

# **INTERMEDIATE**

## **EPEE**

# **GUIDE**



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

## ABOUT THIS CLASS

In this class, you will continue to improve your technical skills. You will also fence electrically, learn more advanced techniques, explore tactics, and prepare for tournaments.

You may also test, as you did in the beginner class, and remember to pay attention in class as some of the details necessary to pass some tests are not written down in this study guide.

When testing, the coach will also assess your ability to execute actions in a bout.

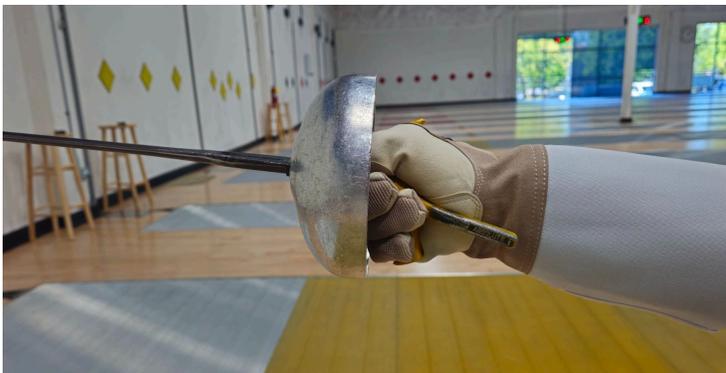
## LESSONS

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. Two lessons a week is recommended for fencers competing on a regular basis.

## EQUIPMENT

- **Complete uniform:** In the Beginner program, you purchase some of your fencing uniform. As you join the Intermediate program, you are expected to complete your uniform. **The following items are required before you can attend any tournaments:**
  - **Knickers:** These are your fencing pants.
  - **High knee socks:** Preferably white.
- **Electric equipment:** Fencers are expected to own their own epee and body cord. **Fencers competing on a regular basis are expected to own at least two of each:**
  - **Electric epee:** Size 5 for Y12 & Y14 fencers.
  - **Body cord:** Should be a 3-prong epee body cord.
- **Pistol or French grip:** Epee fencers should choose the grip that fits their game the best. Consult with your coach to figure out which grip you should use, and how to hold it properly.



## FOOTWORK

- **Half advance:** Small movement of the front foot forward with a small advancement of the body without moving the back foot.
- **Half retreat:** Small movement of the back foot backward with a slight transfer of balance.
- **Check forward:** Forward movement starting with a half retreat, followed by an advance.
- **Check back:** Backward movement starting with a half advance, followed by a retreat.
- **Double check forward:** Forward movement starting with a half advance, followed by a half retreat, followed by an advance.
- **Double check back:** Backward movement starting with a half retreat, followed by a half advance, followed by a retreat.
- **Jump forward:** Starting with the front foot kicking and landing with both feet at the same time. The jump should remain low to the ground, be small, and finish en garde.
- **Jump back:** Starting with the back foot energetically thrown back and finishing en garde.

**Note: Half steps, check steps, and jumps can be used to explore distance, trigger a reaction, or confuse your opponent.**

- **Forward recovery:** Recovery from the lunge bringing the back leg forward into en garde.
- **Redouble:** Forward recover leading into a second lunge. The arm may stay slightly extended to facilitate the continuation of the offense.
- **Fleche:** Offensive movement starting with an extension of the front arm and shifting the balance on the front leg until imbalance is achieved. As imbalance is achieved, the front leg pushes forward while the back foot moves ahead to land in front of the front foot.

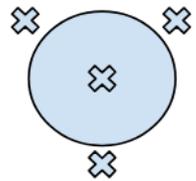


- **Drumming:** Constant movement of the feet (tippy toeing) while maintaining the en garde position. Drumming can be done staying in one spot or moving on the strip.
- **Bouncing:** Small spring movement of the knees that allows a relax and light on the feet movement. In some instances, feet may not even leave the ground.
- **Duck:** Counter offensive move, meant to evade your opponent's attack by bringing feet and legs together to a squat position. Its effectiveness increases when preceded with an advance.

## TARGETS

The choice of a specific target should be carefully considered based on the level of danger it presents, or a specific tactical planning.

- **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.



## RHYTHM, TEMPO, & TIMING

- **Rhythm:** The overall “flow” or pace of actions in a bout — how fast or slow exchanges develop.
  - Fencers establish a rhythm in their movement (footwork, preparation, distance control).
  - A consistent rhythm makes you predictable; a broken rhythm can surprise the opponent.
  - Disrupting the opponent’s rhythm can create openings (change in footwork speed, sudden stop–start, blade disruption).
- **Tempo:** A “unit of time” in fencing, often defined as a single movement (step, attack, blade motion).
  - One tempo actions give the opponent less time to react.
  - Choosing the correct tempo to act on will directly impact the success of an action.
  - Tempo can be stolen by acting before the opponent completes their move.
- **Timing:** The moment an action is executed.

### Why Rhythm & Tempo Matter in Epee?

Epee has no right of way; whoever hits first gets the point. Controlling rhythm and tempo helps you act with good timing. This is how you make your attack land cleanly, catch your opponent on their preparation, and avoid double hits.

A strong epee fencer varies rhythm and seizes tempo to score.

## PREPARATIONS

Preparation is what you do to set up your final action. Preparations can set up offensive, defensive, and counter offensive actions.

- **Footwork:** Advances, retreats, half-steps, check-steps, bounces, etc...
  - Set distance.
  - Establish rhythm.
- **Blade actions:** Executed in space or against the opponent's blade.
  - Feint or tip presence can draw an attack, or provoke a search and open a line.
  - Beat (or press) can provoke a reaction or clear a line.
- **Body motion:** Subtle movements of the upper body (leaning, changing height, shifting weight).
  - Can make distance deceptive to draw or hide an attack.
  - Can disguise timing to surprise the opponent.

**Preparations can have multiple strategic purpose:**

- **Deception:** Make your opponent believe you are attacking when you are not yet.
- **Provocation:** Invite your opponent to attack so you can counter-attack or parry-riposte.
- **Timing control:** Change the rhythm to catch their tempo, or so they can't predict yours.
- **Safe entry:** Enter attacking distance without exposing yourself too much.

**Preparation should always serve a purpose: set up your attack, draw the opponent out, or control distance and timing.**

**When preparing, you should be patient but not take too long either. You should also keep your point threatening as a first line of defense or to keep your opponent under pressure.**

## ATTACKS

When attacking you should always close the line. Closing the line is when you finish your action with your blade blocking the opponent's blade preventing them from hitting.

- **Coupe (or cut over):** The tip moves from one line to another by pulling the blade along the opponent's blade and going around the point, combining the work of the fingers, wrist, and forearm.
- **Simple attack on preparation:** Most effective on the opponent's forward preparation, around or against a blade action.
- **Attack by opposition:** Executed while maintaining control of the opponent's blade, ending with the opponent's weak part of the blade over two support points (strong part of your blade and bell guard).
- **Compound attack:** An attack with one or multiple feints. A feint should draw your opponent's reaction.
- **Short or false attack:** Used to explore your opponent's reactions or hide your real intention.

## DEFENSES

- **Variations of parries and ripostes:**
  - **Beat parries:** You may parry your opponent's attack by simply beating their blade before they land their attack. The beat must effectively displace the blade in order for you to score a single light with the riposte.
  - **Riposte by opposition:** After parrying, you may riposte while maintaining blade control, keeping the line closed.
  - **Counter riposte:** After being parried, retake the blade, and hit. In epee is common to see yielding parries or binding parries
- **Preparations:**
  - **Set-up:** You may use footwork and blade preparation to draw your opponent into attacking at a moment you have chosen a line you are ready to close. For example, search 6 to draw your opponent disengage and then, parry 8 and riposte.
  - **Fighting pressure:** When under pressure from your opponent, use disruption or feints to interrupt their preparation or trigger their attack before they have reached their attack distance.

## COUNTER ATTACKS

- **Have a clear plan in mind:**
  - **Distance:** You should set up your counter attack by moving in and out of the distance, and have a clear plan in mind of how you will execute your counter attack: moving toward the target, moving away, or holding your ground (stop hit).
  - **Target:** Ideally, the counter attack is aimed at the hand or the elbow to ensure a single light hit.
  - **Execution:** Try to keep your arm above the opponent's arm.
- **Ducking counter attack:**
  - **Set-up:** move in and out of distance to draw your opponent's attack.
  - **Timing:** As your opponent triggers their attack, squat and move in under their blade.
  - **Target:** More often, the ducking counter attack will hit the deep target (chest or stomach).



## SECOND INTENTION

A deceptive tactic where a fencer executes a convincing action to draw a specific defensive or counter offensive response from the opponent, which they then exploit with a pre-planned secondary action.

- **Counter time:** Consists of attacking to draw your opponent's counter-attack in order to parry it and riposte.
- **Counter riposte:** Consists of attacking to draw your opponent's parry-riposte in order to parry back and riposte.
- **Counter stop:** Consists of attacking to draw your opponent's counter-attack in order to stop hit.

## INFIGHTING

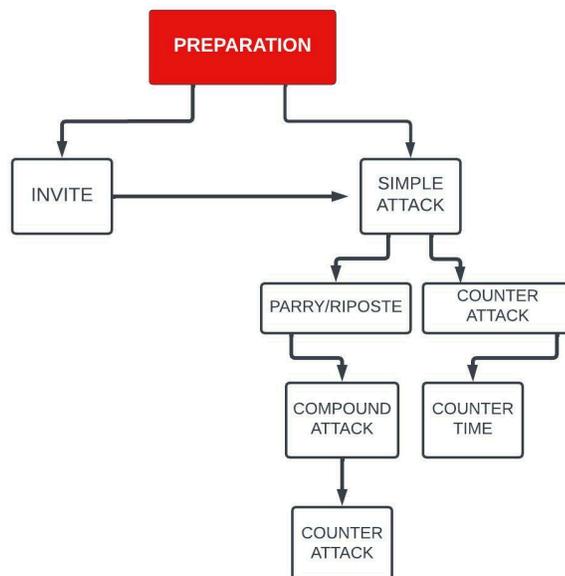
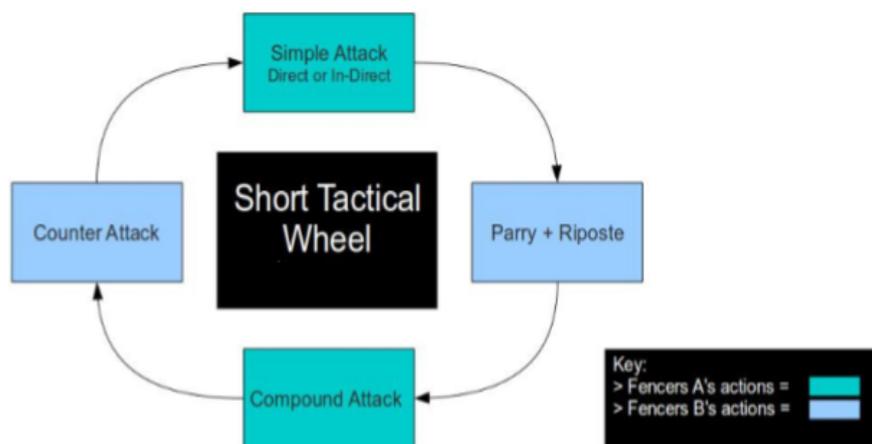
Infighting is the situation in which two fencers are in a very close distance without touching each other. You must learn to deal with infighting situations as these will often happen in bouts.

- **Keep fighting:** When infighting happens, keep fencing trying to hit until the referee calls halt.
- **Prime:** Position in which the fencing hand is high and turned down and the tip of the weapon is pointing down. Parry prime, or hitting from prime, is very effective when infighting.
- **Corps à corps (pronounced cor-a-cor):** It is the situation in which fencers are in contact. The referee will call "Halt" when it happens. It will be sanctioned by a yellow card if it prevents the opponent from executing their action.



## TACTICAL WHEEL & TACTICAL TREE

It lays out the logical progression of a fencing exchange and provides a tactical map.



## TOURNAMENTS

Fencing tournaments are a fun and enriching experience. They allow you to meet new people, fence with fencers from other clubs, and challenge yourself in a new way.

The important thing going into a tournament is to give your best and have a positive attitude.

Some of the fencers you will encounter might be more experienced than you. The final result is not the best way to determine how well you performed. Instead, focus on how much effort you put into each bout, and how you managed challenging situations.

- **Local events:** Ideal as a first tournament to gain experience and build confidence.
  - **Pacific Northwest Cups (PNWC)**
  - **NWFC Unrated**
- **Regional events:** These events will bring the challenge to a new level as you might fence fencers with several years of experience.
  - **Regional Youth Circuit (RYC)**
  - **Regional Cadet & Junior Circuit (RJCC)**
  - **Regional Open Circuit (ROC)**

## PROGRESS TRACKER

Equipment		Concepts		Actions		Tournaments	
Knickers & Socks		Footwork		Attacks		Local	
Electric Epee		Targets		Defenses		Regional	
Body Cord		Rhythm, Tempo & Timing		Counter Attacks			
		Preparations		Second Intention			
		Tactical Wheel & Tactical Tree		Infighting			