alcohol and illegal drugs. The following policies are intended to supplement all applicable laws while at a Vassal event.**

Smoking and vaping of any kind is prohibited indoors and in close/crowded outdoor public spaces. Please note that modern tobacco and vape products (cigarettes, modern vape pens, etc.) may only be used outdoors in **designated out-of-game areas** (the parking lot and modern camping areas shown on the [Site Map](#)). Historically appropriate items (wood or clay pipes, realistic e-pipes, etc.) are permitted in uncrowded outdoor portions of the game space. Please be respectful of your hosts when in a private camp, and always be aware of your surroundings to avoid endangering those with allergies, asthma, or other health concerns.

While Vassal does not prohibit alcohol consumption by players who are 21 or older, players are cautioned to exercise moderation. **An intoxicated player may not be capable of giving or receiving consent, in which case their participation in roleplay and combat is not appropriate.** Game staff do not supervise private camps but may intervene if a player appears to be visibly impaired in an in-game common area (e.g. the tavern). Depending on the severity, players may be asked to temporarily remove themselves from in-game space or may be ejected. **Players are prohibited from engaging in combat while intoxicated.** Repeated instances of excessive intoxication may be grounds for suspension/ban from the game (see [Disciplinary Process](#)).

## EVENT SITE MAP



### In-Game/Out-of-Game Space

#### Outdoors:

The areas labeled “The Invisible Lands” on the Site Map are outside of the game space. All vehicles, modern tents, and modern tobacco use must remain in the Invisible Lands once gameplay begins, and no gameplay may occur in these areas.

All other outdoor areas of the event site are considered to be in-game space and the rules of decorum must be observed.

**Indoors:**

The Tavern contains the only indoor in-game space. The interior of the Inn is out-of-game space, as are all latrines.

[Return to Table of Contents](#)

# Combat Rules



# COMBAT RULES

Combat in Vassal is meant to provide an immersive roleplay experience; the primary goal is to recreate the look of medieval combat using a safe and simple rule set. As with other aspects of Vassal, combat is about adding to the story; there are no “winners” and players do not gain XP or loot via combat.

Although the outcome of pitched battles may affect the overarching game narrative, the outcome of combat scenarios does not negatively affect any individual player (e.g. death, loss of resources, kidnapping) unless all parties agree to roleplay specific consequences.

By default, all “deaths” on the battlefield are assumed to be the deaths of nameless, faceless soldiers. It is up to you to decide whether your character perishes, survives unscathed, or if you continue to roleplay any injuries they might receive. But remember, just as in real life, initiating combat in Vassal—whether as a duel, dispute, or intimidation tactic—becomes a part of the larger story and may have in-game repercussions for your character. Consider this wisely as you decide when, where, and how to fight.

## ➡ The Basics

All weapons and armor should closely resemble items that were in use in pre-1700 Europe, West Asia, or North Africa; fantasy-inspired or boffer-sport gear may not pass kit check.

## Weapons

The following weapons are **approved** for use in Vassal combat:

- Realistic foam melee LARP weapons (such as those made by Fakesteel, Calimacil, Mytholon, Epic Armory, Wyverncrafts, Dreki Megin, or Freyhand)
- Bows and crossbows (maximum draw weight of 30lbs or equivalent, no compound bows) with foam flat-head, low-speed ammo
- Rival ball blasters (must be styled realistically like pre-1700 weapons, maximum of 200 feet per second)
- Thrown weapons must be entirely of foam (no rigid core or solid parts)

The following are **NOT** permitted:

- **“Boffer”** melee weapons
- **Homemade weapons** unless individually approved by the leadership team
- **Steel weapons**; aside from small eating/utility knives, **no sharp or blunt/rebated steel weapons are permitted at the event**, even for costume purposes. Utility knives may not be worn during pitched battles.

All weapons must be inspected prior to use at every event. The leadership team reserves the right to fail any weapon that appears to pose a safety risk.

## Armor

Vassal combat uses low striking force and armor is not required to participate. Although armor is not necessary to protect your body from legal blows, it may be worn for aesthetic reasons and also provides [armor points](#) during combat.

Armor may be made of padded or quilted cloth (gambeson, pourpoint, aketon, etc.), leather, or metal (chain maille, lamellar, plate, etc.) and will provide

different levels of protection based on the material (see [Armor Rules](#) for more details).

## **Shields**

Shields may be any historically-appropriate size and shape (buckler, pavise, heater, etc.) but must have a foam face and non-rigid edging. Shields do not give the user additional armor points and are simply used to block strikes.

Shields provide protection against all blows from melee and ranged weapons. This protection is unlimited and a shield is not consumed. Shields may only be destroyed by artillery fire (cannon, ballista, trebuchet, etc.).

## **New Combatants**

All first-time combatants are required to go through a short orientation bout against one of the leadership team's combat coordinators. This is to ensure that you understand the combat rules and can demonstrate that you are capable of fighting safely.

At the time of weapons inspection, players should seek out any member of leadership and request an orientation bout.

## **When do we fight?**

Combat in Vassal is **completely optional** and may only occur between two or more players who **actively consent**. Combat scenarios may take place in one of several possible ways:

- Pitched Battle or Tournament
  - All players who participate in the scenario as armed combatants are assumed to consent.
  - When the scenario is called “on,” all participants are considered to be engaged without further need to initiate.
- Mission-based Encounter
  - Players who agree to the mission may find themselves in a situation that *could* be resolved violently.
  - Individual players may choose whether to participate in combat by consenting or refusing according to the rules for [Initiating Combat](#).
- Spontaneous Combat
  - Players may initiate combat according to the rules below.

**You may NEVER strike a player with a weapon under any other circumstances other than those outlined above or as part of a [pre-negotiated scene](#). Failure to follow the rules for obtaining consent to combat will result in disciplinary action.**

## **Safety and Calling a Hold**

**If you need to halt combat for any reason, call out “STOPPAGE.”** If you hear someone else call this out, echo it to make sure everyone around you hears it. All combat and roleplay must immediately halt until the leadership team can assess the situation and take appropriate action. The game may not resume until the leadership team calls “game on” again. Reasons for halting combat may include:

- You see another player with a broken or unsafe weapon
- You or another player are injured
- You spot an obstacle on the field or any other dangerous conditions

## ➡ Initiating Combat

Outside of pitched battles or tournaments, all players must use the following process to engage in combat:

**The player wishing to initiate combat must first brandish their weapon.** Brandishing is defined as drawing, unsheathing, or otherwise equipping a weapon in a “ready stance” that conveys imminent threat, such as drawing a pistol or unsheathing a sword and pointing it at another player. The other player may choose one of two options:

### **Consenting to Combat**

- The other player brandishes their own weapon in response.

**This signals consent and combat may commence.**

### **Refusing Combat**

- The other player does not brandish their own weapon in response.

**This signals that they do not give consent; no combat may occur.**

**The initiating player must cease brandishing and disengage.**

If consent for combat is not given, players may use hand signals to indicate how they wish to proceed with roleplay. For example, a player may use the “Disengage” signal if they wish to leave the scene immediately without further interaction. Alternatively, a player may refuse combat by declining to brandish their weapon in response but may use the “Thumbs Up” signal to indicate that

they would like to continue roleplaying the conflict without combat. This is **not** consent to combat and they may not be struck. **Brandishing in response is the only accepted method of signaling consent to combat.**

Note that in a Mission-based Encounter, two armed groups may find themselves on the brink of combat. Individual players from either group may opt out of combat by declining to brandish their weapons and withdrawing to a safe distance using the “Disengage” signal (shading one’s eyes). **If combat commences, consenting members of the groups may not strike unarmed players or players who have disengaged in this manner.**

## ⇒ Combat Overview

Combatants are expected to adhere to the following rules at all times:

- All melee strikes must be made with the **minimum force necessary** to let the target know they are being struck.
  - Hits should never be hard enough to cause discomfort; excessive force may result in ejection from combat.
  - Players who repeatedly refuse to acknowledge valid blows may be subject to disciplinary action.
- Strikes may only be made with an **approved striking surface** (e.g. edge or tip of a sword, blade of an axe, head of a mace) that has been inspected by one of the leadership team’s combat coordinators.
  - Strikes may not be made with the haft, butt, hilt, handle, or other non-striking surface.
- When you are downed/ “killed” or need to disengage from combat, hold a hand (or your weapon) on top of your head to **signal that you are “dead” or otherwise exiting combat.**

- You may not strike a player who is signaling that they are dead or disengaged.
- Players may add or substitute a verbal cue by calling out “dead” repeatedly while exiting.
- Strikes are only permitted to legal [strike zones](#).
- Certain combat actions are [always prohibited](#), even with pre-negotiation.

## Strike Zones

Strike Zones are the various areas of the body that are considered valid targets in Vassal combat. Strike zones are limited to:

- Torso
- Arms (including hands)
- Legs
- Top (“crown”) of the head
  - Strikes to the crown of the head are to be performed with extra care for player safety.
  - These strikes may only be delivered with the striking surface of an edged or bludgeoning weapon in a downward direction; no thrusts or sideways strikes are permitted to the head.

Blows to the **neck, face, side/back of head, groin and feet are prohibited**. Such blows are considered invalid strikes and are not counted.

**Wounding Strike:** When a valid Strike Zone has been hit without Armor present.

**Casualty:** When a player is “downed” after the requisite number of Wounding Strikes occur (see diagram below).



### Red

The crown of the head and torso

- Casualty = 1 wounding strike.

### Yellow

Arms (including the hands) and legs

- Casualty = 1 wounding strike on any 2 limbs.

### White

Invalid strike zones (neck, face, groin and feet)

## **Weapons and Damage**

- All weapons do the same amount of damage per strike regardless of their size or the method in which they are used to strike (bludgeoning, piercing, slashing, etc.).
- Weapons deal 1 Wounding Strike upon contact with an unarmored Strike Zone.
- For multiple strikes to be considered valid, each strike must involve a **full reset/wind-up motion** involving more than the wrist joint (no drumming).
- If Armor is worn, take 1 Armor Point from the armor piece per strike; when armor points have been depleted, that body part is considered unarmored and the next strike is a Wounding Strike.

**If an arm is dealt a Wounding Strike**, it is rendered useless and must be held limp at one's side

- Wounded limbs do not function as shields; if a wounded arm is positioned in front of the torso and is struck, the strike is assumed to hit the torso.

**If a leg is dealt a Wounding Strike**, the player should remain standing and may use the wounded leg as a pivot point.

- Do not kneel to roleplay a leg wound.
- There is no “knee walking” for wounded legs, as commonly seen in other LARPs.
- Wounded legs may not be used to move, unless assisted by another player.

A **Casualty** occurs when a Wounding Strike is delivered to the crown of the head, torso, or by the loss of any two limbs.

Vassal does not incorporate battlefield healers or any other noncombatant roles during combat situations. Depending on the scenario, Casualties may be required to lie where they fall, disengage and leave the field, or disengage and retreat to a designated location for respawn. The leadership team will announce the scenario rules prior to the start of all pitched battles.

## **Prohibited Combat Actions**

The following actions are **NEVER** permitted during combat at Vassal, even via negotiation between individual players. Any player engaging in such actions may be subject to disciplinary consequences.

1. **Never strike anyone who has not given you consent to do so.** If you are in a situation where you are unsure, disengage and use appropriate Hand Signals.
2. **No strikes using excessive force beyond the minimum needed for your opponent to register the hit.** If another player refuses to acknowledge your blows, speak with the leadership team; do not increase your force.

3. **No grappling.** This includes people, weapons, shields or anything in another player's possession.
4. **Shields are not to be used as a weapon.** You may not “shield bash,” throw a shield, or strike a player with a shield. A shield is a defensive tool and may only be used to block weapons.
5. **No punching, kicking, or body to body contact.** This includes but is not limited to: shield-kicking, hip-checking, tripping, shouldering, etc.
6. **No feinting to Invalid Strike Zones or feinting with other Prohibited Actions.** These tactics can pose a safety risk and go against Rule Zero.
7. **Arguing or competitive shot-calling is not permitted.** If you lose track of your armor points and aren't sure, just take the Casualty. If you believe that another player is fighting in an unsafe manner, speak to the leadership team immediately.
8. **No combat in unsafe areas.** If combat moves into an unsafe area (e.g. dangerous terrain, near a tree, or close to a no-combat zone) combat must stop and players should move back to where it is safe to continue.

## ⇒ Armor Rules

Armor in Vassal operates within 3 tiers: Light, Medium, and Heavy. While any damage to an unprotected zone (see diagram below) incurs a Wounding Strike, armor provides protection (referred to as Armor Points).

### Armor Tiers

#### Tier 1: Light armor

1 Armor Point per piece/Strike Zone covered

- Leather
- Gambeson
- Any appropriately layered cloth armor

## **Tier 2: Medium armor**

2 Armor Points per piece/Strike Zone covered.

- Chain Maille

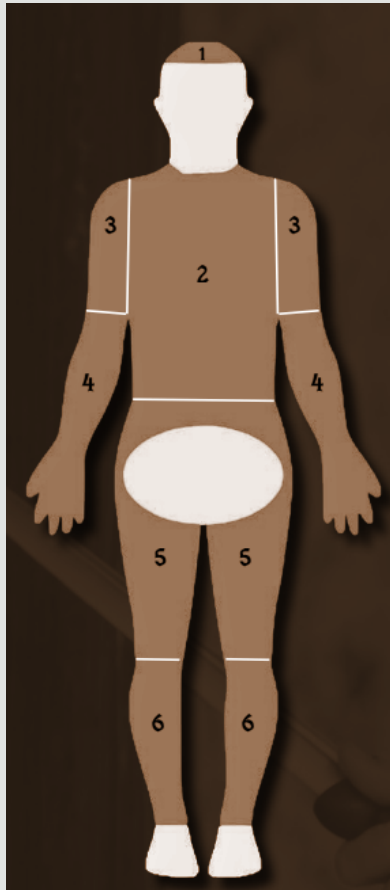
## **Tier 3: Heavy armor**

3 Armor Points per piece/Strike Zone covered.

- Plate armor
- Lamellar

## **Armor Zones**

Valid strike zones are subdivided into Armor Zones that may be protected by individual pieces of armor of any tier. Within each Armor Zone, Armor Points are based on the actual armor as worn, and any areas within the zone that are not covered by armor are considered to be unarmored.



- (1) Crown of the head
- (2) The torso
- (3) Upper arms
- (4) Lower arms and hands
- (5) Upper legs
- (6) Lower legs

## Counting Hits

All players are responsible for keeping track of the hits they receive. You are not required to call hits aloud but you must roleplay a **Wounding Strike** or **Casualty** as appropriate to the scenario.

1. **When armor is struck, it loses 1 armor point.** When the armor points are spent, that armor no longer provides protection for the Armor Zone it protects. The area is then treated as unprotected; the next strike will be a Wounding Strike.

⇒ Player A is wearing a metal breastplate and is hit 4 times upon it by Player B. The breastplate protects Player A for the first 3 hits but now all 3 Armor Points it provided are spent. The 4th hit is a Wounding Strike to Player A's torso, which results in a Casualty.

2. **The top-most piece is the only one that grants protection.** While armor can be layered for comfort or historical accuracy, the number of Armor Points is determined by the top-most layer at the actual point of impact.

⇒ As per the previous example, Player A is not granted a fourth Armor Point from the gambeson worn underneath the breastplate.

⇒ Player B may choose to “bypass” the breastplate and strike Player A upon the gambeson in an exposed place on the torso that the breastplate does not protect. The gambeson’s 1 Armor Point is spent and if Player B delivers another strike to the gambeson-covered torso of Player A, this is a Wounding Strike that results in a Casualty.

3. **Armor points are per zone, not per item.** In cases of light or medium armors that cover multiple armor zones (maille, gambeson, etc), they will operate as independent armor per zone they cover.

⇒ If a player is wearing a long-sleeved, knee-length gambeson, all Armor Zones covered by the gambeson (Zones 2, 3, 4, and 5) would each have 1 Armor Point.

## ⇒ Ranged Weapons

Vassal combat includes two categories of Ranged Weapons: bows/crossbows and firearms. Ranged weapons are subject to all the same rules as melee weapons outlined above, with one important exception: **no portion of the head or neck are legal targets; you may not aim for any area above the torso.**

You may retrieve your ammunition after combat has ended, or after you are defeated in battle (Casualty). If you are retrieving ammunition while combat is still occurring:

- You must signal that you are out-of-combat (hand on top of your head).
- Wait until combat is clear of the immediate area where your ammunition is located; you must stay out of the way of active combat.

- **All ammunition must be retrieved.** No loose ammunition may be left behind. You are responsible for counting your ammunition prior to combat and ensuring that you retrieve the same amount you started with.

Ranged weapons must follow the same rules as any other weapon in the game regarding brandishing as the signal to initiate/consent to combat outside of a pitched battle.

- Bows are considered to be “brandished” when an **arrow is placed on the string** even if not drawn.
- Crossbows are considered to be “brandished” when **spanned and loaded** with a bolt.
- Firearms are considered to be “brandished” when they are **drawn, unholstered, etc. and held at the side.**

The following sections outline additional safety requirements specific to each category.

## ➡ **Bows and Crossbows**

Bows and crossbows may have up to a 30 lbs draw or equivalent. Weapons up to 35 lbs may be permitted on a case-by-case basis after testing by the leadership team’s combat coordinators.

- Arrows and crossbow bolts must be a foam-tipped, flat-head style (Gorgtech or similar). Round-headed or high-speed heads are not permitted.
- Bows and crossbows may not be discharged if you are less than 10 feet from your target.

## **Damage**

Individual arrows and crossbow bolts inflict the same amount of damage as legal strikes with melee weapons and armor. Each direct hit does 1 Wounding Strike to unarmored areas or depletes armor by 1 Armor Point.

## ➤ **Firearms**

The only firearms approved for Vassal are those capable of firing a Nerf Rival ball round at less than 200 feet per second. Ammunition must be brightly colored (blue, yellow, or orange) for ease of retrieval and may not be altered in any way. Darts or other types of ammunition are prohibited. All firearms must be checked by the leadership team's combat coordinators prior to use in Vassal.

- **Firearms must be fired while stationary.** The player must plant both feet, aim and then deliver the shot.
- Firearms, loaded or otherwise, may never be pointed in the direction of any player's face/head.
- Firearms may not be used in any other manner other than firing approved rounds; no portion of the weapon may be used for melee attack or defense.
  - You may not strike an opponent with the stock or butt.
  - You may not parry a melee weapon with a firearm.

### **Damage**

All firearms are considered to do the same amount of damage per shot regardless of type (i.e. there is no difference between pistols, arquebuses, hand cannons, etc.). Firearms penetrate **all armor below Tier 3** and ignore this armor to deal a Wounding Strike. Firearms destroy Tier 3 armor, leaving the player unprotected against any subsequent strikes.

To ensure that your opponents can see and properly acknowledge your shots, it is recommended that you **fire from within the target's field of vision**, particularly if they are armored. Remember that players may not be able to feel a shot; do not expect them to perceive strikes that they cannot see.

[Return to Table of Contents](#)





# ABOUT US

## ➤ MEET THE LEADERSHIP TEAM

During events, the leadership team uses their character roles to foster collaborative storytelling between players. The team manages “worldwide” events and monitors in-game storylines to support each player in developing their character.

Between games, members of the leadership team have a primary role/area of responsibility that reflects the unique body of knowledge and skills we each bring to the game.

Regardless of role, we work as a team to make Vassal an incredible LARP experience for all participants. Players are encouraged to reach out to any member of the leadership team with questions, concerns, or ideas. A great player experience is our top priority.

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**Liaison/Historical**  
**Consultant**

**Dan**  
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