

# Acton Minuteman Company Black Powder Rules

Adapted from the Charlestown Militia Company

## WHAT RULES APPLY

Please note that these rules and guidelines were adapted from the Charlestown Militia Company for the Acton Minutemen hereinafter referred to as AMM. The rules of other re-enactor groups will, at times, differ from these. When invited to an event hosted by another organization, such as the National Park Service, the other group's rules shall apply UNLESS the Acton rules are more specific or restrictive. The officers of the AMM will be responsible for informing the Company of any changes or other applicable rules.

## WHAT WEAPONS ARE COVERED

These rules and guidelines are specific to the use of black powder and flintlock muskets. They do not cover small arms, artillery or edged weapons such as swords and knives.

Muskets used by the AMM are those found during the early Revolutionary War period. They are:

British Long and Short Land Pattern (Brown Bess)

French Charleville

## GENERAL RULES AND GUIDELINES

Always assume a musket is loaded.

Never point the musket at another. Keep the musket pointed in a safe direction.

Keep the barrel end away from your face and hands.

Always maintain control of the musket. While spectators may view and even touch your unloaded musket – with your permission – the member must maintain physical control of the weapon.

Never leave a musket unattended.

Do not smoke around the musket or black powder.

Never look into the flash pan following a misfire. Bad burns are possible due to a delayed flash back.

Store the musket and powder separately.

Company training will occur yearly, or more often if, in the opinion of the Commanding Officer or Safety Officer, additional training is needed by an individual(s) or the entire company.

The use of the musket apart from AMM musters and events will reflect on the group as a whole. Members should conduct themselves accordingly.

No “walk ons” permitted at an event without the explicit permission of the Commanding Officer or Safety Officer.

## INSPECTION OF THE MUSKET

Inspection of muskets prior to any event is the duty of the Commanding Officer, the Safety Officer, or their designee.

All muskets must be equipped with a leather hammer stall, flash guard, leather or lead to hold the flint, functioning half-cock position.

Care should be taken when using the “ping method” to test if the musket is empty. This involves dropping the ramrod down the barrel and listening for the distinctive “ping” of an empty barrel. Remember that black powder is impact sensitive and could ignite. Furthermore, if the musket has been used and is dirty, soot may drop down the barrel and block the vent hole. This could cause a misfire.

The Commanding Officer or Safety Officer may restrict any member from using his/her musket for safety reasons.

**The musket** shall be inspected for cleanliness. A dirty musket is an unsafe musket.

**The stock** will be inspected for cracks, splits, loose screws, and splinters or rough edges.

**The lock** will be inspected for smooth operation, firm hammer position, proper trigger pull, secure flint, clean pan, open vent hole, secure flash guard, properly fitted frizzen and frizzen guard, functioning half and full cock positions, working spring.

**The barrel** will be inspected for straight and properly fitted ramrod, muzzle not dented or worn, properly fitted to stock, not being struck by the flint, secure bayonet plug where applicable.

## POWDER STORAGE AND CARTRIDGE USE

Cartridges must be made of paper, rolled in an 18<sup>th</sup> century manner. They must be folded or glued. Tape and staples are unacceptable.

Assemble cartridges in a cool, dry place, free of drafts and possible sources of ignition. Never smoke or allow others to smoke around black powder.

Cartridges will be “blank” meaning powder only. No ball.

Cartridges must be carried in an approved leather cartridge box. Cartridge may not be carried in clothing.

Unless ordered to ram the paper used for cartridge into the barrel, spent cartridge shall be returned to the cartridge box or pouch for safe disposal. At no time should spent cartridge paper be thrown to the ground where it may be hazardous if found by children.

## LOADING THE MUSKET

**Never** load the musket unless ordered to do so.

Do not remove the rammer unless specifically ordered to do so by the Commanding Officer or Safety Officer for inspection or demonstration purposes.

The load for a .69 or .75 caliber musket with no ball shall be approximately 100-125Gr. FFg or FFFg powder.

Never use modern smokeless powder. It is too powerful for the weapon.

Never lean on the musket while loading.

Powder horns should only be used for decorative/re-enacting purposes and never to store or pour black powder.

## FIRING THE MUSKET

Members will only fire their muskets when ordered to do so.

Muskets must be fired from the shoulder.

Load only when ordered to do so.

Finger off the trigger until ready to fire.

Remove frizzen cover only when the order is given to "Make Ready"

Replace frizzen cover after firing.

In the event of misfire, keep barrel pointed in a safe direction. DO NOT look down into the pan where a spark may still ignite the powder. If the powder in the pan has ignited but the musket failed to fire, re-prime after waiting several seconds to be sure the musket will not go off. If after re-priming the musket still fails to fire, dump the powder from the barrel onto the ground.

Be aware of animals at events. Gunfire can easily frighten animals and may cause harm to themselves or others.

The angle of fire should be at least 45 degrees above horizontal unless otherwise stated by a company officer.

Burned powder can spray 20 feet. The Commanding Officer, Safety Officer or designee shall determine the safe distance from spectators before any firing commences.

## CEASE FIRE

Anyone may declare a "CEASE FIRE" at any time or for any reason.

All members must cease fire when any other member declares a cease fire.

Do not depend on being heard by other members.

Elevating one's hat on the musket, sword or spontoon will also indicate a cease fire.

If you hear CEASE FIRE, repeat the command for others who may not have heard.

Any officer or Safety Officer may also declare a cease fire and will observe the company for compliance.

If there is a medical concern of any kind, immediately call CEASE FIRE.

In summary: We want your experience with the Acton Minutemen to be a fun, positive, historic experience. We can not over state the safety aspect. It's something we must be constantly aware of and strive for.