

Access: LARP
Playing with EDS and
Hypermobility

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Introduction and Overview

This guide is written from a personal perspective of a LARPer with EDS and will help players with EDS and joint hypermobility.

Everybody experiences their symptoms differently and may experience different difficulties at LARP or find that different things help them. However, many of these suggestions could be adapted to suit different people's needs or may give you ideas of things that would work for you and your symptoms.

Generally people are very understanding and want to help you get the most out of a game. It is also worth remembering that one of the most valuable thing you can do at a game is have fun. Taking care of ourselves and thinking about small adaptations and accommodations allows us to have that fun. If you are the sort of person who worries that you are asking too much of people or that you aren't helping enough or getting involved enough (a feeling often experienced during set up and tidy up) try keeping in mind that any small thing you can do helps and that you have a valid reason for having to say "I'm sorry I can't".

In general

- It's ok to ask for help from the organisers – they are there to facilitate the game.
- You have a right to ask for accommodations.
- Managing your condition before, during and after the game can make the whole thing more enjoyable.
- Good communication and honesty is key.
- Accessibility is not about making the game easier for you, it is about making it no more difficult than for any other player.

Before the game

- Make an effort to be familiarized with the site. Talk to other people who have been to the site and might understand footing and terrain concerns.
- Communicate your needs and concerns to the organisers at the earliest opportunity.
- If you are choosing to avoid combat, let the staff and players know that you will be avoiding combat and removing yourself if it comes in your direction.
 - Ask for help making a quick exit, or accommodation from those involved in the combat.
- Bring any braces or compensatory equipment (Oval 8 braces, ankle wraps, cane, knee wraps, etc) even if you don't currently need them to get around.
 - You may strain or overwork something and find yourself needing it at the event.
- If at all possible, get someone else's help loading and unloading your car to reduce strain.
 - If it is not possible, allot extra time to do so slowly and steadily instead of rushing and carrying too much.
 - If you live up a walk-up, consider bringing everything to the door first, instead of hauling each load through of the house, down the stairs, and to the car.

Example:

Bryce has no one to help him pack, and his front door has three stairs that make him nervous to carry things down. Instead of carrying things down the stairs, he puts all of his things at the door, and then loads the car by going back and forth from the base of the stairs to the parking lot.

Talking to Other Players

You don't need to disclose your diagnosis, but it may be helpful to explain that you have unusually flexible joints and need certain accommodations. Think about the people you will be spending most time with in game.

- Explain that you cannot put strain on your joints by standing with locked knees or undergoing an uphill walk while carrying your weapons/bag, because you need your hands free in case you become unstable and start to fall. See if someone will assist.
- Talk to your fellow players about how you will let them know if you're really injured, versus how you're injured in game.
 - Use a code word or a gesture if that makes you more comfortable.
- Speak to them about a lower bunk accommodation if there are bunk beds.
- Let them know if you have any other sleeping needs, like, "Do not wake me for game related things, allow me to wake up on my own."
 - Or, "Please let me have the bunk furthest from the snoring person."
- Be very clear with them that they should not physically assist you standing, or pull/grab your arm or shoulder. Ask them to allow you to stand on your own time.
 - Tell them to verbalize a grab or touch for roleplaying reasons if there's any chance it could throw you off balance.

Example: Marie has arrived late, but a lower bunk has been saved for them by their cabin mates, because they were informed that Marie would need one.

Talking to the Organisers

Most booking forms and sign up sheets will have a space to share medical information, if not you can email or talk to the organisers directly. It is a good idea to put down your diagnosis or any issues you experience. This doesn't just help in case of emergency, but can help the organisers to create a more accessible game.

- Clearly explain what sort of accommodation you need, though you aren't obligated to discuss a diagnosis.
- Let the organizers know that you will be taking efforts to be cautious of physical hazards.
- Let the organizers know that in situations where the players will be standing around for long periods, you may need to sit, and may need a moment to get up safely before doing anything else.
- Ask about long distance walking, unfamiliar trails, safety between cabins and bathroom, and safety concerns in combat.
- If you have elected not to participate in combat, let them know.
 - If you are participating in combat, give them solid guidelines for ways in which fights can be made safer.

- People without joint instability may not notice uneven terrain or wet, slippery floors.
- If there is an unsafe condition, remove yourself, and clarify with staff at the earliest convenience. Your safety is more important than the immersion of a scene or adventure.

Example: Harris arrives at a field combat at night and is unprepared for the multitude of bowl-shaped rocks scattered throughout the area. He removes himself without comment and explains to the staff that he cannot safely fight there without proper lighting, or while running.

Event Considerations:

- Make sure there is a sleeping accommodation that will protect your joints.
 - If you sleep with a multitude of pillows to support your limbs, make sure you have some way to bring that with you. A LARP will put undue stress on you, and taking injuries as you sleep will add to that and take away your rest.
- If you are easily woken or sensitive to sound because of inner ear troubles associated with EDS, plan accordingly.
 - Bring headphones, earplugs, or both, in case someone else snores or has trouble getting into or out of bed quietly.
- Have a place in game where you can comfortably sit and remove strain from your joints.
 - Anti-gravity or zero-gravity lawn chairs are very useful for this.
 - Don't make yourself choose between resting and playing, and be assertive about going to find your chair when you need to.
- If you take regular meds or have associated co-morbid issues like POTS or MCAS, be aware of situations that might bring them up.
 - Take time to sit up from laying down, and be on the look out for environmental changes.
- Find out if organisers have any long walks or sojourns planned.
 - Ask if there is a way you can leave earlier than the other players so you can take your time and remain out of earshot of the NPC/cast until the players arrive.

Example:

Awinita finds herself in a scene where she has to physically hold a door shut against monsters. The action risks dislocating her shoulder but not doing so puts other characters at risk. She has a quick word with the refs/GMs that simply leaning against the door is sufficient to symbolise the act and monsters will be advised.

After the Game

- Allow for plenty of time to walk back to your cabin/sleeping area and get packed up. Doing it hastily may lead to injury, and it's easy to let fatigue make us rush.
- Ask another player to help you lug your things to your car if it is any significant distance.
 - Try to bring everything to the door/bottom of the steps, so that you aren't doing a walk AND stairs each time.
- Be aware that you are likely to feel more sore/out of joint after the event, even if you had no significant injuries.
 - If your doctor agrees, take anti-inflammatories or other joint related meds as soon as you are home, and before you go to sleep. It will stave off some of the pain.

- Prioritize your unpacking. Consider taking only the essentials out of the car until you have eaten and taken any medication you need to take.
- Communicate with staff to let them know what accommodations worked and did not work, and if there's anything else you need to change about how you interact with the game.

Example:

Gael knows that pain can often happen the day after a strenuous event, and has made sure to prepare an ice pack and medication in advance.

Rounding it Up

These are tips and suggestions employed by real players who have EDS and hypermobility disorders. They may not fit for every person in every situation, but the process is very helpful - remembering to talk to other players, organisers, to give time for packing and unpacking and get the right assistance and accommodation in housing.

Use this guide as a starting point to figure out what accommodations and tactics might work for you.

And as always, heed medical advice above all else, particularly in regards to medication.