

# DKWDDK LARP

This is an (almost) complete rule set for LARP events. It is based on the combination of DKWDDK ("*Du Kannst, Was Du Darstellen Kannst*" [1]: You are allowed to do whatever you can - convincingly - act out) and the Two Rules ("*Zwei Regeln*" [2]), which put arbitration power even more firmly into the hands of players. The rules themselves (pages 1 and 3) are as lightweight as they could possibly be - with the bulk of this document mostly being suggestions, examples and clarifications.

## 1. Safety

This set of rules is missing any sort of rules on safety, player conduct or legal issues. It is up to the organizers to define them, as they can vary a lot from organizer to organizer. This could, for example, include restrictions on alcohol consumption, weapons safety, the real-world handling of theft, harassment and abuse policies, and so on. All of this will be collectively referred to as **Safety Rules**, and those **always** take priority.

## 2. DKWDDK - actions, skills, abilities and spells

Everything you could possibly do in the LARP is covered by DKWDDK. This gives you two ways to achieve doing any possible action you are planning to do:

- **You do the action** and succeed (or fail) in it **for real OR**
- **You use convincing acting, props and special effects to create the illusion that you have done the action for real.** Success (or failure) is determined by the reactions of the players or NPCs affected, or, where inanimate objects are concerned, their owners and/or the organizers and game masters.

Either way is limited by the Safety Rules. If both ways conflict with the Safety Rules, the action you are planning to do is not possible in this game and either cannot be tried - or cannot be done successfully. Use best judgment. For example, if your game has a no-touching policy, you should not even try to touch another player. If your game has a policy against physically taking someone else's property, you can try to steal, but it must always fail. Other than that, you are only limited by what the other participants will play along with.

This covers all aspects of the game, whether you are in a social or a combat situation, whether you play a game in a tavern or try to cast a powerful spell, whether you hit someone or are being hit.

**Some examples:**

- You want to cast a spell to harm another character. There is no spellbook, and no pre-defined effects. You come up with an impressively-sounding formula and intone it (in your case including references to "fire"), perhaps read it out of your own spellbook, you wave your hands dramatically, making sure a specific player takes note, then perhaps even use some pyrotechnics (see Safety Rules). Finally, you're done. The other player falls to the ground, screaming, pretending to burn. So your spell was a success.

- You are in combat, fighting with a large hammer. You roleplay the heavy weight of it, every time you swing it, and every time you get it into position, groaning any time you lift it up again. An enemy with a shield appears. You lift up the hammer, taking it as far back as you can, and with a scream strike it down hard on their shield (observing the Safety Rules). The other player buckles under your strike, and falls to the ground under the heavy hit. Your strike was a success. While you again lift your hammer, the other player gets up again, seems to inspect their shield, glares at you angrily, and then continues to use it. The other player has decided that your hit wasn't hard enough to damage or break their shield.

- Again, in combat, you are hit by a sword. There are not hit or armor points to calculate. Rather, you feel where you were hit, how well armored that spot was, you imagine what a hit like that would do to a person, and perhaps also how tired or wounded your character already might be. Maybe you die right here and there. Or collapse, wounded, screaming. Perhaps you also decide that it is not your time yet, or that your armor protects you - and you still roleplay the physical impact, shaking you, unbalancing you, forcing the air out of your lungs, or knocking you over - perhaps making you very angry, perhaps making you very afraid, and you show it. You decide it's a light wound, you scream from the pain, and perhaps you loudly curse the other character. You "succeed" in getting wounded.

- You are an apprentice alchemist, trying to brew a basic healing potion. There are no recipes, so you improvise (or perhaps go through a routine you came up with earlier). As you didn't have time to prepare and not many tools, you just toss a few herbs into a pot, pretend to boil it, and fill the results into a vial. You hand it to your master to assess - they smell it, hold it against the light, finally (pretend) to taste it, and then spit it out. Your master chides you for your sloppy work. Clearly, your brewing attempt failed, and you will need to put more effort into it next time.

- You are a thief trying to pick a lock holding a chest closed. Since you have the real-world skill of picking locks, you have the tools to do so, and the Safety Rules permit actual lockpicking, you get to work on the (actual, physical, working) lock. Success and failure are determined fully by whether you can pick it or not. Otherwise, you could also pretend to work on the lock - typically with a gamemaster observing, and then opening the lock for you, if they feel you did a convincing enough job.

### 3. Keep the ball rolling and expectations

These are the Two Rules [3] - with explanations and examples:

**1. When someone acts towards you, show any *plausible* reaction. React in some way, no matter in which way, but react.**

This rule ensures that no play of any kind is simply ignored, and always should be given the chance to generate more play.

For example: *A player casts a spell on you, and you notice there is something about fire in the spell. You now decide what happens, not the other player, or a game master. Maybe you burn. Maybe you only imagine you are in flames. Maybe the spell "went wrong", and you play a completely different effect. Maybe the spell didn't work at all, and you taunt the mage. The only things that you shouldn't do is to either completely ignore that a spell was cast on you - or to play a reaction that is completely implausible and doesn't fit the situation.*

**2. When you act on someone, never expect a *certain* reaction. Always accept what the other participant makes of it.**

This rule is also called the "victim rule", as it is the "victim" of any action that determines the consequences of that action, and never the one that initiated the action.

For example: *You are a mage that put a lot of acting and effort to cast a certain spell on another player. But the effect they are playing doesn't match what you had in mind. You do not complain, neither to the player, nor to other players, not the organizers, but just carry on and continue based on the reaction of the other player, whatever it might have been.*

If you and others really feel that another player is continuously playing unfitting reactions, or only those that strongly benefit them, or is continuously showing no reaction at all, it might be a good idea to discuss this calmly with the player in question in an appropriate off-game situation, possibly with a staff member to arbitrate. But don't stop the game for this, just accept their reaction for now!

## 4. Guidelines

While not at all necessary, it can help players unfamiliar with this style of play to have a few guidelines. Those would typically address certain aspects of play that are not immediately obvious from everyday experience, and will help players to get an understanding of the physical realities of your world.

For example: *"An unarmored person will probably be out of combat on the first or second hit, while a fully armored knight might take a dozen hits or more until going down". Or "An apprentice magic-user would typically have the power to severely harm or fully heal a single individual before having to rest a bit - and only experienced mages would typically be able to do any mind-control related spell at all".*

Always remember that these are **never** actual rules. They just explain the norms of your world. There is no reason you can't have an unlucky knight, a surprisingly powerful apprentice, an inept great wizard, or a berserker shrugging off quite a few blades at first - if they are all done in a fun, interesting and/or convincing way. It all depends on the judgment of the players.

## Appendix A. Limitations

DKWDDK LARP has a few limitations [4] when compared to "classical" rule-based LARPs that can define specific effects for specific actions by tags, keywords, meta-explanations and the like. Those need to be either avoided or addressed with additional "helper rules" or mechanics whenever they become relevant:

- **Competitiveness.** This style of LARP is very collaborative in nature, meaning that conflicts (including combat) are very typically resolved by one party "giving in", if this generates the most interesting play. Though in practice it is common that any combat with no deeper meaning attached to it (a random character, and not your archenemy, or former friend, etc.) is simply resolved by competing with another player using real skill - though nonverbal communication is also used to steer the fight into a certain direction.  
Still, it is recommended that organizers should try to instill into players that "losing" is not only not a bad thing, it can be a very good thing in the right situation.
- You cannot do something where the in-game information given conflicts with the meta-information. For example: Give someone a healing potion that is actually poison. For such a thing to work, you would need to introduce some way of marking it as having a specific effect.
- Any magic or physical abilities that are inherently impossible or at least very difficult to do or act out convincingly. For example: Invisibility, jumping over buildings, teleporting, slowing time, mind reading, summoning meteor storms, etc. This will essentially depend on your player base, whether they are willing to collectively suspend their disbelief to accept certain actions as "convincingly acted out".
- Passive abilities can often be indistinguishable from ignoring play. For example: Being invulnerable to arrows looks exactly as if you as a player are just ignoring arrows. It is best to not use such abilities, or, if you absolutely need to have them, have players point them out when in use ("Nice try, but I cannot be injured by arrows!")

A further limitation of sorts is that this style of play doesn't provide any rule-based character progress. There are no races, classes or professions with any rules attached to it - it is up to the organizers to define them in their background - and also no levels or experience points. Character growth is completely up to the player and, usually, related to the connections they make in the game. Your mage's apprentice will become a mage when you want this to happen - perhaps because you made a more elaborate costume, perhaps because you joined a mage's order in game, perhaps there was some sort of graduation ceremony, perhaps because you just became better at playing a magic-user. Or perhaps you didn't even start out as a lowly apprentice, since you feel you have no problem convincing other players that you are very powerful mage. Either way is fine.

Something connected to this is that there is no balancing characters. But there is also no balancing needed, as experience shows. Even if in-game status and power are seemingly far apart, typically, characters tend to have a similar range of options in games.

## Appendix B. The Frequently Brought Up Problem

The single most common thing that you hear when first introducing anyone to this style of play is "*That's nice and all - but it will be exploited and everyone will be an invincible super warrior in 5 minutes!*". And this has been the case since this style of play was first conceived.

The reality is, though, that quite the opposite was true. A game in which you can (in theory) do everything and be all-powerful was seemingly not attractive to power gamers at all. Probably because everyone could just do the same, if you did. And more importantly - there is no page of a rulebook you can point to for more power. There are only the other players - and they control your power, in a subtle way.

These rules (and variations thereof) are now used in the majority of German LARPs (and in some other countries), from tiny events to those with over a thousand players, and in between 300 and 400 events per year. And while it took a little while for large-scale adoption (they were used in only 10% of LARPs in 2001 [5]), they have been around at least since the mid-Nineties [6].

After now almost 25 years, it can be safely said that these rules work, and work well.

## Links/Sources (German language)

[1] DKWDDK

<http://www.larpwiki.de/Regeln/DKWDDK>

[2] Die Zwei Regeln (Ralf Hüls)

<http://www.larpwiki.de/Meinung/Spielphilosophie/ZweiRegeln>

[3] Die Zwei Regeln - Anmerkung des Verfassers (Ralf Hüls)

<http://www.larpwiki.de/Meinung/Spielphilosophie/ZweiRegeln/Kommentar>

[4] DKWDDK-Howto (Ralf Hüls)

<http://www.larpwiki.de/Meinung/Spielphilosophie/DKWDDK-Howto>

[5] Diplomarbeit " Live-Rollenspiel - ein touristischer Freizeittrend?" (Sikko Neupert)

[http://www.mittellande.de/bib/sikko\\_diplomarbeit/diplomarbeit.html](http://www.mittellande.de/bib/sikko_diplomarbeit/diplomarbeit.html)

[6] Geschichte des LARP (Fred Schwohl)

<http://www.larpwiki.de/Geschichte%20Des%20Larp>

**Feel free to share, copy, adapt, remix and redistribute the contents of this document, as long as the attribution to the original creators of the ideas presented here (under links/sources) remain intact.**