

SAFE SHAKESPEAREAN SWORDPLAY - DO'S AND DON'TS

1. Always warm up arms, chest, back, and legs before beginning any combat work. Without, the tendency is to tire easier, be less accurate, and run the risk of injury.
2. NEVER swing your sword casually or engage in horseplay -- a sword is always "loaded."
3. Always know where the sword's point is in the space around you.
4. NEVER let anyone else hold or play with your sword -- EVER!
5. NEVER improvise during a combat routine -- always stick to your planned routine.
6. Begin your training without blades -- mimed or with dowels.
7. Work out with your partner a "go up/rescue" signal which indicates an immediate cessation of action -- hand on chest, certain number of fingers, etc.
8. Always carry your sword cradled like a baby or a bouquet with the blade close to your body.
9. Always begin at ¼ speed or slower, then gradually increase to combat/performance speed.
10. Speak first, then move blade. Shakespeare used this method -- line, fight, line, fight.
11. Always telegraph your blows either physically or verbally like a pitcher's wind-up.
12. Maintain eye contact with your partner. Develop and maintain trust which also creates intensity.
13. Maintain your partner's safety zone (bubble of safety) -- always pull your blows if in error, then circle till recovered.
14. Inspect your sword -- blade and handle -- before each rehearsal and performance. Look for nicks which are potential breakpoints, straightness of blade, tightness of handle and pommel.
15. NEVER use non-combat worthy swords.
16. Always keep your non-blade hand within your safety zone.
17. Wear gloves whenever rehearsing or performing. They should fit well, go past your wrist, preferably leather to avoid slipperiness from sweat.
18. NEVER let a blade be pointed at or cross in front of anyone's face.
19. Always look where your sword will hit BEFORE you strike.
20. NEVER wear jewelry, watches, or carry anything in your pockets when engaging in combat. Try to avoid wearing glasses.
21. Keep it simple.
22. Inspect the combat area for potential hazards, slippery spots, uneven areas of the floor, or obstacles of any kind.
23. NEVER compromise your footwork. If the footwork is correct, then the form is correct.
24. Always maintain proper combat distance -- 1 hand beyond arm's length.
25. PRACTICE, PRACTICE, PRACTICE.