

# **BEGINNER STUDY GUIDE**



**Northwest Fencing Center  
Tigard, OR  
[www.nwfencing.org](http://www.nwfencing.org)**

## ABOUT THIS CLASS

In this class, you will continue to work on basic fencing techniques and be introduced to new skills. You will improve your form, technique, and understanding of the game through footwork exercises, partner drills, and fencing with your teammates.

## HOW DO I TEST

You can track your progress and work toward the next class level through a series of tests.

This study guide will help you prepare for the tests. You will also need to pay attention to what the coaches teach in class and practice good form.

You may test anytime you come to class. All you need to do is let your coach know at the beginning of class that you want to be tested that day. If you are successful, the coach will update your progress tracker. If you are not, the coach will let you know what you need to improve in order to pass.

## THE EQUIPMENT

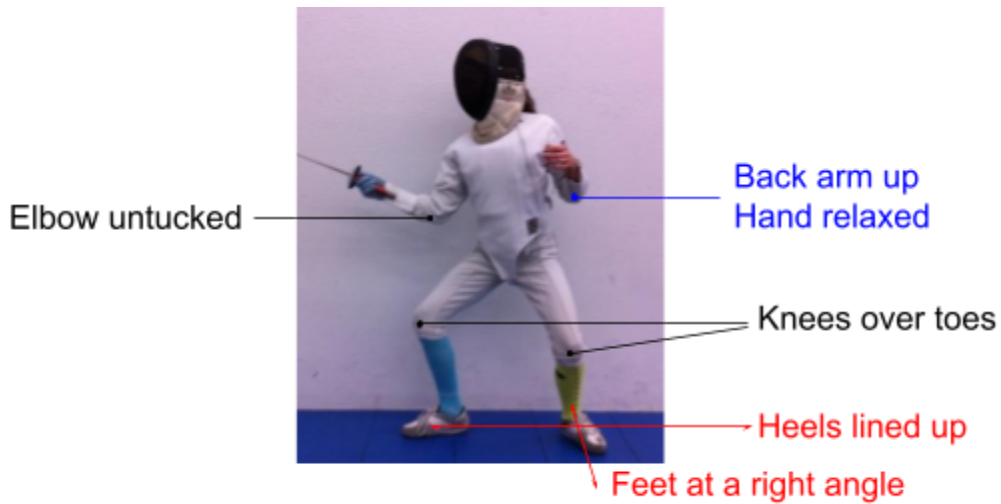
- **Glove:** It protects the fencing hand. Fencers should have their own after one month in class.
- **Mask:** It protects the head and the neck. Fencers should have their own after one month in class.
- **Jacket:** It protects the upper body. Fencers should have their own after two months in the class.
- **Chestplate:** It adds extra protection to the chest. This piece of equipment is a requirement for girls and optional for boys. Fencers should have their own after two months in class.
- **Foil:** It is the weapon of the fencer. Foils will be provided in the beginner classes.

## SAFETY RULES

- Keep the tip of the weapon below your knees when you are not fencing.
- No poking or fencing unless you and your partner have full fencing gear on.
- When putting on or taking off your mask, set your foil on the floor and use both hands.
- Do not cross a fencing strip if people are fencing; walk all the way around.
- Stop immediately when a coach says "Halt."

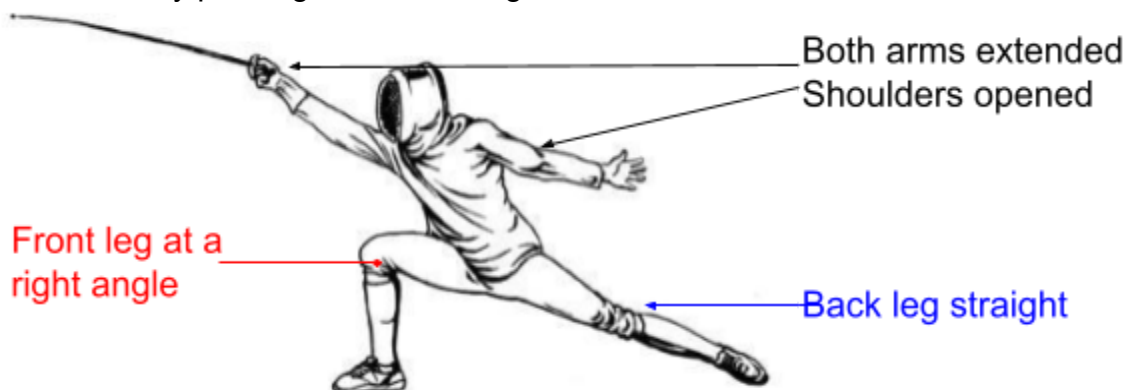
## EN GARDE POSITION

The basic stance is called **En garde**. A good en garde position is essential to good balance and mobility.



## FOOTWORK

- **Advance:** Forward movement is used to approach the opponent. When advancing, the front foot moves first, followed by the back foot.
- **Retreat:** Backward movement is used to get away from the opponent. When retreating, the back foot moves first, followed by the front foot.
- **Lunge:** Offensive movement is used to hit the opponent. The lunge starts with the front arm extending, tip pointing at the target, then kicking the front foot forward while pushing off the back leg. At the end of the lunge, the front leg is at a right angle, the back leg is straight, and both arms are extended. **(see pictures below)**
- **Advance lunge:** Link an advance and a lunge to hit from a further distance.
- **Recover back:** Action of getting back en garde from the lunge. Recover starts with unlocking the back knee followed by pushing of the front leg.

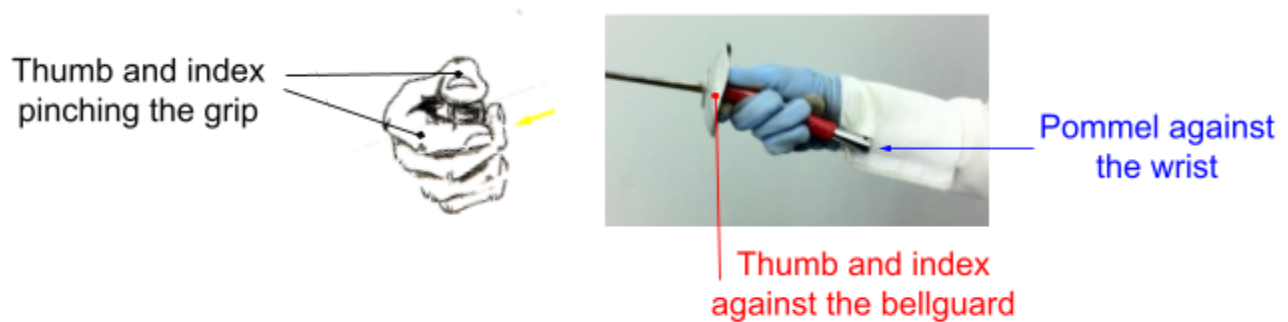


## HANDLING THE WEAPON

The proper execution of all the actions that the fencer can perform is dependent on wielding the weapon properly.

- **How to hold a French grip:**

- The thumb and the index finger should pinch the top of the grip (against the bellguard), while remaining slightly flexed. The rest of the fingers fold firmly around the grip, but not too tight.
- The pommel should be located against the middle of the wrist and should be parallel to the axis of the forearm so that it forms a straight line from the point to the elbow.



- **How to wield a French grip:**

- The thumb and the index finger control the point of the weapon in the movements that it can make, while the other fingers help in the movements of the point of the weapon through contraction and relaxation of the fist, without ever releasing the grip.
- The pommel should remain parallel to the axis of the forearm. In certain fencing positions, and depending on the distance, the pommel will detach from the wrist to provide better coverage.

## THE SALUTE

It must be done before a private lesson, a drill, or a bout. It is a sign of respect for your coach, your opponent, or the referee. At the end, fencers must salute again and tap blades.

- **How to salute:**

- Legs are straight, feet at a right angle, heels together. The front arm is in a straight line with the foil, the tip of the foil towards the ground but not touching it, the rear arm falling naturally, the hand open.
- First, point the foil toward the ceiling.
- Second, bring the bellguard below the chin.
- Third, point the foil back toward the ground.



## DISTANCE

The fencing distance is the space between two fencers. Distance will vary from one fencer to another depending on their height and their flexibility. When fencing, you must consider your own distance and your opponent's.

- **The three main distances:**

- **Short distance:** When a fencer can hit the target by just extending the arm (blades are crossed at the middle).

- **Medium distance:** When a fencer can hit the target with an advance or a lunge (blades are crossed at the top).

- **Long distance:** When a fencer can hit the target with a double advance or an advance-lunge (blades are tip to tip).

- **Keeping distance:** When a fencer is retreating at the same time their opponent is advancing, or advancing at the same time their opponent is retreating, in order to maintain distance.

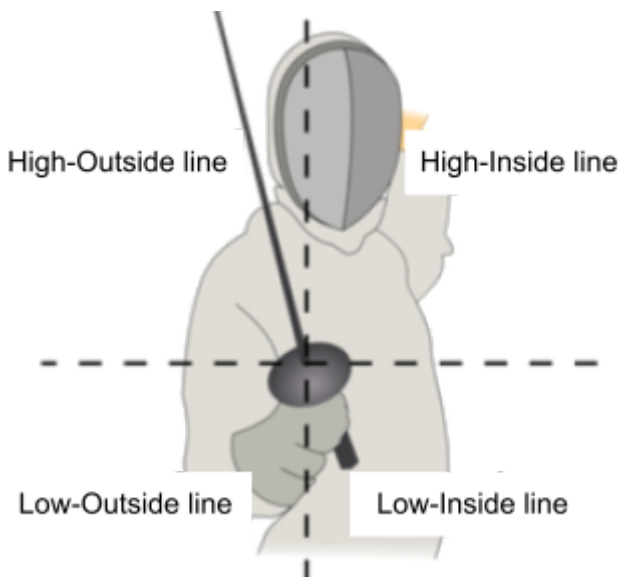
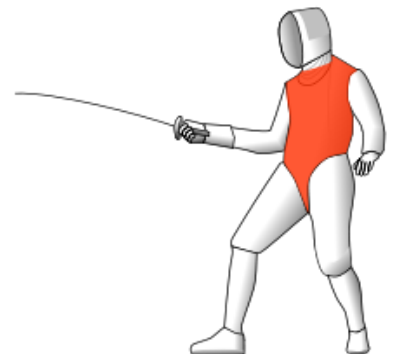
## THE TARGET

The valid target is limited to the torso, the groin, the back, and the bib (lower part of the mask).

A hit on the valid target is called a **touch**.

A hit outside of the valid target is called **off-target**.

Fencers stop fencing when a hit happens. They then determined if the hit is a touch or if the hit is off-target.



## THE LINES

The target is divided into **4 lines** by two imaginary straight lines, perpendicular to each other, which intersect at the bellguard.

Outside and inside lines will be on different sides depending on which hand is holding the weapon.

Outside lines will be on the right of the weapon for right-handed fencers, and on the left for left-handed fencers.

## SIMPLE ATTACKS

A simple attack is an offensive action executed with one tip motion and forward movement. It can be direct or indirect.

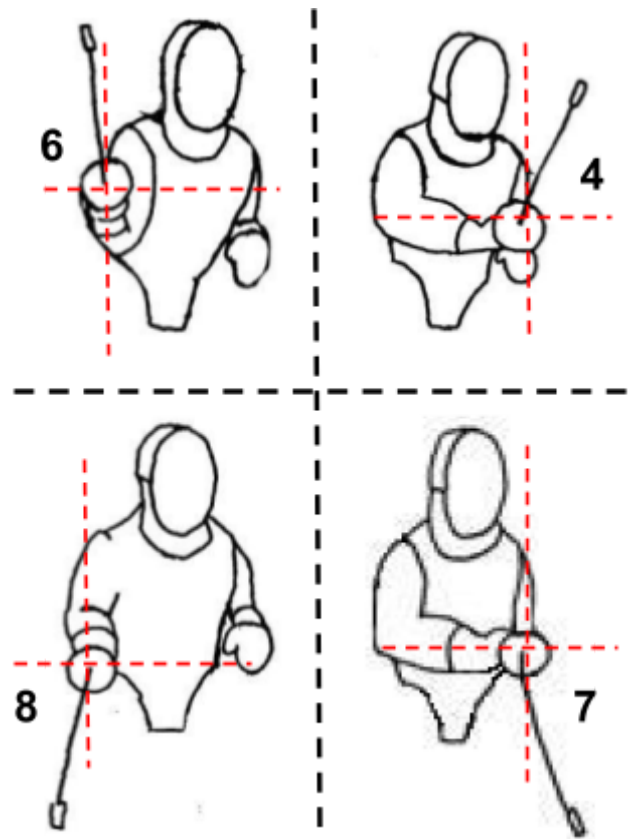
An attack is properly executed when the front arm is extended, tip threatening the valid target.

- **Straight:** Simple attack direct.
  - It starts and finishes in the same line.
- **Disengage:** Simple attack indirect.
  - It starts from one line and finishes in a different one.
  - The tip of the weapon changes lines with a small motion using finger work.
  - In high lines, the tip changes line going under the opponent's blade.
  - In low lines, the tip changes line going over the opponent's blade.
- **Beat attack:** Simple attack preceded by a beat of the opponent's blade.
  - The beat is a sharp hit of your blade on the opponent's blade.
  - The beat's purpose is to open the line or trigger a parry.
  - The beat is executed with a small relaxation and sharp contraction of the grip.

## HAND POSITIONS

Each hand position will close a specific line:

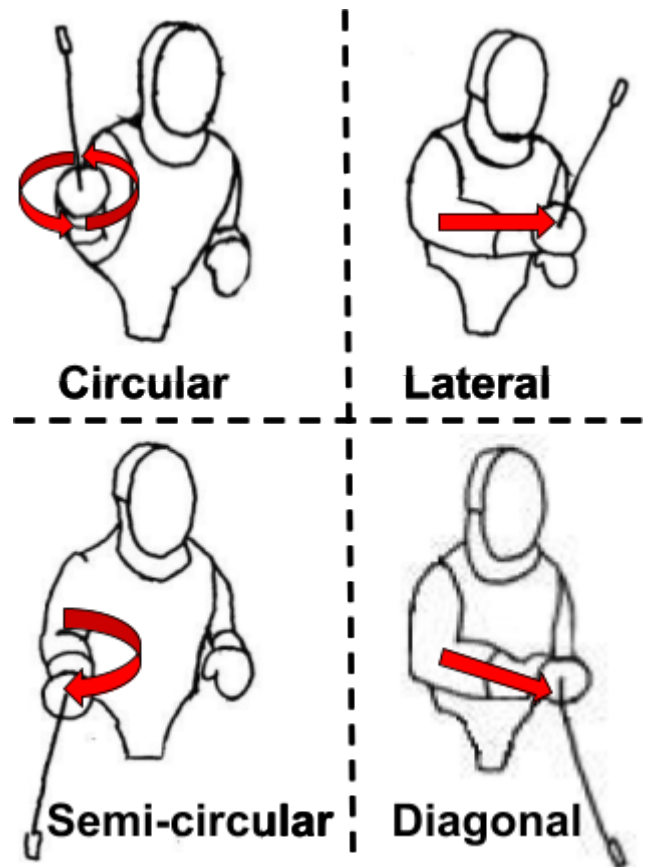
- **Position 6** closes the high-outside line.
  - Thumb up top
  - Tip pointing up
- **Position 4** closes the high-inside line.
  - Hand in pronation (palm down)
  - Tip pointing up
- **Position 8** closes the low-outside line.
  - Thumb up top
  - Tip pointing down
- **Position 7** closes the low-inside line.
  - Hand in supination
  - Tip pointing down



## DEFENSES

When your opponent is attacking, you need to defend to make the attack fail.

- **Distance:** You can defend using distance and retreating just before getting hit. We call that making the attack fall short.
  - The attack is over as soon as the front foot lands. If a hit has not happened at that point, the attack has fallen short.
  - After making the attack fall short, the defending fencer should then attack, even if their opponent is still in a lunge position.
- **Parry:** It is the defensive action that consists of deflecting or blocking the opponent's offensive action with your blade.
  - A parry ends in a specific hand position: 6, 4, 8, or 7.
  - A parry can be executed with different motions:
    - **circular:** start and finish in the same position
    - **lateral:** across high lines, or across low lines
    - **semi-circular:** from high to low lines, or low to high lines
    - **diagonal:** from high to low lines, or low to high lines, AND outside to inside line, or inside to outside line
  - When parrying, the strong part of the blade should be used against the opponent's weak.
  - When parrying, keep your tip close to the target in order to make the riposte faster.



- **Parry-Riposte:** After parrying, you should try to hit your opponent. We call that a riposte.

## RIGHT OF WAY

Right of way determines who gets the point if both fencers touch at the same time.

**RIGHT OF WAY BELONGS TO WHOEVER ATTACKS FIRST OR DEFENDS LAST.**

If the fencer with the right of way hits his/her opponent's off-target the action is reset.

## COMPOUND ATTACKS

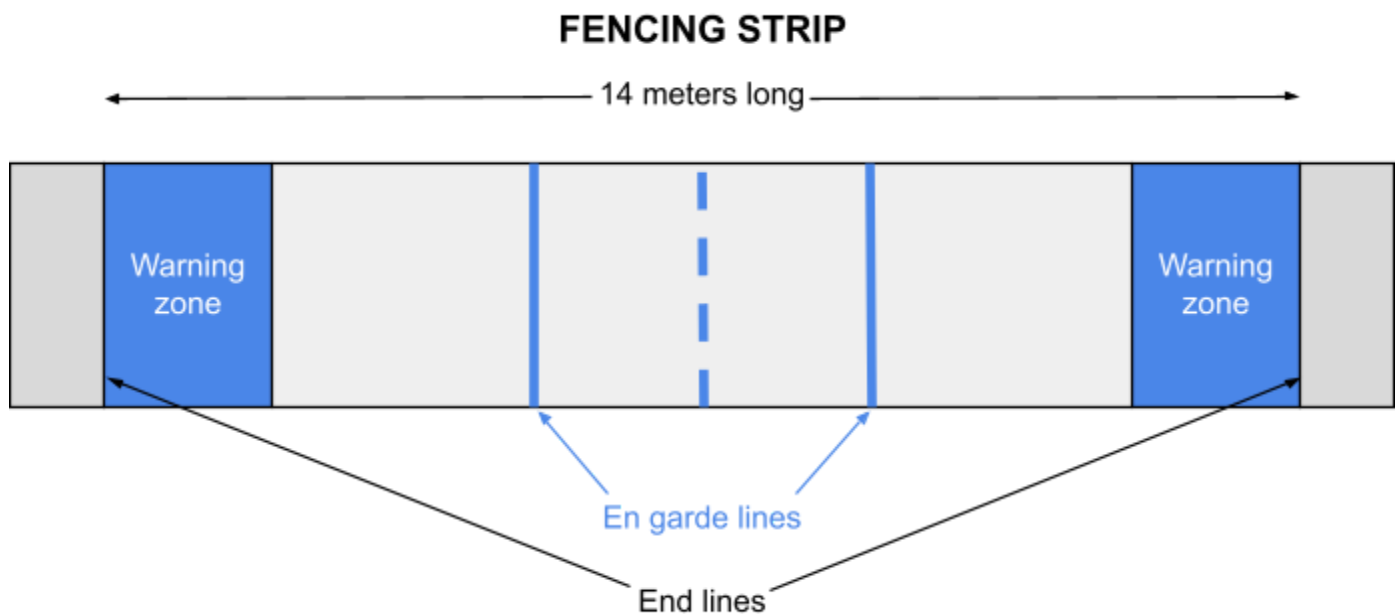
A compound attack is an offensive action that includes one or several **feints**.

A feint is an extension of the arm and movement of the tip that is threatening enough to provoke a parry. To reinforce the efficiency of the feint, it can be reinforced with actions of the leg.

- **Feinte-deceive:** Compound attack starting with a straight feint, followed by a disengage.  
→ Best executed at medium distance.
- **One-two:** Compound attack starting with disengage, followed by a second disengage.  
→ Best executed when the opponent searches for the blade.  
→ Can be set up with a beat.

## STRIP RULES

- If you go off your end of the strip, your opponent is awarded a point.
- If you go off the side of the strip with one or both feet, you move one meter back from where you started your attack.
- To find your distance on the strip after off-target actions, both fencers should extend their arms and retreat until the blades are no longer crossing.





# COMMANDS

Fencing starts and stops on the coach's or the referee's commands.



## En garde

Order the fencers in En garde position



## Ready

Ask the fencers if they are ready to begin



## Fence

Order the fencers to start fencing



## Halt

Order the fencers to stop fencing

# PENALTIES

- Penalties are given when fencers break a rule such as:
  - Covering the valid target with the back arm.
  - Turning the back to the opponent.
  - Fencing too aggressively, or in a violent way.
- The first time a rule is broken, a yellow card is given. If a rule is broken again, a red card is given. When a red card is given, the opponent gets a point.

# TRACK MY PROGRESS

Basics 1		Basics 2		Actions		Rules	
Safety Rules		Distance		Simple Attacks		Right of Way	
En Garde Position		Target		Defenses		Strips Rules	
Footwork		Lines		Compound Attacks		Penalties	
Handling the Weapon		Hand Position				Commands	
The Salute		Equipment					