

ACHIEVEMENT AWARD NOTES

The Grip

The sword may be held in any way so long as it is not used as a throwing weapon. There are countless varieties of sword handles in fencing. The main two categories of grip are French and Pistol – both involve slightly different styles of play, but world champions have used both.

However, the conventional way of holding the foil is to grip the hilt between the **thumb and forefinger** and use the remaining three fingers as **aids** to control the movement of the blade.

The thumb should be on top and in line with the blade. The pommel should be held against the wrist in the on-guard position. In the on-guard position the sword should be held such that there is a **straight line** from the elbow, through the thumb to the point. The elevation of the sword is adjusted by bending from the elbow (not the wrist).

As stated, this is the conventional way of holding the sword but it is not mandatory and other methods can be used so long as they do not break the basic FIE rules. The conventional grip is recommended when learning how to fence, until a personal style is developed.

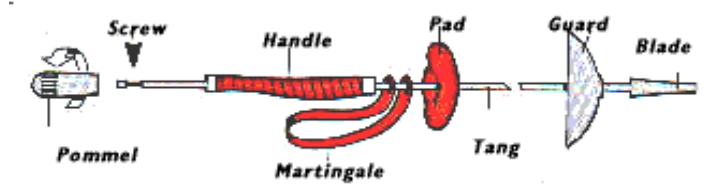
The choice of grip is a question of personal preference for each foilist or epeeists.

French grip



Pistol grip

The foil: It is a light, flexible weapon weighing fewer than 500 g. The blade is rectangular or square in section and must not be more than 90 cm long. The overall length of the weapon must not exceed 110 cm.



The target:

Of the three weapons foil is the most common for beginners. The foil developed from the epee and was used in training for duels. In a duel hits to the torso inflicted the most damage to your opponent, so in foil the target area is **only the torso and the beeb**, excluding arms, legs and head. In electric foil fencing the valid target area on the fencer is covered by a metallic jacket (lamé), when the opponent's weapon makes contact with it a coloured lamp lights up. A hit on the non-valid area (not covered by the metallic jacket) causes a white lamp to light.

Safety

- Always wear correct clothing – mask, plastron, jacket, glove, long trousers and trainers – and make sure that your equipment is in good condition (e.g. no holes in clothing, stitching intact, mask not rusty or too dented, with a working back-strap).
- Make sure your opponent is ready to fence, and wearing the correct equipment.
- Never lose your temper.
- Obey the rules and the referee.
- Do not turn your back on your opponent, or run into them whilst fencing.
- Keep your non-sword arm out of the way.
- Do not use excessive force; hits on your opponent should be firm but light, with a slight bend in your blade.

En Garde

Your feet should be at a right angle, hip- or shoulder-width apart. Hold your weapon with a bent arm, not too close or far away from your body, pointing towards your opponent. Bend your knees!

Basic Footwork

You should finish each step as it started: with your feet at right angles, hip-width apart, with your knees bent.

The Salute

The fencer's salute is performed by lifting the weapon guard up to the chin; this is the minimum requirement, usually the sword is then dipped towards the recipient, brought back to the chin and a final flourish added.

Fencers are required to salute their opponent, the spectators and the Referee at the start and at the end of a bout. Refusal to do so will result in a Black Card (exclusion from the competition).

The fencers must shake hands with their opponent at the end of a bout; using the unarmed hand. Failure to do so will result in a Black Card (exclusion from the competition).

The On Guard - Guards of Sixte & Quarte

The basic fencing guards below represent the conventional on guard positions for fencing Foil.

The fencing target is separated into *lines* which correspond to the four basic guard positions, these are further classified as either *high line* or *low line* according to whether or not the guard is above or below a line dividing the fencer's trunk in two.

High Line

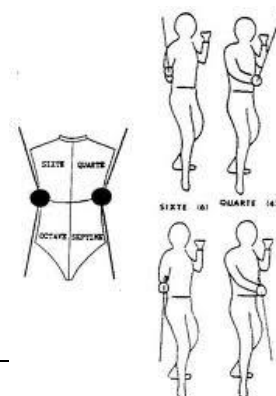
6: Sixte, defence of the sword arm side

4: Quarte, defence of the non-sword arm side

Low Line

8: Octave, defence of the sword arm side

7: Septime, defence of the non-sword arm side



Steps Forward and Backward

From the basic on guard position the fencer steps forwards and backwards maintaining the on guard position:

1. A **Step Forward** is performed by moving the leading foot forward and then bringing the rear foot up to finish in the same position but a step forward.
The **balance shifts forward** progressively leading with the front foot, then drawing the rear foot forward.
2. A **Step Back** is performed by moving the rear foot backward and then bringing the leading foot back to finish in the same position but a step back.
The **balance shifts back** progressively leading with the toe of the rear foot, then shifting weight to draw the front foot back.

Cross-over Steps

Forwards

Starting with your rear foot: move it forwards, across the front of your body, and place it on the ground in front of your other foot (in the same position prior to movement). Lift your front foot, move it forwards, and place it on the ground (on to the heel first) so that you are back to the en garde position.

Backwards

Starting with your front foot: move it backwards, across the back of your body, and place it on the ground behind your other foot (in the same position prior to movement). Lift your back foot, move it backwards, and place it on the ground so that you return to your original en garde position.

The Lunge

Extend your front arm, towards your opponent, with your foil pointing towards your opponent. As with a step, raise your front toes and extend your front leg into a longer stride by pushing off your back leg (make sure that you land on your front heel first, not toes). Your back arm should extend backwards to act as a counter-balance. Throughout the movement, your body should remain upright with your front hand slightly above your shoulders. On completion of the move, your front knee should be above the instep, with a straight rear leg. Both feet should still be at right angles, flat on the floor, with your head and body upright. On completion of the lunge, you'll need to recover:

Recovery backwards: Keep your back foot where it is. Push off your front leg and bend your back leg, using your rear arm as a counter-balance, to return to your original en garde position.

Recovery forwards: Keep your front still. Bring your back foot up to return to your original en garde position.

Note: When lunging, move your arm first! When recovering from a lunge, your sword arm is the last to return to the en garde position.

The Lunge - Hitting - Direct Attack

From the basic on guard position the fencer attacks the opponent by straightening the sword arm and lunging:

The lunge is initiated by first extending the sword arm with the point threatening the opponent's target area.

1. The Lunge is performed by taking a large step forward with the leading foot, which lands more or less flat on the floor. When the point makes contact with the opponent, a slight lift of the hand ensures that the blade bends upwards.

2. The balance accelerates forward by pushing with the back foot while straightening the back leg. The front foot lands more or less flat, with the weight shifting from the heel towards the ball of the foot. The recovery is done by pushing with the leading foot while "pulling" back up into the on guard position with the rear arm.

Different Types of the Lunge. You should be aware that there are two types of lunge – Explosive, and Accelerating – which can be used according to different situations. The technique involved with both types of lunge remain exactly the same, it is only their speed that changes.

Explosive. This is the type of lunge that you've been using up until now; use an explosive lunge for more direct attacks, where speed is paramount. Extend your arm first, and then use the power in your back leg for a burst of energy to propel you forwards. There is just one speed for explosive lunges: fast!

Accelerating. One of the more difficult footwork techniques to master; use an accelerating lunge for more complex attacks that involve preparations. After extending your arm, proceed with the lunge at half speed – this time is reserved for preparing an attack – and then, as you finish your preparation, fully extend your arm and accelerate your lunge to full speed to reach the target.

* For both types of lunge, always remember one thing: ***ARM FIRST !!!***

Ballestra

The ballestra is a forward, jumping, movement that serves two purposes. Firstly, it is a quick way of gaining ground on your opponent and, secondly, acts as a preparation by intimidating/surprising your opponent, making them react. Start off as you would a forward step, by raising your front toes. Extend your front leg, as with a step or lunge, and push off your back foot to gain extra distance. Both your feet should land at the same time, and you should finish as you started, on balance in the en garde position.

The Target Area

Limitation of the Target.

At foil, only hits which arrive on the target are counted as valid. The target at foil excludes the limbs and the head (exception is the lowest part of the mask, bib). It is confined to the trunk, the upper limit being the collar up to 6cm above the prominences of the collar bones; at the sides to the seams of the sleeves, which should cross the head of the humours; and the lower limit following a horizontal line across the back joining the tops of the hip bones, thence by straight lines to the junction of the lines of the groin (see Figure).

Hits off the Target

A hit which is made on a part of the body other than the target (whether directly or as a result of a parry) is not counted as a valid hit, but stops the phrase and therefore annuls all hits which are scored thereafter.

Extension of the Valid Target

However, hits which arrive off the target are counted as valid whenever, by reason of an abnormal position, the fencer has substituted this non-valid target for the valid target. The Referee may question the judges about this, but alone must decide whether the hit is valid or not.

The Principles of Fencing with the foil

Each action in fencing represents a unit of fencing-time; e.g. step, lunge, attack, parry, riposte. In order to score a hit (on or off target) a fencer must be in time and have the priority (i.e. by threatening the opponent by straightening the arm, point on target).

The priority is gained either by initiating an attack, by making a riposte or counter-riposte immediately after a parry, or by making a stop-hit during the pause between two fencing actions.

The offensive actions are the **attack**, the **riposte** and the **counter-riposte**.

- The attack is the initial offensive action made by extending the arm and continuously threatening the opponent's target, preceding the launching of the lunge.
- The riposte is the offensive action made by the fencer who has parried the attack
- The counter-riposte is the offensive action made by the fencer who has parried the riposte.

The defensive actions are the **parries**. The parry is the defensive action made with the weapon to prevent an offensive action arriving.

Method of making a Hit

The foil is a thrusting weapon only. Offensive actions with this weapon are made therefore with the point and with the point only.

Pushing or dragging the point of the electric weapon on the electric piste is forbidden during the actual bout (between 'Play' and 'Halt').

Straightening the weapon on the piste at any time is also forbidden.

At foil it is forbidden, during the course of fencing, to advance the shoulder of the non-sword arm in front of the shoulder of the sword arm (cf. t.36 Judges). Any hit scored by the fencer at fault while committing this offence will be annulled

Fencing Etiquette

The competitors must fence faithfully and strictly according to the rules laid down in these Rules. All breaches of these rules will incur the penalties laid down.

All bouts must preserve the character of a courteous and frank encounter. All irregular actions (flèche attack which finishes with a collision, jostling the opponent, disorderly fencing, a fall, irregular movements on the piste, hits achieved with undue violence, hits made while falling) are strictly forbidden. Should such an offence occur, any hit scored by the fencer at fault is annulled.

Before beginning the bout the two fencers must perform a fencing salute to their opponent, to the spectators and to the Referee. If one of the two fencers does not comply with this rule, they will receive a penalty hit (Red Card) from the Referee. If, after receiving the Red Card, they do not comply, they will be excluded from the competition (Black Card, cf. t.114, t.118, t.120). If both fencers commit the offence, they will both be excluded from the competition.

When the final hit has been scored, the bout is not ended until the two fencers have saluted each other, the spectators and the Referee. To this end, they must remain still while the Referee is making the final hit

decision. When the decision is given, they must proceed with the fencer's salute, which is performed by lifting the weapon guard up to the chin, and must shake hands with their opponent, with the unarmed hand.

If the winner does not comply with this rule, the hit given to his advantage is annulled. If the loser fails to comply, they will be suspended for two competitions. If both fencers so fail, they will be excluded from the competition and suspended for two further competition.

The fencer, whether on or off the piste must keep their mask on until the Referee calls halt. They may under no circumstances address the referee until the Referee has made a decision.

Under no circumstances may fencers remove their clothes on the piste, even to change their body wire

Immediately after the end of a pool or a direct elimination bout the fencers must sign the pool or bout score sheet, under the responsibility of the Referee who must check the accuracy of the results on the score sheet. Before the score sheet is returned to the Directoire Technique, the Referee must indicate in writing if a fencer refuses to sign it. No subsequent appeal relating to the results will be allowed.

Courteous and respectful behaviour and fencers "Pledges of Honour" (cf. Rules:t.114, t.116, t.120)

t.114

There are three types of penalty to be applied in the cases in the table in Article **t.120**. They are cumulative and they are valid for the bout with the exception of exclusion, which is indicated by a Black Card.

Certain offences can result in the annulment of the hit scored by the fencer at fault.

During the bout, only hits scored in circumstances connected with the offences may be annulled (cf. t120 Offences and Penalties).

The penalties are as follows:

- A **warning**, indicated by a Yellow Card with which the Referee identifies the fencer at fault. The fencer then knows that any further offence on his part will result in a penalty hit.
- A **penalty hit**, demonstrated by a Red Card with which the Referee identifies the fencer at fault. A hit is added to his score of his opponent and may, if the last hit is at stake, lead to the loss of the bout. Furthermore a Red Card can only be followed by another Red Card or by a Black Card, depending on the nature of the second offence (cf. t.120).
- **Exclusion** from the competition or the whole tournament as applicable (for a fencer), or expulsion from the competition venue (any person disturbing the order of the competition), demonstrated by a Black Card by which the Referee identifies the fencer or person at fault.

All warnings (Yellow Cards), penalty hits (Red Cards) and exclusions (Black Cards) must be noted on the score sheet of the bout, the pool or match, together with the group to which they belong.

t.116

The first infringement, in this first group, is penalised by a Yellow Card (**warning**). If, during the same bout, the fencer commits any further offence in this group, the Referee penalises them, on each occasion, with a Red Card (**penalty hit**). If the fencer at fault has already been penalised by a Red

Card because of an offence listed in the second or third group, he receives a further Red Card for his first infringement relating to the first group.

t.120

t.120 See the Schedule of Offences and Penalties below.

Offence	Article	First Offence	Second Offence	Third Offence
Leaving piste without permission.....	t.18/3	Yellow Card	Red Card	Red Card
Simple corps à corps (foil and sabre)	t.20			
Corps à corps to avoid being hit.....	t.20			
Turning back on opponent*.....	t.21			
Use of non-sword arm/hand*.....	t.22			
Touching/taking hold of electrical equipment.	t.22			
Covering/substitution of valid target.....	t.22,t.49,t.72			
Leaving the piste to avoid being hit.....	t.28			
Interruption of a bout without valid reason.....	t.31			
Straightening weapon on conductive piste.....	t.46,t.61,t.70			
Clothing/equipment not working or not conforming; absence of second regulation weapon or body wire.....	t.45/1&3(b)			
At foil, reversing line of shoulders*.....	t.46			
At foil and épée, bending, dragging weapon point on conductive piste.....	t.46,t.61			
Bringing weapon into contact with conductive jacket*.....	t.53			
Deliberate hit not on opponent.....	t.53,t.66			
At sabre, hit made with coquille, any forward movement crossing the legs or feet*.....	t.70,t.75/3			
Refusal to obey the Referee.....	t.82,t.84			
Fencer not presenting himself at the first call of the Referee during the competition.....	t.86			
Jostling, falling, disorderly fencing*; taking off mask before the Referee calls ‘Halt’; undressing on the piste.....	t.87			
Unjustified appeal.....	t.122			
S Interruption of bout for claimed injury not confirmed by E doctor.....	t.33	Red Card	Red Card	Red Card
C Absence of weapon check marks*.....	t.45/3(a)			
N Dangerous, violent or vindictive action, blow with guard D or pommel*.....	t.87			
T Faking weapon check marks, intentional modification of H equipment*.....	t.45/3(c),(d)	Red Card	Black Card (1)	
I Fencer disturbing order when on piste (4).....	t.82,t.83			
R Dishonest fencing*; refusal to salute before the beginning D of the bout (only one fencer).....	t.87			
Offence against Publicity code.....				
Refusal of one fencer to salute his opponent after final hit scored.....	t.87	Winner: Annulment of hit Loser: Suspension (5)		

Changing the order of bouts in a team match, whether intentionally or unintentionally.....	t.86	Loss of Match
Any person not on piste disturbing good order.....	t.82,t.83(c),(d)	Warning (4) Expulsion (3)
Manifest cheating with equipment (2).....	t.45/3(e)	Black Card
Refusal of a fencer to fence another competitor (individual or team) properly entered (6).....	t.85	
Non-presentation when called by the Referee at the start of the competition/round/direct elimination bout/match after three calls at one minute intervals (1).....	t.86	
Offence against sportsmanship (1) or (2).....	t.87	
Deliberate brutality (1), refusal of both fencers to salute; before the bout (1); after the final hit scored (5).....	t.87,t.105	
Profiting from collusion, favouring an opponent (1).....	t.88,t.105	
Doping (2).....	t.129	

* Annulment of any hit scored by the fencer at fault.

Yellow Card = Warning (valid for bout, whether one or several encounters).

Red Card = Penalty hit.

Black Card = Exclusion or expulsion

(1) Exclusion from competition.

(2) Exclusion from whole tournament.

(3) Expulsion from competition venue.

(4) In serious cases, Referee may exclude/expel immediately.

(5) Suspension for two competitions.

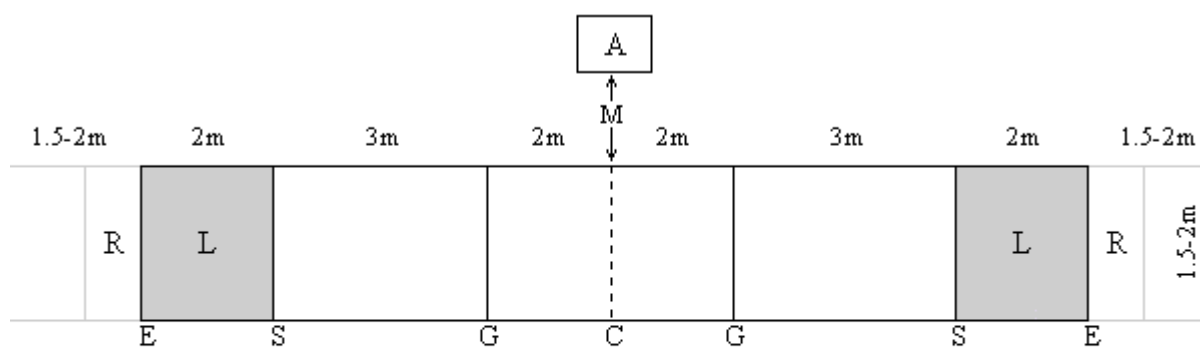
(6) Disqualification.

If a fencer commits an offence in the First Group after having been penalised with a Red Card, for whatever reason, he receives a further Red Card. A fencer only receives a Black Card in the Third Group if he previously committed an offence in this Third Group (demonstrated by a Red Card).

'Pledge of Honour'

The Irish fencing pledge of honour is simply a promise that you will observe the regulations, obey orders, abide by the decisions of the Referees, be respectful and behave in an orderly, courteous and sporting manner.

Dimensions of the Piste



A Table for scoring equipment

C Centre Line

G On-Guard Lines

R Run Back (piste extension)

M Minimum of 1m

L Last 2m of piste

E End of piste (rear limit)

S Start of 2m warning area

Quarte (lateral parry)

Keeping your point where it is (inline with your opponent), move your guard horizontally across from sixte to quarte. Keep your hand at the same height, with the pommel pushed away from the wrist, and make sure not to push your weapon too far from your body.

The foible of the attacking blade should be trapped between the guard and forte of your weapon.

Make your riposte either directly, hitting your opponent in their quarte area; or hit them indirectly, in the octave section of their target area.

Sixte (circular parry)

Move your blade in a (clockwise) circular movement to catch the foible of your opponent's weapon between the guard and forte of your own. You should finish in the same position as when you started, but with your opponent's blade on the opposite (sixte) side of yours.

The circle made by your point should be small, no larger than a dinner plate, using only movement from your wrist and fingers (not the whole of your arm!).

Make a direct riposte, hitting your opponent in the sixte part of their target area.

Octave (semi-circular parry)

Move your point downwards in an anti-clockwise direction, to make a half-circle with your point. Your point starts high, in the sixte position, and finishes in the low-line position of octave. The attacking blade should not be pulled across your body, but deflected to the outside edge of the closest target area. Again, you should trap the foible of your opponent's blade between your guard and forte.

It is your point that lowers, not your hand – keep your hand in the same position, only move your point. To help, try to use your fingers and wrist, not the whole of your arm.

Make your riposte either directly, hitting your opponent in the octave area of their target, or hit them indirectly, in sixte.

- ❖ A few things to remember... A parry is named according to where it finishes, e.g. a lateral parry of quarte finishes in the quarte position. After completing a parry, the point of your blade should always be inline with your opponent. You can adapt these basic parries to defend other areas of your target, e.g. instead of a circular parry of sixte, you can do a circular parry of quarte (on the non-sword arm side of your body). Try to keep the timing of your parries so that they are not too late (you could get hit), and not too early (later, your opponent will learn to avoid your blade). Similarly, make sure that your parries are a good distance away from your body – too close, and you risk getting hit; too far away, and the parry could be weaker and less effective. Most importantly, a parry should make contact with your opponent's blade; it is ideal to trap the foible of their blade between the forte and guard of your own.

The Riposte

Is an offensive action that follows after a parry has been made; the defender becomes the attacker.

Direct/Indirect

Direct riposte: where a hit is scored without passing under or over the opponent's blade, i.e. in the straightest line possible to the target area.

Indirect riposte: after making a successful parry, your point finds its way to the target but not in a straight line, i.e. you move your point under or over their blade.

Attached/Detached

An **attached** riposte is where your blade keeps in contact with your opponents; after making a parry, slide your blade along your opponents to score a hit (always keeping contact between the two blades).

A **detached** riposte is where, after making a parry, your blade loses contact with that of your opponents, e.g. with an indirect riposte.

The Counter Riposte

This is a riposte, made after an opponent's initial riposte has itself been parried ... For example: Person A attacks, Person B parries and makes a first riposte, Person A parries this riposte and then makes their own riposte – this last riposte is the first counter riposte. This pattern may continue to give second, third, or even fourth counter ripostes.

Engagement of the Blade (*prise de fer*)

An engagement of the blade simply means taking control of the opponent's foible with your own blade – principally the forte and guard – as a means of making a direct hit or in preparation. There are four main types of engagement: simple engagement, bind, envelopment, and croisé.

Whenever attempting to engage your opponent's blade, make sure that you use only your fingers and wrist movement, not the whole of your arm. The smaller the technique, the quicker it will be and therefore harder to defend against.

Simple Engagement

The easiest and simplest of engagements, this consists of making contact and taking control of the opponent's blade, as in a parry, but with a half-extension of the arm. The most common simple engagements are: sixte (circular), quarte (lateral), and octave (semi-circular).

Change of Engagement

A change of engagement simply reverses the initial engagement made by your opponent. For example, if your opponent engages your blade in sixte, use your wrist and finger movement to move your point in an anti-clockwise direction, underneath your opponent's blade, to come up on the other side and engage their blade in quarte.

The Bind

Once your opponent's blade has been engaged by your own, a bind is where their blade travels diagonally across (from high to low-line, or vice versa). For example: engage your opponent's blade in quarte. Cut your point over their blade in a (anti-clockwise) circular motion, and then move your blade downwards and across to the position of octave. Binds are a quick and effective form of engagement, although for a small time your opponent's blade will travel across your own target area.

Prepare to Attack!

You may wish to use tricks and tactics to outsmart your opponent... in fencing; a number of movements can be used to prepare your attack, instead of just going straight in for the kill!

Feint, Disengage

• **The Feint**

A simple move, the feint is used as a preparation before making an attack. Its objective is to make your opponent react, often forcing them to make a parry, whilst you attack elsewhere. Feints are more effective when you aim your point to the opponent's eyes, not chest, but be careful not to over-extend your arm in doing so (it will make the rest of your attack less effective).

• **The Disengage**

When making a simple attack or a riposte, disengagement can be used to deceive your opponent's parry. This not only makes your life easier, but also the avoidance of your opponent's blade will mean that you keep right of way (see later notes, in Weeks 5 & 6, under Principles of Foil). To make disengagement, simply use your wrist and finger movement to move your point underneath your opponent's blade, without touching it, and then back up again. Make the movement as small as possible: smaller movements are quicker and therefore harder to defend against.

Beat It!

One of the simplest preparations, the beat is a short, crisp striking movement against the opponent's blade. The aim is to knock their blade aside (and provoke a reaction). Make sure to use only your wrist and fingers to move your blade, not your whole arm. The objective is one of subtlety and guile, not to bash your opponent's weapon across the room – as such, it is a small movement, and your blade should stop where it makes contact with your opponent's. Most often, the beat will be used in tandem with either a feint, a disengagement, or a cutover.

Think About...

Keeping distance.

Time actions (**the stop hit and the time hit**) are actions made into an attack to steal the time from the attack by landing first (the stop in epee), by landing before the final action commences (the stop in foil and sabre), or by intercepting and blocking the final action (the time hit). **Counter time actions** steal time from the time action; in other words the Counter time steals time from the attempt to steal time. We can distinguish three levels of **Counter time actions**:

(1) **Countertime**: There are two basic Counter time actions, defensive counter time and offensive counter time:

Defensive Counter time is often referred to simply as Counter time, and is the form the action most often discussed in fencing texts. Against an opponent who stop hits the fencer initiates an action to draw the counterattack. The fencer then parries the stop hit and ripostes to score in Defensive Counter time. This action is called defensive because a parry is used to defeat the counterattack. In terms of what the opponent and the referee see, this looks like a parry and riposte, and is not easily discernible as a specific tactical choice.

Offensive Counter time is rarely discussed in the fencing literature, perhaps because the prevailing theory is that you defeat a stop hit with a simple attack. However, the idea of Offensive Counter time is important to understanding the tactical flow of the bout. Against an opponent who stop hits the fencer initiates an action to draw a stop hit. The fencer then executes a stop or time hit against the counterattack. This action is called offensive because an offensive (or more properly counter-offensive) action is used to defeat the stop. In terms of what the opponent and the jury see, this looks like a simple attack that accelerates at the end as the opponent attempts to counterattack. However, the fencer has made a distinct choice to defeat the stop hit, not a choice to execute a simple attack against an opponent's defense.

(2) **Feint In Tempo:** Feint in Tempo is used by the stop hitting fencer to defeat Defensive Counter time, and to ensure the arrival of the counterattack. In sequence: (a) the opponent starts an attack to draw the stop, (b) the fencer initiates the stop, (c) the opponent starts to execute a parry, and (d) the fencer deceives the parry and hits. The initial action of the stop hit becomes a feint to draw the parry so that it can be avoided.

(3) **Counter attack In Tempo:** A Counter attack in Tempo is a stop hit on the opponent's reaction to Defensive Counter time. If the opponent executes Feint in Tempo, the fencer who was attempting to execute Defensive Counter time executes a stop hit into the stop hit. In sequence: (a) the fencer starts an attack to draw the stop, (b) the opponent initiates the stop, (c) the fencer starts to execute a parry, (d) the opponent disengages to deceive the parry, and (e) the fencer stop hits on the disengage. Because the parry in Defensive Counter time should be made while moving forward, this action most probably will appear to the referee as one continuous simple attack.

It is important to note that these actions are complex, require eyes open fencing at attacking speed, and are as much in the mind as in the blade work. In particular offensive counter time and counterattack in tempo look and feel like simple attacks. The difference is in the conception of their application, not in how the blade moves.

Reassemblément in Foil Fencing

Okay this next move is not a parry per say but it is a defensive move known as an evasion and it is very useful for getting out of the way of a blade which of course is the function of the parry in the first place. It is called a Reassemblément in French and my French is terrible. It is so called because from an on guard position or even occasionally from a lunge you reassemble your feet quickly bringing the feet together and out of the way of an attack but it is more useful than a foil because on effete this is actually a legal target area but in foil it is useful against a low line attack because as you can see my target area is here and a Reassemblément is a very quick way to get my body out of the way and if you notice my point actually has not moved so that while I have made my target area retreat from the danger of my point, my blade is still on point and ready to take advantage of any sort of openings that might emerge. So let's show what that looks like against an opponent. What you just saw there was a Reassemblément in action. I made an intense attack, a lunge and Syria parried it with a retreat and then riposted with a low line attack which I then evaded by pulling my body out of the way but of course keeping my body out of the way of target for the attack that would have probably come next and that is the Reassemblément.

The Flèche

This is one of the hardest footwork techniques to master... when executed well, it is an excellent way to rapidly finish off your attack and score a magnificent hit on your bedazzled opponent... As with any attack, the first thing you must do is to extend your **ARM FIRST**. Your knees should be bent, and as you tilt your weight forwards slightly, push off your back leg to propel you forwards, and then drive it through in the direction of your target. You should (in theory) hit your opponent *before* your back leg lands on the floor. The energy of the movement should be aimed forwards, not upwards, and your body should remain upright, with your head up and eyes facing forwards. After (hopefully) hitting your opponent, you should move around them: move to your sword-arm side – if you need to, this will allow a better opportunity to hit your opponent again – and then continue past. N.B. If you miss, your opponent is allowed one parry and one riposte to hit you, even once you've passed them! The fleche should not be over-used, but is a useful move and should be done to its full effect every time.

It's Not Over... Remise and Redouble

Sometimes after making a lunging attack, your point will fall short. A remise can be done quickly in order to make up the extra distance to the target. To remise, once you have completed a lunge, lift up your back foot and place it 10-15cms forwards from its original position.

Now, use the newfound bend in your back leg to push off and make either:

a) Another (smaller) lunge, or,

b) A flèche.

The Remise

A different kind of remise this time ('remise' comes from old French – *remettre* – which means to 'replace' or 'renew'). Put simply, once an attack has failed – after falling short, or having been parried – a remise means having another go at the target, in the same line of attack. Once your attack has failed, use a remise to hit the any of your opponent's target area that remains exposed. You may have to angulate your foil in order to get a better shot at the target.

Reprise

1. An indirect renewal of an attack that missed or was parried. This is a continuation of an attack, and does not have priority (in foil and sabre) over a direct riposte.
2. From a lunge, a swift surprise attack made by performing a short forward recovery and an immediate second lunge. In terms of Right-of-way, a new action that follows an attack that missed or was parried. A redoublement takes place in a fencing tempo subsequent to that of the initial attack or riposte.

The Redouble

Similar to a remise, a redouble is a renewal of the attack, hitting in a different position. For example, if your attack to the quarte position of your opponent's target area, you could redouble to sixte. N.B. The remise and redouble are used mainly in épée fencing. In foil, once an attack has ended – by falling short or being parried – priority is handed to the other fencer... as such, the use of a remise/redouble is done without priority and, if both fencers hit at the same time, it will be the ex-defender that scores the point. Unless your renewal is done at lightning speed, the safest option in foil would be to get out of distance, and/or use a counter-riposte.

Pressure

With the blades engaged, simply pressure in a lateral motion upon the mid-section of your opponent's blade. Use your fingers and wrist movement, keeping your hand and arm in the same position. The aim is to provoke a response from your opponent. A short, sharp pressure will provoke a more immediate reaction (similar to the beat), whereas a slower one will allow for more control of their blade. Most often, an effective pressure will provoke your opponent to counter-pressure, allowing you to attack with either a disengage or a cutover.

Froissement

Froissement can be translated into English as "rustling" (in terms of noise). The move involves making contact with your opponent's blade at its foible, and then sliding your blade down toward their guard whilst exerting pressure at the same time. So, like a pressure but with movement on the blade.

Cut-over

To make a disengagement, simply use your wrist and finger movement to move your point slightly towards you whilst arching over the opponent's blade, so that it arrives on the opposite side. Again, make the movement as small as possible to maximise its effectiveness.

The Idea of Compound Attacks

Simply put, a compound attack is an attack made up of two or more movements. Direct attacks – also called ‘simple’ attacks – look to hit the opponent in a straight line, with no other movements in preparation; whereas compound attacks look to combine a number of different movements – such as some of the movements we have covered in this lesson – to trick the opponent into reacting to an initial movement, and then hitting them afterwards.

• **An Example of a Compound Attack: the 1-2 Attack**

With your partner, stand at a distance where you can hit them with two steps, with your blades not touching. Slightly extend your arm into a feint and, when your opponent goes to parry quarte, disengage and place your point into the quarte position, whilst stepping forwards. After making an initial parry, and having been deceived, your opponent will make another lateral parry back into sixte; disengage again, so that your point is in the sixte position, extend your arm and step forwards a second time to make the hit.

Successive Parries

When an opponent uses compound attacks against you, you will often be forced to make a number of parries to keep them from hitting you. Make sure that you don't use the same parry too often, because a predictable fencer is easier to hit... and always remember that distance is also the best defence!

Prime (1). One of the hardest parries to get right under pressure, prime is a parry normally reserved for close quarters defence. From your en garde position in sixte, pronate your hand slightly and, as you make contact with the opponent's blade, continue to lift your hand upwards in a diagonal movement. You should end up with your hand flexed at a right angle, positioned directly in front of your mask (roughly eye level). Try to keep your point in line with your opponent, and position your blade so that it is a small distance away from your body, in order to fully block the oncoming attack. To make a riposte, flex your wrist slightly and go for a direct hit, stepping in if necessary in order to close distance to the target.

Seconde (2). Another parry that is primarily defensive, used regularly due to the strength of its final position and control over the opponent's blade. From your en garde position in sixte, pronate your hand and move your point in a circular (anticlockwise) movement, trapping your opponent's blade as you do. With control of their blade, move your guard slightly outwards (your elbow will also move out as a result). You should finish with your hand positioned slightly ahead and to the side of your body, making for a safe and solid position to make your hit. Angulate your point to go for a direct (attached) hit to the low section of your opponents target area, or hit indirectly.

Neuvième (9). Probably the least used of all the hand positions in fencing it is, however, a nice one to know so that (when you're good enough) you can show off once in a while... Its position is the same as in prime, but with your hand placed slightly more in front. Make sure that you take the blade early and then, once in neuvième, make a quick and direct hit on your stunned and bewildered opponent.

• **Just so you know...** the seven positions that we have covered so far are those used most frequently in foil and épée fencing. However, there are two more that you should also be aware of.

These other positions are...

Tierce (3). This is the starting position in sabre and one of the main parries in sabre. Although it is seldom used in foil and épée fencing, tierce can be used in some (more advanced) compound attacks. From sixte, flex your wrist and turn your palm upwards (so that it is facing towards you).

Quinte (5). Only used in sabre fencing, this is a parry used to protect from lunging attacks to the head. From the sixte position, raise your hand upwards and tilt it inwards so that it finishes above and in front of your head, with the blade not parallel but sloping slightly upwards. If you have to do a parry of quinte in foil or épée, then something has gone terribly, terribly wrong...

Be Engaging...

An engagement of the blade simply means taking control of the opponent's foible with your own blade – principally the forte and guard – as a means of making a direct hit or in preparation. There are four main types of engagement: simple engagement, bind, envelopment, and croisé. Whenever attempting to engage your opponent's blade, make sure that you use only your fingers and wrist movement, not the whole of your arm. The smaller the technique, the quicker it will be and therefore harder to defend against.

• **Simple Engagement**

The easiest and simplest of engagements, this consists of making contact and taking control of the opponent's blade, as in a parry, but with a half-extension of the arm. The most common simple engagements are: sixte (circular), quarte (lateral), and octave (semi-circular).

• **Change of Engagement**

A change of engagement simply reverses the initial engagement made by your opponent. For example, if your opponent engages your blade in sixte, use your wrist and finger movement to move your point in an anti-clockwise direction, underneath your opponent's blade, to come up on the other side and engage their blade in quarte

Oh, Referee!

At the start of every new point, both fencers must stand behind their respective en garde lines. The referee stands on the outside of the piste, level with the centre line. These positions are taken at the beginning of every fight, and after a successful hit has been awarded.

The referee's **commands** are...

"En garde" – to ask both fencers to come to their positions.

"Are you ready?" – say *"no"* if you're not.

If there are no objections from either fencer at this point, the ref will say one of any of the following... *allez, fence, fight, play!*

Whenever the bout needs to be stopped, the ref will say *"halt"*!

During free play, the ref must move in order to remain by the side of the fencers, whilst keeping a clear view to the scoring apparatus.

In the event of a non-valid hit being made, the ref will call 'halt' to stop play, and fencing will resume in the same place on the piste.

Stepping completely off your end of this piste will stop play, and a point will be awarded to your opponent.

Stepping off the side of the piste results in a stop in play, and when play resumes the offending fencer loses one metre in ground – if this results in the fencer crossing the back line, one point is awarded to the opponent.

If this is done on purpose – to avoid being hit – the ref may award a yellow card.

The ref may give a fencer a 'warning' for small offences. A yellow card must be awarded if this offence is repeated, and two yellow cards will result in a red – giving one point to the opponent. Please avoid... weapon failure (when fencing with electrics), the use of unreasonable force, failing to salute the opponent or referee.

Keeping Score & Time

Points win prizes! To win a fight you must get to the allocated maximum score before your opponent or, if time runs out, be the one with the most points. In épée, if for example you and your opponent are tied at 14-14 and there is a double hit, then you must replay the point until a single hit is scored (the same applies at 4-4 in a fight to 5). In competitions, fights are often scored to 5 points in the first rounds (called 'poules'), and then to 15 points in DE (or 'Direct Elimination') fights later on.

Poule fights: score 5 hits/3 minutes. The person who scores 5 hits first will win; if the 3 minute time limit is reached before either fencer has gotten to 5, the person who is leading will win.

DE fights: 15 hits/9 minutes. Three times the fun of a poule fight... these are comprised of three 3-minute periods, with 1- minute rest periods in between (e.g. fence for 3 minutes, rest for 1 minute, fence a second period of 3 minutes, rest for 1 minute, and then a third, final, and nerve-racking final 3 minutes). Again, the

first person to reach 15 points will win the fight and, in the event of time running out, the person leading on score will be victorious.

Sudden death: in the event of time running out and *both* fencers being tied on score, then the bout is decided with one final point. One person is given ‘priority’, normally by tossing a coin or spinning a pen or pencil, and then fencing resumes for a further minute – the person who scores the first hit will win or, if time runs out before a hit is scored, then the person with priority will win.

NB: time keeping in fencing is *not* continuous. The clock starts as soon as the referee tells the fencers to begin, and ends each time “halt” is called.

‘Electric’ Fencing

Electric fencing is the norm nowadays. It involves a **scoring box** (usually referred to simply as “box”), situated by the centre line of the piste, which is connected to two **spools** at either end by what are called **ground wires/leads**. Each spool will have a socket, into which the fencer will plug their **body wire** and then attach it to a clip on their jacket – the other end of the body wire, which is worn underneath the fencing jacket, will plug into the socket of an electric weapon. As the valid target in each weapon is different, fencers must use different equipment accordingly: _ Foil: is complicated. Each fencer must wear an **electric jacket** (also referred to as a **lamé** [pronounced “lar-may”] – don’t ask us why, we don’t know!), which covers only the target area valid for foil (i.e. not the arms or legs). The body wire will have 2 ends with 3 different bits at each one – a 3-pin socket (plugs into spool), a crocodile clip (clips onto jacket), and a bayonet or 2-pin socket (plugs into weapon). Before the fight commences, each fencer will hit the electric jacket of the other, making sure that a coloured (red/green) scoring light registers, instead of an off-target (white) light. _ Sabre: is more complicated. More or less the same as foil in that each fencer must wear an electric jacket, however the jacket will be sabre-specific (i.e. with sleeves and no metallic fabric below the waste). The same body wire is used in sabre as in foil, but with an additional “mask clip” – a wire with two crocodile clips, one at each end – connecting the electric jacket to the mask. Before a match, fencers will test by tapping each other’s mask to make sure that a coloured light appears. _ Epee: is much easier. No funny jackets – apart from the normal fencing one! – need to be worn. The body wire is simple, with two 3-pin plugs at each end – one end plugs into the spool and the other into the weapon socket. Fencers “test guards” before each fight – hitting your opponent’s guard once – to make sure that no scoring lights come up on the box. Electric fencing is simple for the most part, with just two fencers and a referee. Fights progress as detailed earlier in this handout. During play, any hits registered by either fencer will cause the box to beep and show some pretty lights, signalling the referee to call “halt” – in foil; a **white light** signifies a “non-valid” hit (i.e. hitting off target, like the arm, or the floor). In all three weapons a **coloured light** signifies that a valid hit has been scored. The side on which the light appears is the same side by which it was scored. As you’ll appreciate, in foil and sabre there tends to be a bit of polite discussion before any hits, if any, are actually awarded, in accordance with Right of Way. In epee competitions, it is not uncommon for there to be **floor judges**, because if the weapon hits the floor it will register a coloured light which may not be valid. To eliminate this, and usually at competitions, fencers will sometimes play on what is called an **electric/metallic piste**, which is hard-wired to the box and will eliminate most floor hits by earthing them out.

How does electronic scoring in fencing work?

One opponent has a green and white light, and the other has a red and white light.

Foil: Both opponents wear a mesh vest, covering the target area (the torso), called a lame. There is a clip attached to the lames connected to the box, and another wire that goes through the sleeve of the weapon arm, plugged into the weapon. The foil has a depressor at the tip of it. When the foil's depressor is pushed in, and it is on the lame, a circuit is completed that lights the green or red light, depending on which fencer struck. If the depressor is pushed in and it is off the lame, the white light goes off. There is a lock out time, but it is long enough for a counter attack or riposte to land. Then it is the judge's job to award a point or not.

Epee: Since everywhere on the body is target area, there is no need for a lame. Epee's have a depressor that will go off, no matter where they hit. The lockout speed for an electric epee is very fast, because there is no "right of way". If both fencers manage to hit each other, both lights go on, and a double point is awarded.

The judge's main job is to make sure no one hits the floor when attempting to go for a toe touch. (However, simply watching the box and not the fencers is in very bad taste.)

At the start of every bout, the fencers "test fair" to make sure the electrical equipment is working properly. Foilists hit their foils on the lame so make sure both lights come on; epeeists hit each other's bell guards to make sure the lights do not come on.

Electrical equipment makes scoring much easier, but it is prone to malfunction. Big tournaments will have inspections at the start of the tournaments (and also to prevent tampering).

Very Basic Foil Armoury – COMMON FAULTS

Common faults/failures

Problem: Clean hit scored (e.g. you see point land in middle of chest) but no light appears.

Reason: You have not taped your blade properly and both the tip and the blade are coming into contact with the lame.

Solution: Tape your blade properly - FIE regulations state 15 centimetres from tip of blade.

Reason: Your grub screws are in too tight.

Solution: Remove, examine for wear and replace if necessary. If they will not hold tip, check tip is right for barrel.

Reason: You are not hitting properly.

Solution: More practice!

Reason: Friction between the barrel and point is preventing the point from depressing.

Solution: Slap on the floor to loosen it; otherwise clean or replace the tip.

Reason: Spring is too heavy.

Solution: Compress it or heat one end with a match.

Reason: Opponent is grounding his weapon to his/her lamé

Solution: Tell her/ him to stop; it's illegal.

Reason: The wire has come away from the connector screw at socket in guard

Solution: Change weapons and mend at leisure.

Reason: The wire is broken along the blade.

Solution: Change weapons and mend at leisure.

Reason: You are grounding your own foil to your opponent's lamé.

Solution: Improve the insulation on your foible (15 cm is required).

Reason: The foil wire is shorting to the weapon.

Solution: Check the integrity of the insulation along the wire and beneath the cushion. Also make sure no wire ends at the clip are touching the rest of the weapon.

Reason: The scoring box is on the wrong weapon setting.

Solution: Hmm.

Reason: There is a short in your body wire.

Solution: If there are no lights when the weapon is unplugged, but there are lights when the body wire is unplugged from the reel, the body wire is at fault.

Problem: Intermittent white light.

Reason: Your guard is loose and is therefore breaking the circuit.

Solution: Tighten handle.

Reason: There is dirt in your tip.

Solution: Spin tip to clean or dismantle completely, clean and reassemble.

Reason: The spring loaded bayonet socket is broken.

Solution: Throw it away and replace.

Reason: Broken wire, especially near tip so that it is okay when you test but when flexed, circuit is broken.

Solution: In extremis (ie competition and you have no other weapons) apply clear nail varnish to break. This is not going to work for more than a couple of hits and is not even guaranteed for this. But if you have no other weapon, then you might as well try it.

Proper solution is a rewire.

Reason: Loose barrel.

Solution: Tighten carefully. Might break wire.

Reason: Soft or short spring.

Solution: Use foil weight test. If fails, replace or stretch spring.

Problem Permanent white light appears

Reason: Fencer not plugged in.

Solution: Hmm.

Reason: Ground lead has pulled out of spool.

Solution Hmm.

Reason: Connector pulled out of socket in guard.

Solution: Replug.

Reason: Wire is rising up from blade.

Solution: Change weapon.

Reason: Faulty bodwire.

Solution: Change body wire.

Reason: Rusty grub screws.

Solution: Discard and replace.

Problem Weapon Fails Weight Test

Solution: The spring is too soft. Stretch the spring or get a new one.

Solution: Friction between the barrel and point is overwhelming the spring. Clean the inside of the barrel, or replace the entire tip if it is bent or warped.

Solution: Too much tape on the end of your blade is jamming against the sides of the weight.

Problem: Valid touch produces a white light

Solution: Opponents lame is not connected – ask the referee to check.

Solution: Opponents body wire is broken. Ask the referee to check. (Diagnose by testing at the lame clip and at the reel wire connection.)

Solution: Opponents lame has a dead spot. Ask the referee to check.

Solution: Your foil body wire polarity is reversed. Disassemble and reverse the connections.

Solution: The exterior of your foil point is dirty/corroded. Change your weapon.

Problem: Foil produces white lights when tip is not depressed.

Solution: The tip is jammed shut. Spin the point or slam on the floor to free it.

Solution: Grit in the tip is breaking the circuit. Spin the point or slam on the floor to dislodge the grit.

Solution: The barrel is loose, tighten carefully with pliers.

Solution: The foil wire is broken. If the light is intermittent, try flexing the blade to induce the white lights; success means that the wire is probably broken. If the lights are triggered by shaking the blade, the point or clip may be to blame.

Solution: The circuit is breaking at the clip. Check that the body wire is held securely at the clip.

Solution: The body wire is broken. Diagnose by shorting the two connections on the weapon end of the body wire; if the lights continue then the body wire or reel is at fault. Short the two close prongs at the other end of the body wire; if the lights stop, the body wire is to blame. If not, see next.

Solution: The scoring apparatus is broken. The connections, reel wire, reel contacts, floor wire, or scoring box may be at fault.

Solution: The guard is loose, tighten the pommel or pommel nut.

Very Basic Foil Armoury – LAMES

Checking lamés

Clip one lead of the multimeter in to the lamé body wire clip and use the other to work across the lamé. Check readings on multimeter.

Mending

Theoretically it is possible to patch lamés but most people do not bother, as it is difficult to get it even and flat. If you are going to do it, you need to fold the edges down around the piece of patch before attaching it to the lamé. Expect some objections from your opponents and definitely expect to have it looked at closely at competitions.

Care of

If you leave your lamé in your bag, you can expect it to go rusty. Pack it inside out and roll loosely rather than fold as folding tightly will eventually cause wear along the creases. Hang it up to air and dry as soon as you get home. Don't leave it bundled up with wet kit and blades.

Washing

Don't. There's no need to wash it just because it smells bad. The only time you should wash it is if you inadvertently leave a mars bar rolled up in it and the only way you will ever remove it is by washing. Use warm water and a mild detergent like woolite and a gentle hand. Hang up to dry (it takes ages). But really, do not wash unless you absolutely have to.

Rust

This gives high resistance. You can remove it with lemon juice and vinegar. But it won't go rusty if you look after it as above.

Regarding the complexity of movements, all fencing actions may be divided into **simple actions** (one movement) and **compound actions** (more than one movement).

Preparatory actions and their tactical use

A fencer who can foresee his opponents intentions will not easily be taken by surprise and may prepare better his/her own plan of action. After the successful reconnaissance of the opponent, one may plan one's own actions, taking advantage of one's own strong-points and the opponent's weak-points.

All fencing actions applied in a bout may be divided into two main categories:

1. Preparatory actions.
2. Actual actions (real or ultimate actions).

Preparatory Actions are the numerous and various fencing actions not intended to score a hit, directly or indirectly, but facilitating and preparing the successful application of actual (real) actions. Preparatory actions serve the following purposes:

1. Assessment of the opponent and orientation in the psychological and factual situations in the bout.
2. Concealing one's own intentions.
3. Misleading the opponent and using tactical feints.
4. Drawing certain actions from the opponent and trying to influence his movements.
5. Manoeuvring, gaining the feel of play, gaining the initiative, preparing one's own attacks and other actions.
6. Hindering the opponent's concentration, assessment of distance, etc.

Preparatory actions are an extremely important factor in deciding the struggle in the fencing bout and the fencer must know, understand and practice these actions. One of the very important tasks of preparatory actions is to gain maximal information about one's opponent—his/her style of fencing, favourite strokes, his/her strong and weak points, etc.

Actual Actions

Actual actions are ultimate, specific actions intended to ward off a hit or to score a hit, directly or indirectly. From the point of view of the most elementary tactical application, the actual actions can be divided into: **offensive actions**, **defensive actions** and **counter-offensive** (offensive-defensive, counter-attacks).

Offensive actions comprise:

1. Attacks.
2. Ripostes.
3. Counter-ripostes.
4. Counter-time.
5. Renewed offensive actions (remise, reprise, redouble).

Counter-offensive actions comprise:

1. Point-in-line (arm straight and point threatening the opponent's target).
2. Counter-attacks (stop-hit, stop-hit with opposition, derobe, stop-hit with evasion, and compound counter-attack—feint of stop-hit, deceive the parry and feint of derobe, derobe—which is called feint in time).

Defensive actions comprise:

1. Parries.
2. Evasions.
3. Retreats (defence with distance).

When discussing the application of actual actions in a bout, one should bear in mind that they may be executed on one's own initiative (offensive actions) or as a response to the opponent's initiative (defensive and counter-offensive actions).

Plans and tactical tasks in a bout ought to be changeable and adaptable to various tactical situations and in accordance with the nature of the opponent. The ways to mislead the opponent—the real feints, feints of thrusts or cuts which are meant to illicit certain movements from the opponent—may be generally divided into two categories: **first degree tactical feints** (direct feints) and **second degree tactical feints** (indirect feints). The following examples will illustrate the point.

First Degree Tactical Feint (Direct Feint)

Foil— During preparation, Fencer A has led the opponent to believe that a compound attack composed of multiple cut-overs is his intention. At the beginning of Fencer A's actual attack, the opponent, sensing the opportunity, counter-attacks with a stop-hit. Fencer A, who has been expecting this response, parries the counter-attack and scores with a riposte, thus executing counter-time.

Second Degree Tactical Feint (Indirect Feint)

Foil— Fencer A jumps forwards with the point of the foil raised high with an “apparent” attempt to draw and parry Fencer B's stop-hit (simple counter-attack). Fencer B, sensing the “trap”, executes a compound counter-attack (he wants to execute feint of stop-hit—deceiving the parry; Italian “fint in tempo”). Just as Fencer B begins the execution of the compound counter-attack, Fencer A finishes his movement with a direct thrust which causes Fencer B to fail as the counter-time of Fencer A arrives on B's first movement (feint of counterattack).

Classification of Fencing Actions from the Point of View of their Tactical Application

The psychological basis (perception and ways of choosing the actions) of applying the actual actions in the bout lead to the division of these actions into three groups:

1. Foreseen actions.
2. Unforeseen actions.
3. Partly foreseen actions.

Foreseen Actions (preconceived or premeditated actions)

1. First intention actions (foreseen actions of first intention).
2. Second intention actions (Foreseen actions of second intention).

These terms are generally well-known. Generally, foreseen actions are the actions executed according to a previously chosen plan-motor program.

Unforeseen Actions (spontaneous or unpremeditated actions)

These actions are automatic, mostly applied in the form of defensive or counteroffensive actions. They are executed as “reflex”-motor response to unexpected offensive actions from the opponent—usually in the form of parry or counter-attack “on the spur of the moment”. This is a response to an opponent's action which was neither expected nor foreseen.

Partly Foreseen Actions (actions containing both foreseen and unforeseen parts)

1. Actions, mostly attacks, with a known beginning but an unknown ending, so called “open-eyes attacks”.
2. Actions mostly attacks, with change of intention during their execution. In partly foreseen actions, the beginning is known and foreseen and the final part is unforeseen. The two above mentioned varieties of partly foreseen actions superficially are very similar and yet there is a striking difference between them. An open eyes action begins with a foreseen and planned movement (feint or action on the blade) and ends according to the opponent's reaction. Actions with a change of decision are conceived, initially programmed and put into execution as preconceived actions (either first or second intention) and then, under the influence of the opponent's unexpected movement, are changed mid-way.

Second intention attack

Using **second intention actions**, the attacker may react earlier and execute the foreseen final movement with more certainty and accuracy

An attack which is intended to score without drawing and taking advantage of an opponent's riposte or counter attack is called a **first intention attack**. This class of attack may be simple or compound and may or may not include actions on the opponent's blade (i.e. beat, binding or press).

A **second intention attack** consists of a false attack which draws the opponent's parry-riposte, counter-attack or parry and delayed riposte and finishes with a foreseen counter-action by the original attacker. It may finish by parry counter-riposte, counter-time, remise or redouble.

Counter-time

Parrying or counter-attacking the opponent's counter-attack is called counter-time. Counter-time, like many other fencing actions, may be applied "on the spur of the moment" as an "automatic" motor response (motor reaction) or may be executed as a premeditated (foreseen) action constituting one of the many varieties of second intention attacks.

Counter-time may be executed as a parry followed by riposte, a stop-hit, a stop-hit with opposition, or a beat-thrust. Counter-time against a compound counter-attack may be applied by successive parries or successively taking the blade.

Tactically speaking, counter-time, like many other actions, may be applied as:

1. A foreseen action,
2. An action with change of intention during its execution,
3. One of the possible ways of finishing an attack with unknown destination.

Foreseen Counter-Time (second intention action)

An epee fencer deliberately draws a stop-hit the parries it and scores with a riposte or, by a rather slow taking of the opponent's blade, draws a derobe and scores with a hit by taking the blade for the second time and then thrusting in opposition.

Unforeseen Counter-Time (change of intention during the execution of an action)

An epeeist starts to execute a foreseen attack with a feint in the low line, tries to draw the opponent's octave parry and wants to deceive the parry and score a hit in the high line. His opponent, however, does not attempt to take the expected parry but, instead, executes a stop-hit to the forearm. The attacker changes his original intention and finishes the attack with a hit with opposition in sixth line.

Counter-Time as One of Possible Endings of Attack with Unknown Destination

An epeeist begins his attack with an unknown ending ("open-eyes"). He starts with a feint and a step forward and finishes according to what his opponent will do. If the opponent does not respond, the attacker finishes with a direct thrust. If the opponent tries to parry, the attacker will deceive the parry, scoring with a disengagement or counter-disengagement hit. If the opponent chooses to counter-attack, the attacker will parry-riposte or do any other action in counter-time.

Fencing Time: the time required to complete a single, simple fencing action.

'Taking the initiative'

Active fencing means taking the the initiative and controlling the process of the attack. The active fencer is an offensive fencer. The active fencer makes things happen in the bout. Passive fencing, other hand, means leaving initiative to the opponent. The passive fencer works off the errors of the opponent rather than creating situations that will result in a hit. In other words, fencers who believe in victory tend to be active fencers.

GLOSSARY

Absence of blade: when swords are not in contact.

Advance: to step forward

Aids: the last three fingers of the sword hand.

Analysis: the process of describing actions occurring in a fight, usually a phrase preceding a hit.

Angulation: creating an angle between the weapon and the sword arm by flexing the wrist and pronating or supinating the sword hand.

Annulment of hit: a valid hit which is disallowed because of an infringement of the rules or a technical fault.

Appel: beating the ground with the ball of the foot, either as a 'front foot' or 'rear foot' appel.

Assault: friendly combat between two fencers.

Attack: an initial offensive action made by extending the sword arm and continuously threatening the opponent's target.

Avoidance: ducking or moving sideways to avoid being hit.

Back edge: the edge of a sabre blade opposite to that of the cutting edge.

Balestra: a short, sharp jump forwards; usually used as a preparation.

Barrage: a fight-off to determine a result in the event of a tie.

Beat: crisp striking movement of the opponent's blade creating a deflection, or obtaining a reaction; used as a preparation.

Bib: a soft, padded attachment to the lower part of the mask to protect the neck and throat.

Bind: taking of the foible of the opposing blade diagonally from high to low line, and vice versa.

Blade: the main component of a sword on which the hilt is mounted.

Body wire: wire worn under a fencer's clothing to connect the sword terminal to the retractable spool cable, when using the electrical apparatus.

Bout: a fight for a specific number of hits.

Breaking ground: stepping back.

Breeches: white, knee-length trousers made of robust material; side fastening must be on the non-sword-arm side, and legs must have fastenings below the knees.

Broken time: when a pause is introduced into an action which is normally performed in one movement.

Brutality: actions which are performed with an unacceptable level of force or violence which causes discomfort to the opponent.

Button: soft covering over a non-electric foil or epee point.

Cadence: the rhythm in which a sequence of movements is made.

Ceding parry: a parry formed by giving way to an opponent who is taking the blade.

Change beat: a beat made after passing under or over the opponent's blade.

Change of engagement: re-engagement of the opponent's blade on the opposite side by passing under or over it.

Chest protectors: rigid breast cups which fit inside women's fencing jackets.

Choice reaction: reasoned response to a change of conditions presented by the opponent.

Circular parry: deflection of the opponent's attacking blade by making a circle with the sword point.

Close quarters: when two fencers are close together but can still wield their weapons.

Competition: aggregate of individual bouts or team matches required to determine a winner.

Compound actions: two or more single actions performed together as one continuous action.

Compound attack: an attack comprising one or more feints.

Compound prises de fer: two or more consecutive takings of the blade, alike or different, with no loss of blade contact .

Compound riposte: riposte comprising one or more feints.

Conventions: the rules governing the method of fencing for each weapon.

Coquille: bell-shaped guard of a foil or epee.

Corps à corps: bodily contact between the fencers in a bout.

Coulé: the action of extending the sword arm and grazing lightly down the opponent's blade, maintaining contact throughout.

Counter attack: the offensive action made while avoiding, or closing the line against, an opponent's attack.

Counter-disengagement: an indirect action which deceives a change of engagement.

Counter-offensive action: *see* counter attack.

Counter-parry: *see* circular parry.

Counter-riposte: a riposte following the successful parry of the opponent's riposte or counter-riposte.

Counter-time: an action made by the attacker into a counter attack which is provoked by the opponent.

Coupé: *see* cut-over.

Croisé: the taking of the foible of the opposing blade from high to low line, and vice versa, on the same side as the engagement.

Crosse grip: a moulded grip with finger protrusions, used on foils and epees.

Cut: a hit at sabre made by striking with the edge of the blade.

Cut-over (coupe): an indirect action made by passing the blade over the opponent's point.

D

Defence: not being hit by the opponent's offensive actions, either by parrying, avoiding, or moving out of distance.

Delayed: actions made after a pause; usually attacks or ripostes.

Dérobement: evasion of the opponent's attempt to beat or take the blade while the sword arm is straight and the point is threatening the target.

Detachment: when both blades break contact.

Development: extension of the sword arm accompanied by the lunge.

Diagonal parry: deflecting the opponent's attacking blade by moving from a high line guard to a low line guard on the opposite side and vice versa.

Direct: actions made without passing the blade under or over the opponent's blade

Direct elimination: method of competition organisation where winners are promoted to the following rounds and losers are eliminated after one fight.

Disciplinary code: by taking part in a fencing competition, fencers 'pledge their honour' to observe the rules for competitions and the decisions of judges and to be respectful towards the president and the members of the jury.

Disengagement: indirect action made by passing the blade under or over the opponent's blade.

Displacement: turning or ducking to remove the target area from its normal position, resulting in the non-valid target being substituted for the valid target.

Disqualification: to be eliminated from a competition due to cheating or bad behaviour, or by default, eg. late arrival.

Double: a compound attack which deceives the opponent's circular parry.

Double action: when both fencers choose exactly the same moment to make an offensive action.

Double defeat: in epee only; after the time has expired, if both competitors have received the same number of hits (or neither has scored a hit), they are counted as both having received the maximum number of hits being fought for, and a defeat is scored against each, except in direct elimination where the fight goes on without limitation of time until there is a result.

Double hits: in epee only, when both competitors register a hit on each other simultaneously, the difference of time between the two hits being less than 1/25 of a second.

Double prises de fer; loss of contact between the first and second prise de fer.

Draw: seeding of fencers to determine the bouts in a competition.

Duration of bout: actual fencing time allowed during a bout, ie a stop clock is started at the beginning of a bout, stopped each time the president halts the fencers and started again when the bout is restarted.

E

Earthing of guard: guards of electric weapons must be earthed correctly so that weapon hits do not register on them.

Earthing of piste: when using electrical equipment, metal pistes must be correctly earthed so that hits do not register on them.

Elbow guard: a pad worn on the fencer's sword-arm elbow for protection.

Electrical apparatus: an electric box with red and green lights to register valid hits at foil, epee and sabre and white lights to register non-valid hits at foil. The apparatus is mounted centrally, adjacent to the piste and connected by floor leads to spools with retractable cables placed at both ends of the piste, to which the fencers connect their body wires.

Electric weapons: foils, epees and sabres suitable for use with electrical apparatus.

Engagement: when both blades are in contact.

Envelopment: the taking of the foible of the opponent's blade by making a complete circle and maintaining continual contact throughout.

F

Feint: threatening movement of the blade made with the intention of provoking a parry or similar response.

Fencing Line: when fencers are fencing each other it should be possible to draw a theoretical straight line running through both leading feet and rear heels.

Fencing time: Time required to perform one simple fencing action.

Flank: the side of the trunk of body on the sword-arm side.

Floor judges: two judges who watch for floor hits when electric epee is used without a metal piste.

Foible: the flexible half of the blade further away from the hilt

Forte: the half of the blade nearer to the hilt.

French grip: Hilt style which has a straight handle (without finger protrusion) and a pommel.

Froissement: deflecting the opponent's blade by opposition of 'forte to foible' while blades are engaged.

G

Guard (of weapon): the part of the hilt to protect the sword hand.

Guards: fencing positions - *see* prime, seconde, tierce, quarte, quinte, sixte, septime, octave.

H

High line: the position of the target above a theoretical horizontal line mid-way through a fencer's trunk.

Hilt: the assembled parts of the sword excluding the blade, ie the guard, pad, grip and pommel.

Hit: to strike the opponent with the point of the sword clearly and distinctly and with character of penetration. A cut with a sabre.

I

Indicators: a system used in competition to determine a fencer's seeding after the first rounds. The first indicator is expressed as a ratio of the number of victories and the number of fights and the second indicator is the number of hits scored minus the number of hits received.

Indirect: an offensive action made by first passing the blade under or over the opponent's blade.

J

Judges: In non-electric bouts, four judges officiate, two at both sides of the piste, to watch for hits on the fencer they are facing; judges may also officiate during bouts using electric equipment to watch for illegal use of back arm, or hits on the floor when metallic pistes are not used.

L

Lamé jacket: metallic-woven over-jacket covering the valid target for foil and for sabre.

Lines: theoretical divisions of the target, corresponding to fencing guards.

Low lines: position of the target below a theoretical horizontal line mid-way through a fencer's trunk.

Lunge: a method of getting closer to an opponent with acceleration to make an attack and while maintaining balance and making it possible for a rapid recovery to On Guard.

M

Manipulators: the index finger and thumb of the sword hand.

Martingale: the loop of tape or leather attached to the grip and held to prevent a non-electric foil from flying out of the hand in the event of being disarmed.

Metallic piste: electrically-conductive material covering the piste in order that hits on the floor do not register on the electrical apparatus.

O

Octave: low line, semi-supinated guard on the sword-arm side.

On Guard: the stance adopted in fencing.

One-two attack: a compound attack which deceives the opponent's simple parry.

'Open eyes': starting a movement with no prior knowledge of how it will finish, relying on reflexes to adjust and make the correct ending.

Opposition: blade movement maintaining constant contact with the opponent's blade.

Orthopaedic grip: general term for moulded grips of various designs used on foils and epees.

P

Parry: defensive action to deflect an opponent's attack by opposing 'forte to opponent's foible'.

Part-whole: the teaching of a movement in parts, ie isolating the parts of the movement demanding most skill and practising them in isolation; then putting the parts together to make a whole movement.

Patinando: a step forwards with an appel from the rear foot at the same time as the front foot lands.

Phrase: a sequence of fencing movements performed without a break.

Piste: the field of play on which a bout takes place.

Plastron: a half-jacket with no underarm seam, worn for extra protection on the sword arm under the fencing jacket; also a padded over-jacket worn by a fencing coach when giving individual training.

Pommel: a metal cap screwed to the end of the blade which locks the parts of the weapon together and provides a counter-balance to the blade.

Pool (poule): the grouping of fencers or teams in a competition.

Preparation of attack: the movement of blade or foot to obtain the best position from which to make an attack.

President: Referee in a fencing bout.

Prime: high line, pronated guard on the non-sword-arm side.

Principle of defence: the execution of a parry by the defender's forte opposing the attacking foible, ie 'opposition of forte to foible'.

Priority: the right of way gained by the fencer at foil and sabre by extending the sword arm and continually threatening the opponent's target.

Prises de fer (takings of the blade): *see* bind, croisé, envelopment.

Progressive actions: actions made with the sword point continually moving towards the opponent's target.

Pronation: the position of the sword hand with the knuckles uppermost.

Q

Quarte: high line, semi-supinated guard on the non-sword-arm side.

Quinte: low line, pronated guard on the non-sword-arm side at foil and epee; and a high guard at sabre to protect the head.

R

Rassemblement: the bringing of both feet together, either forwards or backwards, so that the heels are touching with the feet at right angles and the body in an upright position.

Recovery: the return to the on guard position.

Redoublement: the renewal of an action after being parried by replacing the point on the target in a different line to the original action.

Renewal of attack: See remise, redoublement, reprise.

Remise: the renewal of an action after being parried by replacing the point on the target in the line of the original action.

Repechage: the competition formula which gives losers of a direct elimination bout a second chance to stay in the competition.

Reprise: the renewal of an action made with a lunge by first returning to guard forwards or backwards.

Riposte: an offensive action following a successful parry of an attack.

S

Seconde: low line, pronated guard on the sword-arm side.

Semi-circular parry: Deflection of the attacking blade by making a semi-circle with the point of the sword from high to low lines on the same side and vice-versa.

Septime: low line, semi-supinated guard on the non-sword-arm side.

Simultaneous attack: Both fencers choose precisely the same moment to make an offensive action.

Sixte: high line, semi-supinated guard on the sword-arm side.

Spools: Part of the electrical apparatus which has retractable cables to connect the fencers to the electrical recording box.

Stop hit: Counter offensive action into the opponent's attack.

Straight thrust: Direct attack landing in the same line.

Successive parries: two or more consecutive parries made to defend against compound attacks.

Supination: the position of the sword hand with the finger-nail uppermost.

T

Taking of the blade (prise de fer): See Bind, croisé, envelopment).

Tang: the part of the blade on which the hilt is mounted.

Tierce: high line, pronated guard on the sword-arm side.

Trompement: Deception of the opponent's attempt to parry.

Valid hit: Hit which arrives correctly on target.

With **disengagement** we avoid the opponent's blade near the guard and with **cut-over** we avoid the opponent's blade near it's point with a cutting movement.