

Whether you are buying new armour or upgrading your old gear, I've found that most Heavy Weapons fighters can use a bit of help. This is intended as a guide to helping people in that position, who may not know what to look for.

Let's say that you are new to Heavy Weapons and need to outfit yourself with a complete set of equipment, or that you are an experienced fighter who is finally ready to upgrade to the set that you wanted all along. You have a big event coming up that you know armourers will be selling at and have decided to begin your quest there. The problem arises at the event however you don't know what to look for; which is the good armour and which is the bad; which will work well, and which will end up being left in your armour bag after a couple of practices. Well, there is a quick and easy way of figuring it all out.

First off, let's start with the easy stuff. Decide what kind of armour you are looking for. Do you want 11th-century Viking, 14th-century Italian, or 16th-century Maximilian? Do you want mild steel, stainless steel, aluminum, leather? How much is your budget? What pieces of armour do you really need immediately, and what can wait until later?

Helms

Does it meet all the requirements for helms for SCA combat? Does it fit? Is it large enough to allow for at least 12" of padding? It is better for the helm to be too large than to be too small.

Look at the welds (if there are any.) Do they look even and clean? A good weld should look like a stack of pennies laid down along the joint so they look like overlapping scales. There should not be any pitting or holes in the weld. Check the weld of both the face grill as well inside the helm. A properly made weld on the outside of the helm, once ground down, should be indistinguishable from the surrounding metal. If you can tell where the weld was, that is a indication of a poor weld.

Look at the rivets (if there are any.) Are they properly riveted on the inside? Feel the inside; are there any sharp edges? Do the rivets stand out substantially? Look at the outside of the helm; is the head of the rivet flush with the metal, or is there a gap? Does the rivet feel loose and moveable in the hole?

Look at the surface finish of the helm. Is it lumpy or does it have a faceted appearance? A good finish should be smooth and even, with a nicely rounded shape (those helmets who have faceting or other angles as a design element are excluded, of course.)

Put the helm on. Does it give you good visibility? How far can you see side-to-side, and up and down without moving your head? How good is the airflow? How easy do you think it will be to take a drink while wearing the helm? How well do you think you will be able to hear while wearing the helm?

Balance the helm on one finger inside the top of the helm. Now tap the side of the helm with a rod. Does it ring like a bell? This may mean that it will be very loud inside the helm when you get hit, and may need some extra attention when padding to resolve this problem.

Arms

Does it meet all the requirements for armour for SCA combat? Does it fit? Is it large enough to allow for padding? It is better for the arm harness to be a bit too large than to be too small. How much does the elbow bend? Does it move as far as your own arm does? Bend your arm and check. Now straighten your arm. The harness should have at least as much movement as your body does.

Look at the elbow cop and lames. Is there any gapping in the harness when you move it? Does it seem to stick when you move it? If so, that's an indication of poor articulation; pass it by.

Does the harness fit your arm? Is it long enough? If it turns out to be too long later, how difficult will it be

to modify the harness Does the vambrace give you enough room for your forearm as well as the clothes (shirt, gambeson, etc.) you will be wearing underneath it If it's too large, can it be easily modified to fit

Look at the rivets holding the harness together. Are they roughly riveted Are there any sharp edges Are there any pointy bits that stick out on the inside of the harness Does the elbow cop look bumpy and rough, or is it smooth and even

Legs

Does it meet all the requirements for armour for SCA combat Does it fit Is it large enough to allow for padding It is better for the legs to be a bit too large than to be too small. How much does the knee bend Does it move as far as your own leg does Bend your leg and check. Now straighten your leg. The harness should have at least as much movement as your body does. Notice also that your knee bends in a much larger circle than your elbow does. Your elbow is kind of pointy, but your knee is definitely round. The leg harness should match this curve.

Look at the knee cop and lames. Is there any gapping in the harness when you move it Does it seem to stick when you move it If so, that's an indication of poor articulation; pass it by.

Does the harness fit your leg Is it long enough If it turns out to be too long later, how difficult will it be to modify the harness Does the quisse give you enough room for your thigh as well as the clothes (pants, breeks, etc.) you will be wearing underneath it If it's too large, can it be easily modified to fit

Look at the rivets holding the harness together. Are they roughly riveted Are there any sharp edges Are there any pointy bits that stick out on the inside of the harness Does the knee cop look bumpy and rough, or is it smooth and even

Body Armour

Does it meet all the requirements for armour for SCA combat Does it fit Is it large enough to allow for padding or the clothes (shirt, gambeson, etc.) you will be wearing underneath it It is better for the body to be a bit too large than to be too small. Put the harness on, then reach for the sky. Is there any pinching Now touch your left shoulder with your right hand, and vice versa. Can you do this Is there any pinching, or do the edges gouge into your chest Bend over and touch your toes. Does the top edge of the harness choke you Does it pinch you anywhere Now stand up and twist side to side, and check for the same. Take your combat stance. Does the harness feel comfortable Are there any sharp edges or corners If there are any rivets, are they well peened, or do they have sharp edges

Gorget

Does it meet all the requirements for armour for SCA combat Does it fit Is it large enough to allow for padding or the clothes (shirt, gambeson, etc.) you will be wearing underneath it It is better for the gorget to be a bit too large than to be too small. Are there any sharp edges or corners If there are any rivets, are they well peened, or do they have sharp edges Put the gorget on. Move your head back and forth, and side-to-side. Does it pinch you anywhere or gouge you If possible, try it on while wearing your body armour and helm. Are there any gaps between the peices of armour Is your neck fully covered Does the gorget get caught up on the rest of the armour, or do the peices move easily together

Pauldrons

Does it meet all the requirements for armour for SCA combat Does it fit Is it large enough to allow for padding or the clothes (shirt, gambeson, etc.) you will be wearing underneath it It is better for the pauldrons to be a bit too large than to be too small. Are there any sharp edges or corners If there are any rivets, are they well peened, or do they have sharp edges Put the pauldrons on. Move your arm all around. Does it pinch you anywhere or gouge you Does it easily follow you throughout your range of movement If possible, try it on while wearing your body armour. Are there any gaps between the peices of armour Is your shoulder fully covered Does the pauldron get caught up on the rest of the armour, or do the peices move together easily

Gauntlets

Does it meet all the requirements for armour for SCA combat Does it fit Is it large enough to allow for padding underneath it It is better for the gauntlets to be a bit too large than to be too small, and gauntlet always look larger than they actually are. Remember that you'll have padding and perhaps a glove on underneath and need extra size for that. Start by looking at your hand as it moves through its entire range of movement. Now remember that a gauntlet does not have to have that much range (although it's nice), because it spends most of its time covering your hand while your hand holds the handle of your weapon. Grab the weapon you'll be using these gauntlets with, and again watch you hand as it goes through it's movements. This is the minimum allowed movement for a gauntlet. If the gauntlet doesn't move that much, pass it by. Notice that your thumb moves in more directions than your fingers do. The thumb of the gauntlet needs to match this. Notice that you wrist has around 130 degrees of movement. The cuff of the gauntlet needs to match this while also not getting caught up on your arm harness. Remember that your hands can move side-to-side as well, and the gauntlets need to allow for that.

Look at the rivets holding the gauntlet together. Are they roughly riveted Are there any sharp edges Are there any pointy bits that stick out on the inside of the gauntlet Does the gauntlet surface look bumpy and rough, or is it smooth and even Look at the lames of the gauntlet. Is there any gapping in the gauntlet when you move it Does it seem to stick when you move it If so, that's an indication of poor articulation; pass it by.