



# United States Fencing Coaches Association

- Member, Academie d'Armes Internationale (AAD)
- Member, National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA)

## Glossary of Terms

The official international language of fencing is French. All international and other major competitions are refereed in French. The official rules book is in French. Nevertheless, the business of the Federation Internationale d'Escrime (F.I.E.) and Academie d'Armes Internationale (A.A.I.) is now conducted in English and Spanish as well as French. Many of the words and phrases used in English pertaining to fencing are directly derived from original French terms, yet there are a number of words which, because of their unique association with the Italian schools, are universally understood in their original Italian form. This brief glossary of fencing terms is presented in an effort to make available to USFCA members a standard of correct definition and usage.

The evolution of fencing through the different languages of its development and codification and the individual ideas of its many Masters has produced a wide variety of definitions and terminologies. The texts recommended by the USFCA contain many different terms for the same actions and, contrarily, terms that refer to multiple actions. This list of definitions from the USFCA contains the most generally used terms and their variations. The USFCA does not imply that other definitions are wrong or even that these are the only ones that should be used when teaching. However, the USFCA examinations are based upon this set of terms and definitions.

---

### Notes:

- cf. = compare
  - e.g. = for example (Latin "exempli gratia")
  - i.e. = In other words (Latin "id est")
  - Syn. = Synonym
  - Fr. = French (originating from French or the equivalent French term)
  - It. = Italian (originating from Italian or the equivalent Italian term)
-

**Absence (of the blade):** A situation in which the blade is held in such a position that it cannot be contacted.

**Abstain:** To refrain from voting when one is unsure.

**Advance:** To move towards the opponent by stepping sequentially with first the front foot followed by the rear foot, restoring the orientation and distance of the feet relative to each other.

**Aids:** The third, fourth, and fifth fingers of the weapon hand. Cf. "Guides".

**Allez:** A command made by the referee to the fencers to begin fencing (in the USA, the command is "Fence").

**Analysis/Commitment drills:** A type of paired drill used to teach fencers to analyze their opponents, develop a strategy based on the analysis, and execute the tactics/techniques necessary to those strategies.

**Angulation:** The act of directing the weapon of point to the target in an angle *other than* a straight line, in order to avoid the defending weapon or to better hit an otherwise protected target.

**Appel:** A tap of the ball of the front foot on the floor.

**À Propos:** The opportune moment to launch an action; the "correct time".

**Arrêt:** See "stop-hit" or "counterattack".

**Assesseeur:** See judge".

**Attack:** The initial offensive action made by extending the weapon arm towards the opponent's valid target and continuously threatening the opponent's target, from the fencer's own critical distance.

**Attack on the blade:** Offensive actions made against an opponent's weapon to remove or control the opponent's weapon before or while attacking. There are two types: *attaque-au-fer* (beat, expulsion, pressure) and *prise-de-fer* (bind, cross, envelopment, opposition).

**Attack on the preparation:** Launching an attack while the opponent is still preparing his attack. See "preparation".

**Attaque-au-fer:** One of the two families of attacks on the blade (refer to each) e beat, expulsion, and pressure. The blade is not held all the way to the target, nor is it moved and held. Sometimes called "Tac-au-fer".

**Avertissement:** See "warning".

**Balestra:** (It.) An attack footwork movement executed in two motions by jumping forward with both feet landing together and then lunging. The feet are pulled slightly together while in the air. Cf. “jump lunge”.

**Barrage:** A fence-off between two or more fencers or teams.

**Beat:** A type of *tac-au-fer*, made by tapping the opponent’s blade sharply on the middle or upper part.

**Belly cut:** Against a same-handed opponent, a cutting action made by drawing the blade *horizontally* across the abdomen of the opponent from his inside to his outside line.

**Bib:** The chin and throat protector attached to the mask.

**Bind (liément):** A type of *pris-de-fer* in which the opponent’s blade is engaged and then moved *diagonally* from one line of engagement to another (i.e., from inside high to outside low, or outside high to inside low, or vice-versa).

**Blocked exercises:** A blocked exercise is where the learner practices only one skill during each set or practice section, e.g. performing ten parry-four with direct riposte. One of three kinds of practice schedules commonly used in physical education for teaching activities.

**Bouting drills:** Similar to an exchange drill, it is a type of paired drill where the fencers are two or more opposing tasks (e.g. a simple attack and a parry riposte), but instead of taking turns being attacker and defender, both fencers are allowed initiate either of the actions. This is similar to bouting, but with restricted actions.

**Break the tempo:** A technique to interrupt the opponent’s actions. Examples include retreating out of distance or intercepting his blade prior to the final action in his attack.

**Broken-time action:** Any action executed with pause or syncopation in either the feet, the arm/blade, or both.

**Cadence:** The time-related rate of execution of a series of fencing movements. Syn. “rhythm”.

**Ceding parry:** See “yielding parry”.

**Change of engagement or line:** A reorientation of the relative positions of the fencer’s and opponent’s blades, made by moving one’s blade from the engagement (or line) in a “U” or “V” motion, either under (high line) or over (low line) opponent’s blade to the new engagement (or line) on the other side of the blade.

**Check:** A toe-tap followed by a jump or a retreat.

**Chest cut:** With a same-handed opponent, a *diagonal* cutting motion made upon the chest of the opponent (e.g., from his high inside line shoulder to diagonally opposite hip).