

Waterbearing 101

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When & Where: At any events or activities where participants are at risk of becoming dehydrated. The people to be served can include, but are not limited to, heavy weapons combatants, fencers, archers, spectators, dancers, kitchen crews, set-up and clean-up crews. These notes are oriented toward coordinating waterbearing for a martial activity but can be adapted for other uses. Under current rules, waterbearing is not allowed to be an event-sponsored activity, so check with the event steward and activity coordinators about their expectations and make a plan for funding any necessary purchases.

Who: Almost anyone with an interest can be involved with waterbearing. Just keep these guidelines in mind:

- ❖ Minors (anyone under 18 years of age) are NEVER allowed on the field. Not between battles, not during a hold, NEVER. This, however, does not mean that children cannot be active contributors to the waterbearing activities. Children can help distribute snacks along the sidelines and help by cleaning up litter. Older children can help with refilling water jugs and mixing the Gatorade. Make certain that all children are able aware of how to act near the activity (awareness of fighter's limited visibility, knowledge of the rules of the ranges, etc.)
- ❖ If it is your intention to allow waterbearers onto the field, be certain to clear this with the marshal-in-charge in advance of the battle. Agree on signals to indicate periods when they will be allowed on the field and when they should vacate.
- ❖ Inform your waterbearers of their respective duties and responsibilities. Make certain that they know if and when they will be allowed on the battlefield and what the signal to vacate the field is.

How:

- ❖ Locate a central waterbearing station near a source of potable water
- ❖ Know who the marshals/activity coordinators are and make certain that they know who you are and the services you plan to provide.
- ❖ If you are waterbearing for a martial activity, it is helpful to have waterbearing stations set up as well as to have waterbearers circulating with jugs of water and Gatorade. (For dance and many other activities, it is often sufficient to simply set up a station and occasionally check that it is adequately stocked.)
- ❖ Set up the waterbearing station about 30 minutes to an hour before the activity is to begin. This allows participants and spectators to locate the waterbearing station and get some fluids before the activity.
- ❖ Be aware of and follow the directions of the marshals/activity coordinators
- ❖ If waterbearers are walking around with the refreshments, instruct them to politely ask gentles if they would like some water or Gatorade. We are here to provide this service to the participants and spectators – anyone who desires a drink should never be turned down. Conversely – we have no authority and no right to try to force someone to drink. If you are concerned about a gentle, bring them to the attention of the head waterbearer or a marshal. (Signs to note: very red or very pale, not sweating even in intense heat or during intense activity.)

Suggested refreshments: (amounts depend on conditions)

Gatorade (mixed to 1/2-3/4 strength)

- ❖ Many fighters complain about watered down Gatorade, but the full-strength formulation can actually contribute to dehydration
- ❖ Try to choose blue or green flavors. Sensitivity to red food dye is relatively common and can mask blood if the person becomes ill and vomits.

Oranges or Grapes

- ❖ These are great foods for snacking since they have high water content. However, both fruits produce a certain amount of “litter.” Be certain to provide appropriate receptacles for the rinds and stems.

Pretzels

- ❖ Pretzels are great because they provide salt and are a good bland snack for fighters who are not ready for, or not willing to eat, lunch.

Pickles

- ❖ Pickles are also a good source of salts and are particularly popular in the summer
- ❖ Caution! As soon as your pickle jar is empty of pickles and left unattended, someone will make off with it and drink the pickle juice! :P

Basic supplies:

- Knife and cutting board – to cut oranges and/or grapes
- Water coolers – 4-5 gallon size for keeping beverages cool and mixing Gatorade
- Hoses, Y-connectors, and sprayers, especially if the water source is used by others
- Large spoon – to help mix Gatorade
- Empty gallon jugs – to serve water and Gatorade from
- Cups – for serving (previously, air conditioner tubing for gallon-jug size straws had been recommended, but will probably be disallowed in a post-COVID world)
- Bowls and platters – to serve pretzels, oranges, etc.
- Wagon – if the water will need to be transported any distance. (Consider a bike lock if the wagon will be left unattended or overnight.)
- Bleach or sanitizer – for clean-up
- Paper towel or dishtowels – for spills and general clean up
- Duct Tape and electrical or masking tape – to hang signage or fix things
- Sharpie marker, pens, paper – for notes and signage
- Rope or twine – for fixing things or to string through jug handles to corral jugs
- Band-aids or basic first aid kit for people to self-use

Hints:

- ❖ Wear clothing appropriate to the conditions. Wear close-toed shoes, especially when serving fighters on the field. Wear a hat and sunscreen when outdoors. Consider an apron (bonus if it has pockets).
- ❖ Purchase empty gallon jugs or water jugs. This costs a small amount, but ensures that you are serving from clean containers and you don’t need to waste a lot of time cleaning out milk or juice jugs.
- ❖ (When inserting a straw into a gallon jug, feed it through the handle and down to the bottom of the jug, but don’t let it curl upwards again. This gives a stable straw that will reach down to the last few ounces of a jug. May be disallowed in the future.)
- ❖ Don’t forget to water yourself!