

# Fencer's Handbook



## Edmonton Fencing Club

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edmontonfencing.com  
Oct 2014 Revision

## Introduction

The Edmonton Fencing Club has been serving the community since 1962 and is a hub of fencing all year round. Recreational fencers, aged 8 to adult, practice regularly and enjoy occasional in-house tournaments. High performance fencers compete in provincial, national and international tournaments.

As a non-profit organization, the EFC's daily operations are overseen by a volunteer board made up of twelve elected members. If you are interested in joining the Board, please contact the Executive Director, any Coach or a Board member.

All Club members are expected to volunteer their help in the club or at competitions. EFC is the proud host of the annual Edmonton Open, the Jujie Luan Open and regularly such competitions as the Provincials and Western Canadian Championships and, in 1999 and 2005, the Canadian Fencing National Championships.



## Coaching

The EFC is honoured to have as its coach since 1989 Ms. Jujie Luan. **Coach Luan is an Olympic Gold Medallist**, 4-time Olympian, and 8-time Canadian National Champion. Coach Luan brings to the club over 30 years of fencing experience and over 25 years of coaching experience. She has coached many athletes to the National Team and several to the Olympics. A wife and mother, Coach Luan is a favourite among both parents and fencers. Coach Luan competed in Beijing for the 2008 Olympics at age 50. She is truly an inspiration to all who know her.

## Outreach Fencing

Fencing has experienced phenomenal growth in the past few years. To meet this growth, EFC has added Outreach Fencing classes in St. Albert.

Outreach Fencing classes are coached by some of our very successful advanced fencers. Their coaching skills have been developed under the tutelage of Coach Jujie Luan and they are excited to share their knowledge, expertise and enthusiasm with young fencers.

## **What Do I Wear?**

Fencers should come to class in clean, indoor non-marking runners and comfortable workout clothes, but not shorts. Jeans are also not accepted as workout clothes. A refillable water bottle is also handy.

## **Birthday Parties and Demonstrations**

The Edmonton Fencing Club offers Birthday Party bookings as well as on-site, hands-on demonstrations for schools and community groups.

Birthday parties are available for all ages. A room with table and chairs are available for birthday cake after fencing. Parties takes place for one and a half hours. Call 780-434-3000 to arrange.

EFC does many demos for all kinds of schools. These classes are formatted around the needs and requests of the class teacher. This is a really popular phys-ed activity.

Thinking of a different kind of staff party? Or maybe you have a corporate team building event planned. Have a Brownie or Beaver group that needs a fun event? Various women's groups and church youth groups have really enjoyed a fencing party.

Have you got a group of people that would like to take a series of classes together at a time other than the times offered? Call us and we will try to accommodate your needs.

Demos can only take place during non-class times and only at the Edmonton Fencing Club's facility. Preferred maximum group size is 20.

Cost is \$150 for up to 15 people. Any participants over the 15 maximum will cost \$10 each.

To book an event, either call 780-434-3000 or email [edmontonfencingclub@yahoo.ca](mailto:edmontonfencingclub@yahoo.ca)

## **Fencing Links**

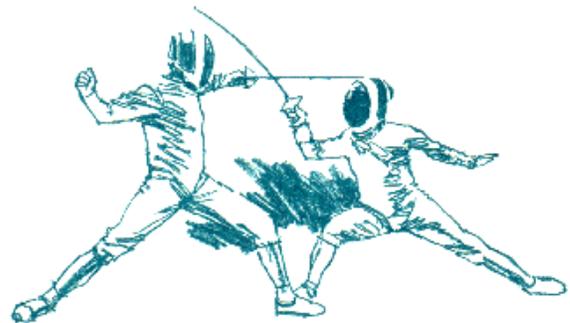
Edmonton Fencing Club (EFC):  
[www.edmontonfencing.com](http://www.edmontonfencing.com)

Alberta Fencing Association (AFA):  
[www.fencing.ab.ca](http://www.fencing.ab.ca)

Canadian Fencing Federation (CFF):  
[www.fencing.ca](http://www.fencing.ca)

International Fencing Federation (FIE):  
[www.fie.ch](http://www.fie.ch)

US Fencing Association (USFA):  
[www.usfencing.org](http://www.usfencing.org)



## Fencing Weapons

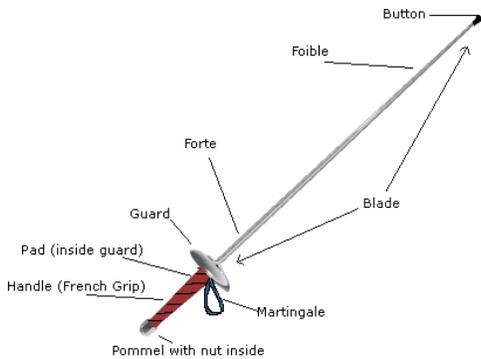
Fencing encompasses three weapons.

**Foil** - The Foil was used for resolving matters of honor.

A light, flexible weapon with which only thrusts with the point of the weapon to the opponent's trunk of body or mask bib count as valid hits.

Hits count on the abdomen, chest and back but not on the arms, legs and head.

Points are scored by the fencer who hits the target area and has "right of attack".



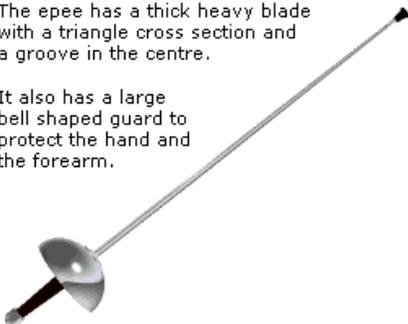
**Epee** - The Epee was used for dueling - the fight to first blood. A development of the dueling rapier, this weapon is used in the Modern Pentathlon.

A heavier thrusting sword and valid hits can be scored with the point of the weapon on any part of the opponent's body, including the head.

Points are scored by being the first to hit anywhere, anyhow, anytime, just **FIRST!**

The epee has a thick heavy blade with a triangle cross section and a groove in the centre.

It also has a large bell shaped guard to protect the hand and the forearm.

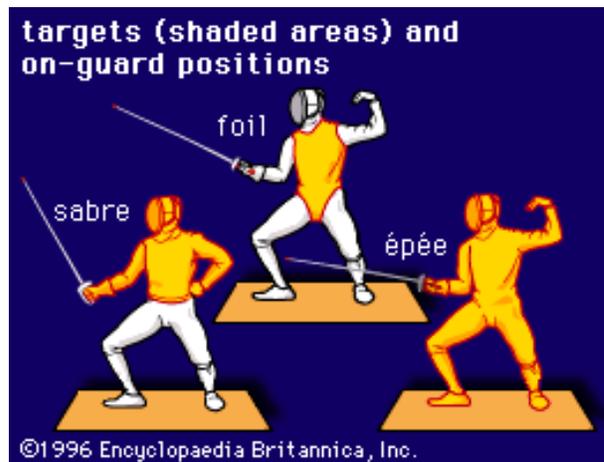


**Sabre** - The Saber was used by the military.

A lighter, more flexible version of the military saber and hits can be scored by using edge 'cuts' or point thrusts.

Only hits scored on the opponent's body above the waist, arm and head count as valid.

Points are scored by the fencer who hits the target area and has "right of attack."



Source: <http://www.hpfc.org.uk/weapons.htm>

## **Buying Fencing Equipment**

Though we provide loaner gear to anyone who wants to fence, fencers are encouraged to eventually get their own gear. Not only does this mean you'll have something that's best suited to *you*, but you'll also be able to wash it regularly!

It is recommended that each new fencer purchase their own glove for \$20 from the Head Coach.

Basic fencing equipment includes a mask, jacket, breeches, knee socks, shoes, a glove, a weapon, body wire and a few spare blades.

### **Tips & Warnings**

- Until you are sure that fencing is for you, avoid spending money on top-of-the-line items and other equipment you don't need.
- Females will need to purchase a breast protector.
- Males should wear an athletic supporter with a protective shield.
- Fencing shoes are frequently expensive. You may want to wear a well-made pair of court shoes.
- You'll have most of this gear for years. Consider whether spending a few extra bucks (or even a couple hundred extra bucks) now is worth having something of higher quality for your entire fencing career.
- Fencing gear is highly personalized. What works for other people may not work for you. The best thing to do is try out a number of different things and find out what you're the most comfortable with. This goes for masks, blades, and armor.
- Don't be shy about asking people about their own gear. They may have some good advice.

## **Fencing Equipment Terms**

To help you get started here is a quick glossary of terms that relate to equipment in no particular order:

### **350 Newton**

sometimes written as 350N this is the short term for the CEN European level 1 standard of protective clothing for fencing. It means that the clothing has been tested to withstand at least 350 Newtons of force.

### **800 Newton**

this is also sometimes referred to as FIE (see below for a definition) and means that the clothing has been tested to CEN level 2. 800 Newton or FIE clothing is even stronger than 350 Newton clothing.

### **FIE (Federation Internationale d'Esgrime)**

this is the international governing body for the sport. The term FIE is also used to describe 800 Newton or CEN level two clothing and maraging (see below) blades.

### **Electric or non Electric**

this refers to whether or not an item is suitable for fencing with an electric scoring apparatus. Non-electric equipment may also be referred to as "dry".

### **Lame**

Pronounced La-may not lame (as in duck)! This is the conductive over jacket that is used for electric scoring in both Foil and Saber.

### **Plastron**

Also sometimes called an underarm protector; this is worn under your jacket on your sword arm and gives extra protection to the most commonly hit part of your target area.

### **Breeches**

this is the name given to the short trousers worn to just below the knee.

### **Maraging**

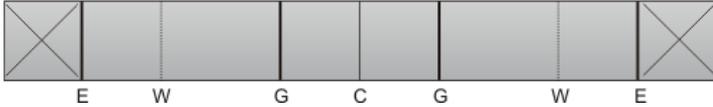
this is the name of the type of steel most commonly used in FIE weapons. FIE blades are tested to withstand a very high number of

bending cycles so they break less often but are more expensive than standard blades.

### **Bodywire**

This connects your electric weapon to the scoring apparatus and is worn under your jacket.

### **Piste**



The piste is the name given to the metal strip that denotes the playing field for the sport of fencing. The piste measures 14m long by 1.5 to 2m wide, and is marked by several lines: (C) Centre Line; (G) En Guard Line; (W) 2 Meter Warning Line; (E) End Line. There is an additional meter or two added at each end of the piste to allow of run offs, but is considered out of bounds. (Source: <http://www.fencing.ab.ca/sport-equipment.asp>)

### **First Purchases**

EFC will lend you equipment when you are doing a beginner course, but recommend purchasing a glove at first. All competitive fencers must have their own equipment.

Equipment can be purchased from the Head Coach or from any of these dealers: Leon Paul, Blue Gauntlet, All Star or Uhlmann. Purchase online or from vendors at tournaments.

### **Glove**

These can be purchased from the Head Coach for \$20. As you fence more, you may wish to purchase a more comfortable and expensive glove.

### **Mask**

Masks are made in 4 sizes called Small, Medium, Large and Extra Large. For Foil and Epee you would normally buy an insulated mask (one with black or coloured mesh). For



Saber you need a special saber mask with a lamé bib.

### **Jacket**

you will want a front zip jacket as they are much easier to put on. Jackets are available in a huge range of styles both stretchy and non stretchy and some even contain high tech wicking linings to make them more comfortable. At beginner level the only reason to select FIE 800N rated gear is for additional security.

### **Plastron**

For non-electric fencing a 350N plastron is OK however; for a small amount more you can usually buy an FIE 800N plastron which will also allow you to fence electric.

### **Weapon**

A beginner can purchase a non-FIE blade to start. If you are certain that you will be fencing a lot then it is worth considering getting a maraging FIE blade as, although they are about twice the price they last about 3 times longer.

### **Bodywire**

Although a simple part of your equipment, they are not all the same, cheap bodywires are often made with inferior parts and cable that will need replacing more often. Bodywires are different for each weapon.

### **Breeches**

Similarly to jackets breeches come in many different styles. Most people go for ones of the same style as their jacket so that they match!

### **Shoes**

Fencing specific shoes are only essential for advanced fencers but many people buy them as they provide better grip and the correct shaped sole.

Source:

[http://www.leonpaul.com/shop/why\\_lp\\_order.htm](http://www.leonpaul.com/shop/why_lp_order.htm)

## Fencing Basic Terms

1. **"Lunge" and "Parry"**: These are the two basic words which you will probably understand immediately. They describe actions that occur countless times in a match at every level:

"Lunge" is the attack and "parry" is the defense to the attack. You can tell the lunge because the fencer who is lunging has the point of the weapon as far toward the opponent as possible, a back leg that is straight and leaning into the attack by at least 45 degrees and a front leg that is bent to the point where the knee is over the toes.

"Parry" is the defender moving her weapon to "push" aside a blade that is attacking. There are a number of different ways to parry and lunge but the basic purpose of each remains the same.

2. **"En garde"** (French term): In training it describes the basic stance of a fencer. In a match it is a warning from the judge to both fencers to prepare to fence.
3. **"Prêt"** (French term): This is used by a judge at a fencing match. After the judge warns the fencers with "en garde", the judge will then say "prêt", meaning "ready", to alert the fencers that the match is about to begin.
4. **"Allez"** (French term): Meaning "go", this is used by a judge at a fencing match to tell the two fencers to have at one another.
5. **"Touch"**: (A much welcome replacement to stabbing that was developed as fencing became a sport.) A touch is when the tip of one fencer's weapon touches the target area on an opponent. Whether the touch results in a point is the determination of the judge for the match, one of whose duties it is to insure the touch was proper under competition rules. The foregoing is true in all styles of fencing. However, in saber fencing, a touch can be scored with the blade as well as the blade tip.

6. **"Riposte"** (Another of the ubiquitous French terms (the French love to fence), literally meaning "answer".) In fencing it describes an attack that a fencer makes immediately after she executes a parry. Thus the ubiquitous fencing term "parry-riposte". The parry-riposte is one of the most common techniques in scoring touches you will see in a fencing match, again at any level. The parry-riposte is often done in a sequence of two or three, viz. the fencers quickly switch between attacking, defending, attacking, defending - back and forth until a touch is scored or one of the fencers backs down. At the top level of competition, the speed is dazzling to the point of being faster than the eye.
7. **"Disengage"** (not a French term though the French terms are so apt): A disengage is moving the tip of a blade under an opponent's blade to the other side or where the disengage started. This is done very quickly and with the absolute minimum of movement - the "great" fencers simply use their fingers to make the tip of the blade duck under their opponent's weapon. It is used chiefly to escape a parry or as part of a disguised attack, i.e. the attack starts toward the opponent's left side (the opponent is thinking left and prepared to defend the left) and moves to the opponent's right side (so quickly the opponent hasn't time to register the change and react to it with a parry).
8. **"Attack"** (we are now safely away from the French): An attack is any movement intended to score a touch.
9. **"Right of way"**: This is an important concept in foil fencing and in saber fencing, although it does not apply in epee fencing. (It is a very complicated concept but since this is just an intro, this is a very basic explanation.) Because of the speed at which foil fencers move, there had to be some way for a judge to award a point when both fencers have scored a touch almost, if not totally, simultaneously. "Right of way" generally means that the attacker gets the

point (aggression pays). In a "parry-riposte", a successful parry ends the opponent's attack and the riposte (being an attack) if successful, the presider awards the point to that fencer, even if the fencer who initiated the attack touches the parry-riposter in a legitimate target, too bad - the person executing the successful parry-riposte gets the touch.

10. **Target areas.** Depends on the weapon used in the match. In foil ("fleuret" in French) fencing, the target area is defined by a jacket (a lame [lom-MAY]) worn over the torso that appears to be of metallic material; touching anywhere else is "off-target" )(a

waste, practice point control). In épée fencing, the target area is the entire body of the opponent, including the head (ouch). In saber fencing the target area is the same as foil but the arms and the head are fair game as well. So, in foil a touch is off-target if it doesn't touch the lame and the fencing stops with no point scored. In épée there is no "off-target". In saber, even though there is a target area, no off-target occurs (stopping the action) if a fencer touches an area off-target the fencers keep battling until a touch is affected.

Source: <http://www.wikihow.com/Understand-Basic-Fencing-Terminology>



Picture Credit:

<http://www.stumbleupon.com/demo/?review=1#url=http://library.thinkquest.org/27480/fencing.jpg>

## FIRST COMPETITION – WHAT TO EXPECT!

1. **Give your fencing passport to the registrar.** Check the registration sheet to ensure that you are registered.
2. **Take your mask to the Mask Check.** It will be tested to make sure that it is safe to use. 
3. **Dress for the competition.** Warm-up.
4.  **Listen for the announcement that the list of competitors in your event is posted.** Check the list to ensure that you are on it and that your passport number is correct. This list will have rankings of fencers. Since this is your first, competition, your ranking will be 999 which means you are not ranked.
5.  **Listen for an announcement that your event is to begin.** The announcement will also tell you which piste you will be fencing on.

Your event will be split into pools of 5-6 fencers. The fencers are uniformly distributed across the pools so that there is a range from beginner to experienced fencers in each pool. Each fencer will fence every fencer in the pool, so you should get 4-5 bouts. Each bout goes to 5 points or 3 minutes, whichever is reached first. It is customary to salute your opponent and the presider before and after each bout. Shake the ungloved hand with your opponent at the end of each bout. **The presider will ask you to sign the results of your bout. Ensure that you agree with the outcome (who won)**



**and the points scored *before* signing.**

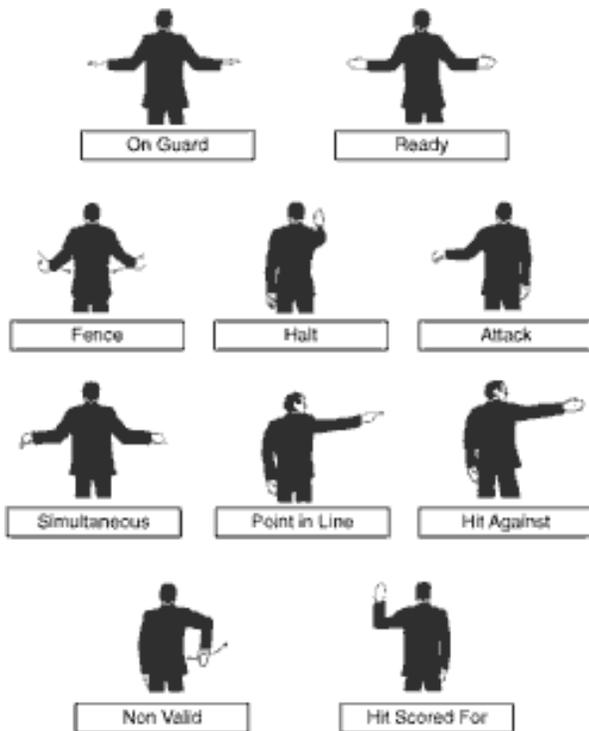
Once signed the outcome is official and cannot be changed.

Pools are where you will get the most experience. Have fun and drink lots of water.

The outcome and points scored are used to determine who is paired in the Direct Elimination rounds. Fencers are paired from high to low so the fencer with the greatest number of victories fences the fencer with the least number of victories.

6.  **Listen for the announcement that the Direct Elimination schedule is posted.** Check the schedule to see how you did in the preliminary round.
7.  **Listen for the announcement calling you and your opponent to which piste number.** The bout is longer this time. The points go to 15 or 3 rounds (Each round is 3 minutes with a 1 minute rest in between.) Have fun. If you lose, you will then be eliminated from the competition and you are finished your event.
8. **If you win your first Direct Elimination (DE) round, listen for the announcement to call you and your new opponent to a piste. DO NOT LEAVE IF YOU HAVE WON A DE.**
9. **When you have either been eliminated or have won all DE's in the tableau, you can change back into your street clothes. If you won, you will need to stay and listen for the announcement for the medal presentation.**

## Referee Hand Signals



Source: <http://www.undergroundfencing.org/info.htm>

### How to Watch a Fencing Bout

Fencing is a modern and exciting sport, often described as trying to play chess while running the 100 metre dash! It is hard to believe that this thoroughly sophisticated sport has emerged from the serious and deadly combat practised by the Three Musketeers. Fencing requires split second timing and lightning fast reactions. It is a sport where one small mistake can win or lose a bout.

Fencing is physically and mentally demanding. Speed, strength, footwork, wrist work, and psychology are essential to winning. The following hints should be helpful.

- To begin, do not try to watch both fencers. Concentrate on the movement of only one.
- The fencer who starts the action is considered to be the attacker.
- An opponent's attack may be parried; that is, the defender uses his weapon to move the attacker's blade out of the lines of attack.

- The defender may then immediately riposte, or hit the other fencer.
- Watch the footwork and notice how fencers try to maintain their best distance in order to either launch an attack with a lunge or to assure their defense if the opponent attacks.
- See if you can see the preparation to the attack of the fencer that you are watching.
- Try to recognize the split second in which the fencer tries to provoke a counter reaction, or reaction from the opponent.

### Ranking Fencers After Pools:

1. Each fencer's wins and losses are first used to set the rankings for the tableau.
2. If there is a tie of wins/losses, indicators are used. This is the total number of touches scored minus the total number of touches received. For example, in a 5-fencer pool, a fencer who won all his/her bouts 5-0 would have an indicator of 20. A fencer who lost all their bouts 0-5 would have an indicator of -20.

The tableau is arranged according to the pool results with fencers paired from high to low so the fencer with the greatest number of victories fences the fencer with the least number of victories. Once a fencer is defeated, they are eliminated from the competition. Final placement in the tournament is based upon each fencer's performance in the tableau.

Source:

[http://palmettofencers.org.s29.dotnetssl.com/Portals/0/Documents/PFC\\_Docs/A%20HUGE%20Glossary%20of%20Fencing%20terms.doc](http://palmettofencers.org.s29.dotnetssl.com/Portals/0/Documents/PFC_Docs/A%20HUGE%20Glossary%20of%20Fencing%20terms.doc)

## Official Individual Rankings

For Provincial rankings, go to Alberta Fencing Association: <http://www.fencing.ab.ca/>

For Canadian National Domestic rankings, go to Canadian Fencing Federation site: <http://fencing.ca/>

For High Performance Program rankings in Canada, go to CFF: <http://fencing.ca/>

For International rankings, go to FIE website: [www.fie.ch](http://www.fie.ch)

Rankings are based on placements at sanctioned events. There are different points for each ranking system, which are explained on each of the websites.

## Volunteer Program at EFC

Volunteers are the basis of the functioning of the EFC in all capacities. From accounting commitments to tournaments to marketing to publicity to casinos to building maintenance and cleaning.....all are performed by volunteers.

In 2007, the EFC hired an Executive Director on a part-time basis to handle some of the day-to-day items. This has helped to relieve some of the load from the various board members, but there remains a large amount of work to be done by our volunteers.

To that end, the EFC has instituted a system whereby volunteers and their hours are utilized in the best way possible for both the club and the volunteer. EFC has started the process with our **Competitive fencers, requiring them to submit a \$400 cheque per term, dated for the last day of each session.** Once 2 volunteer tasks have been completed in a session, the cheque will be returned to the fencer. Should a fencer/family not complete

their 2 tasks of volunteer duty, the cheque will be cashed by the EFC and a receipt will be issued at that time.

Comments from EFC volunteers have always been very positive. Most say they didn't realize how much fun they would have. All tournament volunteers appreciate the opportunity to learn more about the sport and the opportunity to meet other parents, coaches and fencers involved in the sport. EFC tries to reward their volunteers as much as possible, often providing t-shirts and always providing lunches and snacks at tournaments. Every hour that a volunteer submits is entered into a draw twice a year for discounted fencing classes. This can have as much value as 50% discount per session!

Requiring our competitive fencers alone to volunteer will not cover our requirements and **we strongly encourage all other fencers and their families to volunteer their services throughout the year.** There is a huge variety of opportunities for which to volunteer, some that take place in the club and some that take place at a tournament. Please check with the volunteer coordinator, or any board member, for a list of those opportunities. Notices will also be put on the volunteer bulletin board for services needed. Remember that when someone asks you at the club to volunteer for something, it is because EFC *really needs you* and value your input.

Thank you in advance for your support – without you the club could not operate!



