

# NERO Boston's Combat Sportsmanship and Safety Policy

**With this policy, we hope to give players the feel of medieval combat without the pain and suffering of the real thing, while still keeping true to the values of fair play and friendly competition. We encourage players to use this guide to help them towards experiencing better interactions at NERO.**

**Safety and overall enjoyment are NERO's most primary concerns. These rules are designed to help players make that their main concerns as well.**

## The Hold Rule

This is the single most important rule in the NERO system. Read it and take it to heart. Anyone can call a hold in a fight if they see an unsafe situation happening or about to happen. "Hold!" should be yelled so that everyone in battle can hear it—otherwise, it may be followed by another flurry of swings. When a Hold is called, stay exactly where you are, drop to one knee (if its safe to do so), and *Do Not Move*. Do not look around you or talk to people about anything not connected with the Hold.

You can use this time to update your tags and remove any spells that you have cast. You can also pick up spell packets from the ground or from your pouch as long as you return to your original spot before the game is resumed. This is not a time to study someone and see if they are an NPC or a PC, nor is it a chance to look behind you and see if anyone is sneaking up on you. Please play fair and try not to gather information while the Hold is being sorted out.

When the reason the Hold was called is resolved, then the person calling the hold should call a Lay-on. First, insure that everyone is ready to resume play, then call "3... 2... 1... Lay-on!" Hold can also be called for excessive zeal on the part of an opponent. The infraction should be reported to a marshal. Repeated complaints will get a player removed from combat. Hold can also be called if anyone's eyeglasses make the Incredible Journey, if there is a dispute about the effects of a spell, or if you are unsure about a rule that has an immediate effect on the battle.

Understand that the game rules have been written in such a way to try to prevent Holds from being necessary except in rare out-of-game situations. Do not abuse this rule. You cannot call a Hold to collect spell packets even though they are out-of-game. You may pick up packets during a Hold that has been called for another reason.

Collecting tags or treasure is not a legitimate reason for calling a Hold. Tag bookkeeping should be done after the battle is over, not during it. However, if someone is claiming to have an outrageous amount of power, then you are certainly free to call a Hold and challenge that person to prove that they can in fact do what they claim.

Anyone who ignores a Hold called for any reason will face severe disciplinary action and possible expulsion. This is usually used for emergencies and not to be treated lightly. Stop what you are doing *immediately* and find out why a Hold was called, then do what you can to help. You must return to your original spot before the Lay-on is called.

If you see a crowd of people kneeling down, then they are probably in a Hold. Do not approach the group until the Hold is over. If you cannot tell if people are in a hold, you may ask if there is one. If you are in the middle of a battle and everyone starts dropping to one knee, then a Hold has probably been called and you did not hear it.

## Body Contact

The only contact allowed during battle is by weapon. Any other type of fighting contact such as grabbing someone, hitting, or kicking is strictly forbidden. Violation of this rule is the shortest path to disciplinary action. Note that because of this rule, everyone striking an opponent needs to have a weapon, although the weapon may only be there to represent a monster's claws. People playing monsters usually use short swords to represent claws, even though the monster is not using a weapon.

Therefore, you must pretend that the weapons being used by the monster are actually its claws. Note that a *Disarm* spell will have no affect on this type of monster. In some chapters, the monster's claws will be red

to differentiate them. Similarly, a shield may not be used to strike an opponent. Only weapons may be used to strike an opponent.

## Charging

During NERO combat you must never come into physical contact with your opponent. It is the responsibility of all parties involved in combat to ensure that there is always a safe distance between combatants. If you are crowding your opponent so much that he or she must step back to avoid body contact with you, you are Charging.

No combatant should be able to touch the torso of an opponent in combat. If you can reach out and touch the torso of an opponent, then you are too close. Any combatant who has moved too close must increase the distance to be greater than his or her arm length; though at no time may someone shove away an opponent or otherwise initiate physical contact. In the case of extreme differences in arm length, the combatant with the shorter arm length is allowed to approach close enough to strike their opponent so long as they cannot touch the opponent's torso with their own hand.

### Here are a few examples of charging:

**Hugging:** If you are close enough to someone to hit them across the back with a weapon from the front, or vice versa that is called charging, plain and simple. Obvious exceptions are if the person is crouching, kneeling or laying down in front of you, or if there is an extreme height difference.

**Bulldozing:** Running through a group of people can lead to collisions and certainly violates the spirit of charging. This is highly unsafe and made doubly so when the 'dozer is trying to strike the people they are running through. If someone needs to move through people they should do so in a courteous and calm manner and be afforded the courtesy of moving out of their way.

**Blocking:** If you move to stop someone's movement with your body they you are forcing your opponent to charge you. You cannot restrain someone's movement with your own body even if you are not making contact; this is a violation of charging and the body contact rules of NERO. Stepping in front of someone to engage him or her in combat should be done only with care due to the possibility of collision.

## Machine Gunning

On the other hand, you can't just tap the person a hundred times a second like a hummingbird wing in flight; you have to give some swing to your strikes. A general rule is that a swing should progress between 45 to 90 degrees. The swings must be controlled and must not hit too hard. If you are swinging so fast that you cannot announce the damage fast enough to keep up with the swings, then you are "Drum Rolling" or "Machine Gunning" and your opponent should count all of that as one or maybe two hits.

**Changing Targets:** You should change targets on a person's body between every two swings (the exception covered in the sportsmanship section below) this means, upper arm, lower arm, upper leg, lower leg, chest, abdomen, upper back, lower back, and shoulders should be alternated. If you strike someone in his or her upper left arm twice, your next should be to another legal target. This helps eliminate machine gunning and cuts down on bruising from whacking the same area repeatedly. However, if you pause for 2-3 seconds between hits you can re-strike the same location as well.

## General Combat Sportsmanship

It is usually not necessary to hit hard at all. When fighting an unarmored and unarmed opponent, an easy tap will do. You only need to apply enough pressure to make sure your opponent is aware of the attack.

**Tapping:** As listed above if you are fighting an unarmed, and/or unarmored opponent you can swing under 45 degrees and just 'tap' them so long as you pause for a second or two between each tap. This will be enforced to insure that those who are not fully geared up for combat do not get beaten and bruised beyond what is reasonable for NERO combat. You do not need to change strike locations on 'tapping' because it would negate the softness of the strikes.

For example, hitting an armored opponent from behind by surprise might require more vigor than a standard tap. And if it seems that your opponent is not taking his or her hits, it might be because the hits are

not being felt under all that armor. You should mention to your opponent when you think you got a hit in, and all players should call hits whenever possible (see below).

**Grief Targets:** In addition to the illegal target areas of the head, neck, hands, groin it should be noted that striking someone behind the knees, attempting to trip them, or repeatedly striking at a female players chest are not acceptable and you will be called on sportsmanship violation for doing so. Sometimes strikes will land in those areas but repeated or deliberate hard strikes to those vulnerable areas or attempting to trip are completely unacceptable.

The key to the NERO combat system working is to fight with out-of-game honor, even if your character has no honor in game. If you don't count hits on yourself, soon your opponent will stop counting his or her own hits as well. It's a self-correcting system. Give your opponent his or her due and die gracefully. One thing you must remember: you are only trying to make contact, not hit a home run. Do not reach back, wind up, and take a huge swing at your opponent.

**Flurries/Combinations:** Flurries of attacks are another mainstay of swashbuckling films however they are highly unsafe in NERO combat because the vast majority of strikes come from well over 90 degrees and due to the lightness of NERO weapons there is not enough feedback to the wielder to know how fast they are swinging their weapon. Flurries are not allowed, however two-strike combination attacks where the second strike goes over 90 degrees of swing (such as a shoulder to leg combination) are allowed so long as you maintain control of your weapon and are not striking too hard or in any other unsafe manner. This does not mean you can string together multiple two-hit combinations you must make another type of attack between combinations.

**Feint:** A feint is defined as any maneuver of the weapon into a position from which an attempt to strike the target will be made. This is a non-combat shot and all reasonable effort should be made to avoid contact with the target. Damage should not be called during the feint, as it is a non-attack movement of the weapon. A feint may travel more than 90 degrees itself, but there must be a momentary pause at or less than 90 degrees during which control of the weapon is regained and the feints momentum halted before the actual damage inflicting strike may be made. Onus for detecting the feint as a feint is upon the defender.

## Turtling

"Turtling" or hiding behind an impenetrable shield (with little more than your head showing) is not allowed! Anyone using a shield in such a manner could be subject to warnings from the marshals and if necessary, loss of the shield skill. Shields in our game are not all that realistic, and as such you are artificially limited in what you can do with them. In real life you could overbear someone who was hiding behind a shield, but such contact is not allowed in our game.

**Here are a few more examples of turtling:**

**Flamingo:** Standing on one foot behind your shield and exposing only your head, hand and back foot to your target violates the spirit of the turtling rule and is also unsafe.

**Square Dancing:** Holding your shield directly in -front of you (squarely) while crouching, leaning over, or in any other stance/angle/position that exposes only basically your head, hands, and feet without also exposing at least a full limb, and some torso to attack violates the spirit of the turtling rule. NERO Shield combat is not intended to be realistic because your opponent cannot use sheer force to knock your shield away or hammer on your shield with maximum force to create an opening.

**Shielding:** Placing your shield in someone's face or close to their body to restrict visibility or movement violates the spirit of the turtling rule, and it is highly unsafe and unsportsmanlike.

## Spell Packet Attacks

All packet-delivered attacks are effective on contact with the target or any of the target's immediate possessions, such as a shield or cloak. Packet attacks include spells, gas globes, and certain monster abilities.

Note that unlike the weapon rules, a packet attack will count if it hits "non-legal targets" such as the head or groin but that's not to say you should aim at these illegal targets.

**Casting Volume:** Spell casters must incant their spells at least loud enough that people within 3 feet can hear them clearly enough to validate that the incantation was spoken correctly. This is to avoid any confusion on the part of players as to if a spell was cast successfully or not. This includes protective/healing etc that are touch-cast on the caster or others. You do not need to speak them loudly you can even speak them on the verge of a whisper but they must be audible to people in close proximity, if they paying attention to you. This eliminates any question on whether you cast the spell properly with the proper incantation or not.

## Calling Damage

Whenever you swing a weapon in NERO, you must call out the amount of damage you do with that weapon, followed by the attributes your attack may have. When in combat with the same opponent, there is no need to continue calling your damage beyond the first or second swing. But if you opt to not call damage, you must follow the rules for conversational combat, which is described below.

**Damage Calls:** In larger battles with multiple combatants sometimes it is not practical to cease calling your damage against the same target.

## Conversational Combat

All non-ranged attacks must be delivered in a clear, conversational tone of voice (i.e. no yelling). Further, once you have announced your damage to your opponent, there is no need to continue announcing it until another opponent appears. This is in addition to existing rules for damage, and does not supercede them in any way.

**Conversation:** When moving to conversational combat the initiator should say “Conversational Combat” and their foe(s) should respond with an agreement or disagreement before stopping damage calls. This is to make sure all players are aware of what is going on. A player is never required to accept conversational combat and should not be expected to.

## Calling Hits

When calling hits against yourself, it is strongly encouraged that you do so by saying, “hit” or “ouch!” Acknowledging which hits you are accepting and which ones you feel you blocked will help curb anger from your opponent. In large melees this is not always possible, as there are too many swings coming at you and too much confusion, but in any case, this should always be attempted to assure fair playing by all.

**Role-played Damage:** We most strongly encourage people to role-play being struck and the severity of the blows or spell effects as they land. If you are drained/tainted, you could shuffle around. Under the effects of nausea you could pretend to be sick. Got slept? Snore softly. If you are under 50% of your body points you should try to look weary and weak, grunt and groan or hold act like you just got punched in the gut (of course you can still fight normally just act beat up when you aren’t swinging). This adds so much flavor to combat and also helps your allies figure out what is wrong with you much faster to heal or otherwise help you without having to stop, do healing arts, etc. Please don’t say, “Got it!” to a hit unless you are answering an out-of-game question as to if you noticed the hit.

## Killing Blows

There are many ways in our game to render an opponent completely helpless. These include *Web* spells, *Paralyze* spells, tying them up physically (thus making them immobile from the neck down), or just hitting them until they drop unconscious.

Once a person has been incapacitated, it is not too difficult to kill them. A Killing Blow represents this. If companions are actively guarding the character, however, it is another matter entirely! When you have leisure to do so, it is easy to find a chink in the armor or slip a dagger under the helmet and deliver a *Killing Blow*. It is considerably more difficult to do so if someone is trying to prevent you from accomplishing that very feat. Therefore, there are a few restrictions as to its use.

To administer a killing blow, you must place your weapon or your hand (which must contain a packet as physically touching someone is highly restricted unless you have permission directly from the player) somewhere on the victim’s torso, and remain in that position while you recite “One Killing Blow; Two Killing Blow; Three Killing Blow.” If anyone strikes you during the count or knocks your weapon away,

then the *Killing Blow* is interrupted and fails to kill the person. Please note that even though there is a three count for *Killing Blows*, the *Killing Blow* only counts as one strike.

A *Killing Blow* must be administered to the torso of the victim an arm, leg, or shoulder is not enough. Likewise, the blow cannot be struck on a moving target. If you have *Waylaid* someone, you must wait for the body to come to rest before you can deliver the *Killing Blow*. A *Killing Blow* can be delivered by anyone, whether they have a weapon or not.

**K.B.s:** You cannot directly use your hand to killing blow; you must use a weapon or a packet. In addition when delivering a killing blow to a female player please avoid the chest out of courtesy.