

BEGINNER **EPEE** **GUIDE**



Northwest Fencing Center
Tigard, OR
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.

LESSONS

Private Lessons are an integral part of fencing training. During a private lesson, the coach will provide instruction and feedback tailored to each student.

Private lessons are highly encouraged for all fencers. One lesson a week is a good rhythm for young fencers.

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.

EQUIPMENT

- **Glove:** It protects the fencing hand. Fencers should have their own after one month in class.
- **Epee 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.
- **Underarm protector:** it adds a layer of protection on the weapon side. Fencers should purchase their own at the same time they purchase their fencing jacket.
- **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.
- **Fencing shoes:** You should have a clean pair of shoes that you will only wear when fencing. Fencing specific shoes or indoor court shoes are recommended.
- **Epee:** It is the weapon of the fencer. Epees will be provided in the beginner classes.

→ **Remember to write your name on your equipment in case you misplace it.**

SAFETY RULES

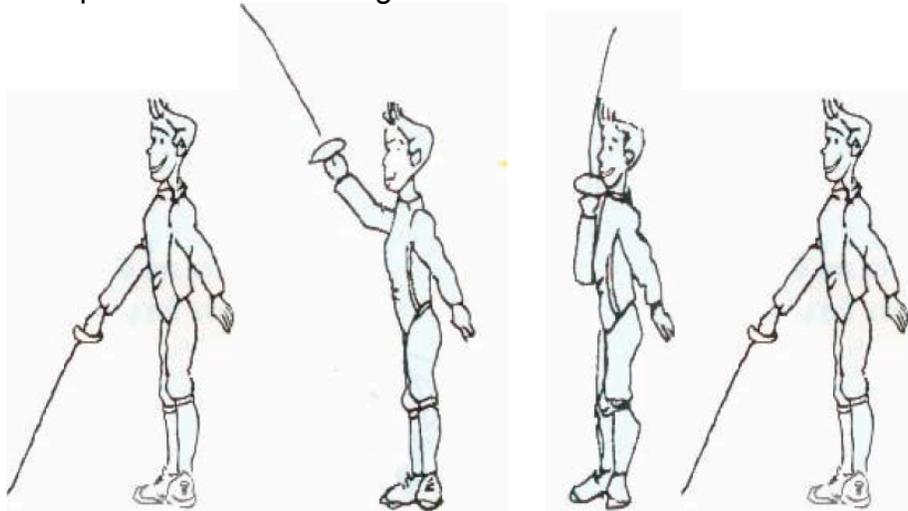
- Keep the tip of the weapon below your knees when you are not fencing.
- No poking or fencing unless you and your partner have full fencing gear on.
- When putting on or taking off your mask, set your epee on the floor and use both hands.
- Do not cross a fencing strip if people are fencing; walk all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

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 epee, tip towards the ground. The rear arm falling naturally. First, point the epee toward the ceiling.
- Second, bring the bellguard below the chin.
- Third, point the epee back toward the ground.



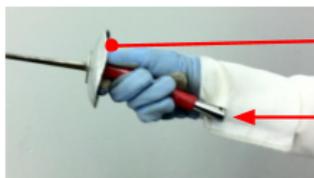
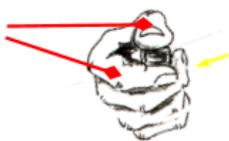
HANDLING THE WEAPON

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

- **How to hold and wield 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 thumb and the index direct the movement of the point, while the other fingers help in through contraction and relaxation of the fist, without ever releasing the grip.
- 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. In certain positions the pommel will detach from the wrist.

Thumb and index pinching the grip



Thumb and index against the bellguard

Pommel against the wrist

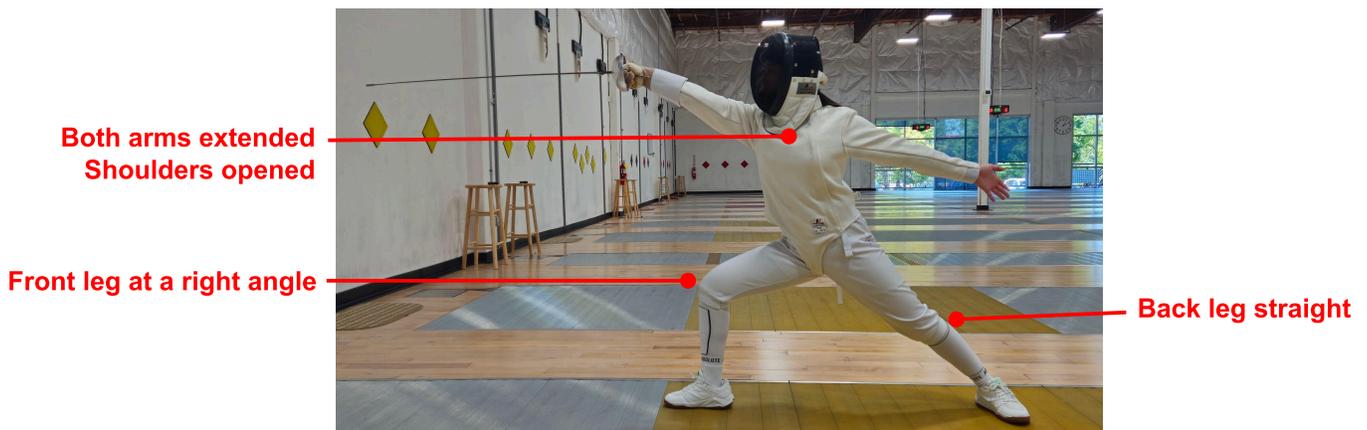
EN GARDE POSITION

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 picture below)**
- **Advance lunge:** Link an advance and a lunge to hit from a further distance. Hand should extend at the beginning of the advance.
- **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.
- **Bouncing:** Small spring movement of the knees that allows a relax and light on the feet movement. In some instances, feet may not even leave 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).

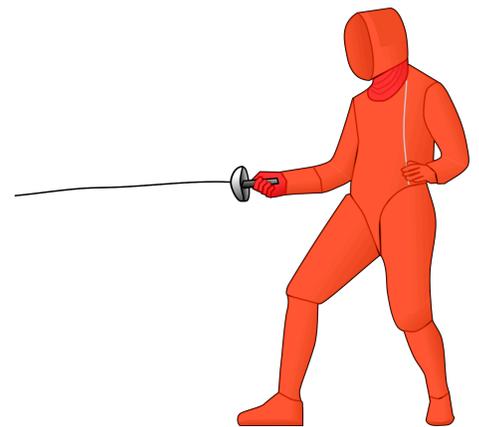
- **Keeping distance:** When a fencer is retreating at the same time their opponent is advancing, or advancing at the same time their opponent is retreating, in order to maintain distance.

TARGET AREA & SCORING POINTS

The target area is the entire body, from head to toe. Every hit counts (hands, arms, chest, legs, and even feet) which makes epee unique among the three fencing weapons.

Double touches (when both fencers hit within 40 milliseconds) results in both fencers scoring a point.

Fencing stops when a hit happens.



- **Different targets can be reached at different distances:**

- **The hand and the front foot:** These are the closest targets, also called short targets. They can be reached with less commitment. It is easier to reach these targets and recover quickly, however, these targets tend to require better accuracy. They can also be used as part of the preparation.

- **The elbow and the thigh:** These targets are a bit further in the distance. The elbow hit can be used to set up a deeper attack, or on a counter attack. The thigh hit should be set-up with a feint or a beat.

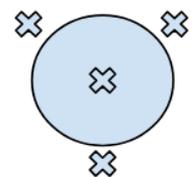
- **The body:** This is the furthest target. It requires full commitment and proper preparation.

- **There are different angles of attack for the hand target:**

- **Over the top inside.**

- **Over the top outside.**

- **Under:** The under shot can be executed with the hand in pronation or supination.

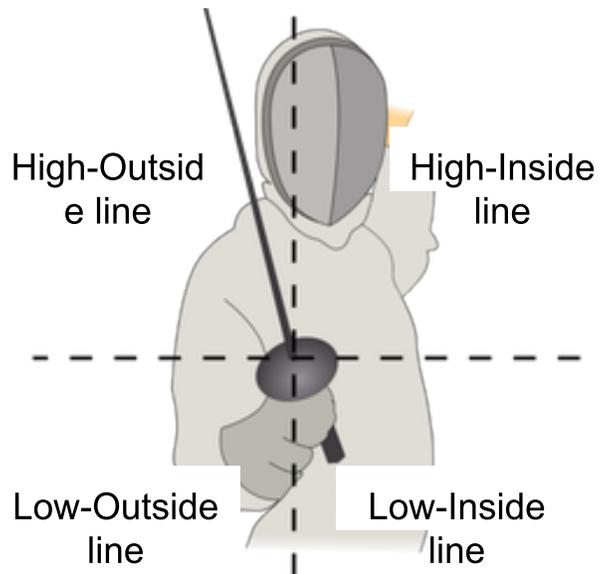


- **The concept of two targets:** You should plan to hit two targets when trying to score against your opponent. For example, hit hand then body, or hand then thigh.

LINES

The target is divided into **4 lines** by two imaginary straight lines, perpendicular to each other, which intersect at the bellguard. Lines are dependent on the hand position.

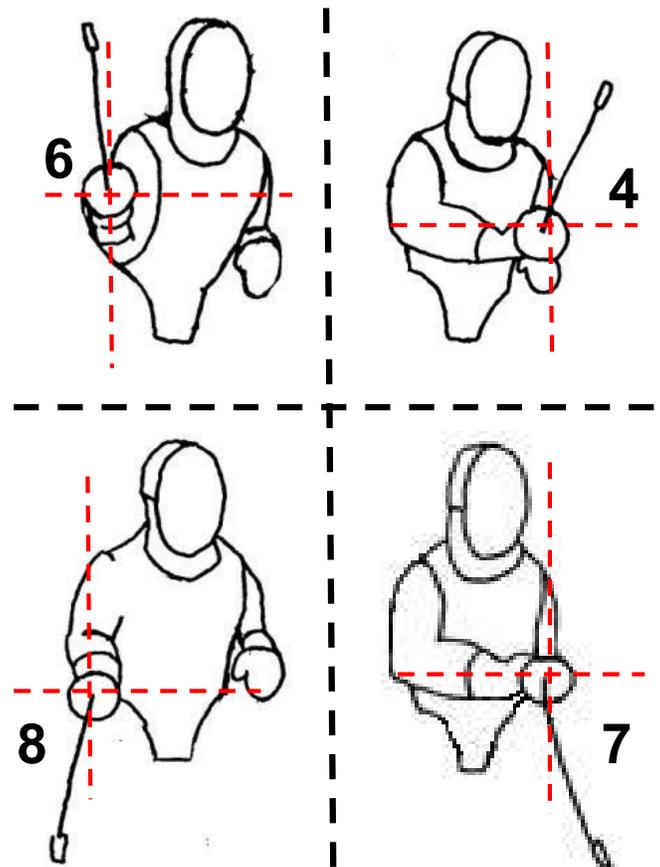
- **Outside and inside:** Outside and inside lines will be on different sides depending on which hand is holding the weapon. Outside lines will be on the right of the weapon for right-handed fencers, and on the left for left-handed fencers.
- **High and low:** High lines will be above the weapon, and low lines under.



HAND POSITIONS

Each hand position will close a specific line:

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



SIMPLE ATTACKS

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

- **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 lines going under the opponent's blade.
 - In low lines, the tip changes lines going over the opponent's blade.
- **Attack with opposition:** Simple attack executed while closing a line.
 - Hitting the target remains the main goal.
 - The closing of the line is achieved by leaning the blade against the opponent's blade.
 - If executed correctly, attacking with opposition can prevent double touches.

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 or long distance.
- **One-two:** Compound attack starting with disengage, followed by a second disengage in the opposite direction.
 - Executed when the opponent combines two lateral parries, or a circular parry followed by a lateral parry.
 - Can be executed on the opponent's search, or provoked with a preparation on the blade.
- **Doublé:** Compound attack combining two disengages in the same direction.
 - Executed when the opponent combines two circular parries, or a lateral parry followed by a circular parry.
 - Can be executed on the opponent's search, or provoked with a preparation on the blade.

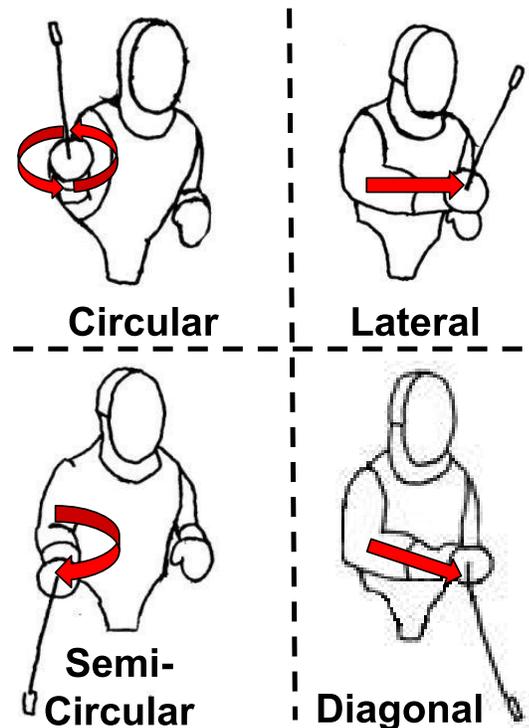
DEFENSES

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.
 - 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. It ends in a specific hand position (6, 4, 8, or 7) and it can be executed with different motions:
 - **Circular:** Start and finish in the same position.
 - **Lateral:** From right to left, or left to right
 - **Semi-circular:** From high to low, or low to high.
 - **Diagonal:** Across the center.

When parrying, the strong part of the blade should be used against the opponent's weak, and the tip should remain 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. The riposte can be executed with or without opposition.



REMISE & REPRISE

This is a successive offensive action that immediately follows an attempt to hit. When attacking to the body, you should always follow with a remise or a reprise. A remise is executed in the same line as the initial action, while the reprise is executed in a different line.

COUNTER ATTACKS

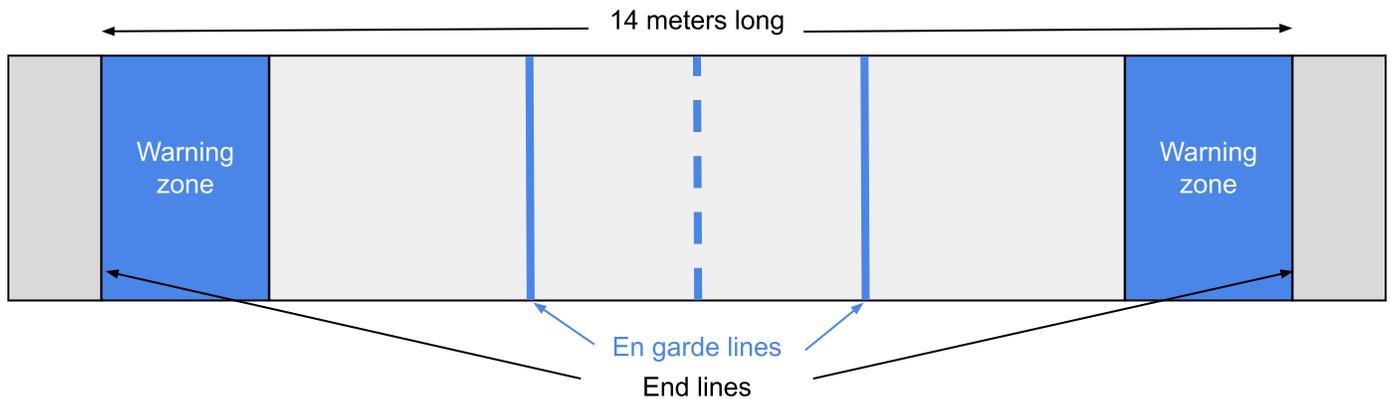
When counter attacking you should try to keep your arm above the opponent's arm. Ideally, the counter attack is aimed at the hand or the elbow to ensure a single light hit.

You should set up your counter attack by moving in and out of the distance, and be ready to retreat when executing the counter attack.



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:
 - Deflecting the opponent's blade with the back arm.
 - Turning the back to the opponent.
 - Fencing too aggressively, or in a violent way.
 - Stepping off the strip on purpose to avoid getting hit.
- 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.

PROGRESS TRACKER

Basics 1		Basics 2		Actions		Rules	
Safety Rules		Footwork		Simple Attacks		Strips Rules	
Equipment		Distance		Compound Attacks		Commands	
Salute		Target		Defenses		Penalties	
Handling the Weapon		Lines		Remise & Reprise			
En Garde Position		Hand Positions		Counter Attacks			