



US Fencing Coaches Association

Study Aid for Practical Exams

Published by the Certification and Accreditation Board
of the United States Fencing Coaches Association, © 2022

Version: 2.1
Last Updated: January 2022

Originally compiled by Rob Handleman when he was chair of the Certification and Accreditation Board, this study aid summary is not a substitute for reading the books and documents suggested by the USFCA. However, it will help you to understand some major concepts in a form that is easier to review. In addition, the information contained here may be asked during the oral part of the exam (mostly Prevo and Master). Some of the sources are noted, most of the information is taken from the books, *"Fencing Sabre: A Practical Training Guide for Coaches, Parents and Young Athletes,"* and *"Fencing Foil: A Practical Training Guide for Coaches, Parents and Young Athletes,"* and the *Addendum e-book* for both books by Rob Handelman and Connie Louie. Use the USFCA website for the latest study guides and written exams questions.

PRINCIPLES OF TRAINING, CONDITIONING AND FITNESS

(Handelman, chap. 4 and 5, Addendum))

Trainers need to develop seasonal training programs for fencers. This is individualized to meet the needs of each fencer. The exercise program must build around motions and key qualities that occur in fencing.

Functional training is a system of training exercises that is viewed as not particularly fencing specific, but improvement oriented to work the muscles and movements that are done during fencing actions. All functional training needs to address endurance, strength and balance, and core stability to improve speed, agility and power. For fencing single leg strength and power is particularly important.

Purpose of the Warm-Up

Warmed-up" means fencers can physically work more efficiently, more safely, and at a higher level with their bodies and minds ready for the training or competition to come. An increase in the temperature within the muscles and an elevation of the core body temperature is necessary for the attainment of warm-up and optimal performance.

The warm-up is divided into three phases:

1. general warm-up (includes gentle cardiovascular work)
2. dynamic stretching (no static stretching)
3. sport-specific activity

Main Components of Training

Trainers need to develop certain qualities in fencers so that they can reach competitive levels. Some of the components are listed below.

1. Fencing technique (manipulation of the weapon, footwork, distance and timing of actions from group and individual work)
2. Coordination abilities (speed of reaction, motor control)
3. Tactics (adaptability) is taught in group and individual lessons.



4. Socio-psychological preparation (motivation, arousal, personality, self confidence, resistance to stress, achievement motivation) is developed in mental training sessions and at competitions. (Czajkowski, chap. 11)
5. Energy System training (shuttle runs, tempo runs, footwork) - to improve the energy system fencers use for competition

Energy Systems

The two major energy systems, **Aerobic** and **Anaerobic**, are categorized based on duration, intensity and how the cells of the body respond to exercise. The anaerobic (not using oxygen) and aerobic (using oxygen) systems actually overlap, alternate, and are integrated and work together in phases. They fit seamlessly into each other.

The two systems use a molecule called ATP (Adenosine Triphosphate) as the standard power and energy source of all human motion. Food is broken down into ATP to fuel the muscles. There are a number of energy pathways that produce and use ATP for muscle activity.

Anaerobic System

This system supplies ATP by using stored resources (ATP and others) for fast burst, explosive action that is dominant in champion fencers. More intense exercise uses either of two different **anaerobic** pathways to burn energy. First used is the ATP-CP energy pathway (sometimes called the phosphate system), for immediate energy for a few seconds. Second used is the glycolysis pathway for energy up to about two minutes of activity. After these pathways are used up, the body switches to the Aerobic System.

Aerobic System

After a short period of time, the stored sources of ATP run out, and the high work intensities exceed the fencer's ability to reform ATP. Even a very fit fencer runs out of the short-term stored energy, and the speed and explosiveness of his attack slows down to varying degrees. The fencer has to switch to the aerobic energy system, which does not give the same bursts of speed that the fencer had using the anaerobic pathway to make fast hits.

Aerobic is also called the oxidative (with oxygen) system in which the body uses oxygen to aid in energy production. Long-duration, lower activity levels use the aerobic system, and combine oxygen with energy sources such as carbohydrates and fats. The aerobic energy system is very efficient, used at rest, during recovery and for low-intensity activities longer than three minutes. The fitness of the fencer, length and intensity of the bout determines the exact pathway used. A trained, physically fit fencer can efficiently access and use the system best equipped to constantly replenish their energy supply.

Fitness

The components of muscular fitness that a fencer needs to train are agility, balance, flexibility, strength, power, speed, and endurance. Poor agility is often due to low levels of general strength and fitness.

The Principle of Specificity implies training using the major energy system for fencing which is 90% anaerobic fitness and 10% aerobic. The best way to develop the muscular and energy fitness required for fencing is to do fencing or activities in an anaerobic training program. That includes fast stop-and-go motions for short periods of time at high intensity. The fencer also must overload or fence at/or greater than the speed and level of intensity of competition (Sharkey p.10-12).



Overload Principle

When training the overload principle, it states that an increasing demand must be placed on the body systems to keep improving. Control the training load and avoid injury by varying the frequency, intensity, and or duration of training (Sharkey p.10-12). The fencer gains significant improvements in whatever their current condition is by exceeding the minimum training threshold. That means working above 50% of the maximal oxygen consumption ($\dot{V}O_2$). When out of condition, a fencer is easily out of breath so it is easy to achieve the maximal oxygen consumption. Elite youths may need to exceed the threshold by 80% of $\dot{V}O_2$ max before overload occurs. If a fencer trains every time at a high intensity, he ends up over-training and injured, sick or burned out. So occasionally, train above the level and often below to recover from previous hard workouts.

Muscle Fibers

There are two major types of muscle fibers: fast twitch and slow twitch. There are two types of fast twitch muscle fibers, fast oxidative glycolytic (FOG), and fast glycolytic (FG).

Glycolytic means glycogen (sugar) is broken down to get energy for contractions. FG fibers contract rapidly but are quick to fatigue. FOG fibers share characteristics of both slow and fast. Slow twitch fibers are slow oxidative (SO). Oxidative means oxygen is used to produce energy. For slower movements the nervous system uses SO muscles, such as in jogging, burning fat and carbohydrates. For rapid and explosive actions, both slow and fast are recruited using ATP and glycogen.

Heart Rate

The heart rate zone for improving cardio-vascular endurance is between 60 and 80 percent of your max heart rate. Maximum heart rate is roughly estimated at 220 - (minus) your age. As the heart rate increases during training, there is a gradual transition from aerobic to anaerobic energy pathways when the anaerobic threshold is reached. This occurs in training as activity speeds up and reaches about 80% to 90% of the maximum heart rate.

Anaerobic training develops short-term energy sources, pathways, and the fast twitch muscle fibers needed for fencing competition. Higher heart rate also indicates a switch from fat to carbohydrate energy and using more fast twitch muscles. Fast twitch muscles fatigue the most rapidly as the carbohydrates are used up in the muscles and blood stream.

Guidelines for Planning a Training Cycle:

In sports, the term periodization refers to dividing the yearly training plan into large and then smaller, easier to oversee training phases.

The periodization of a training cycle is usually broken into an **annual plan** of three major periods (Czajkowski chap. 11) preparatory or **pre-season**, competitive or **season**, and **off season**. The phases are broken into smaller parts or cycles. A macro-cycle is usually 3 to 6 weeks long, while the smallest phase is the single training session. A three week cycle may have one medium, hard, and easy week, and within each week one medium, hard, and easy day to allow for overload and recovery. As the competitive season arrives, the volume of activity drops, while the intensity increases to simulate and prepare for the tournaments.

Preparatory (pre-season)

allows for gradual acquisition of top form and conditioning, and prepares the fencer for the



anaerobic training needed in bouts. This is the best time to learn new skills.

Competitive (main season)

provides maintenance and further development of form and technique and applied tactics in the competitive time of the training cycle. Peaking for important events is planned with training logs.

Transition (off-season)

allows active rest and a temporary decrease in fencing specific form. Cross training is used to increase the level of fitness for the next cycle.



INSTRUCTIONAL INFORMATION FOR TEACHING FENCING

Stages of learning fencing occur over many years (Czajkowski chap. 11).

Introductory

Lasts for 2 to 3 years with up to 3 group lessons per week of one and one half to two hours for youths. Some occasional short individual lessons such as Assessment (check to see if the student understands the drill), Teaching and Training are added in a variety with training bouts and competition. The class contains a suggested break down of activities into energy and coordination 40%, semi and specific fitness 30%, technique and tactics 30%.

For teaching and training pre-teen children, emphasis is on having fun while developing gross motor skills, learning organization and group cooperation, learning the fundamentals of basic skills, and developing general fitness. General development and variety is important, while early specialization is not. Endurance development will occur during the specific sport participation. Ligaments, joints and growth plates are not fully formed in adolescent athletes so heavy weight lifting is inappropriate. Light weight lifting is helpful.

Basic

Lasts 3 to 4 years with 4 to 5 sessions per week of 2 to 3 hours including group training sessions and individual lessons. The class contains a suggested breakdown of activities into energy and coordination 15% to 20%, semi and specific fitness 25% to 30%, fencing technique and tactics 50% to 60%. Emphasis is on the variability of actions and finding executions that adapt to individual traits of the fencer.

Competitive

For many fencers this is as far as they go. Further development of semi and specific fitness coordination, motor adaptability and lightning speed motor improvisation, large variety of fencing actions, variable execution of the same action, and individualized training based on the fencer's physical characteristics. Training increases to daily training of 2 to 4 hours with individual lessons and a lot of various training bouts and competitions.

Champion

Few reach this level, there is less actual physical coaching and more advising. New actions are specific to the fencer's style and physical abilities. Much time is spent on analysis of competitions: good points, progress made, victories, defeats and mistakes. Defining errors of perception and reaction (not noticing opponents actions in time), errors of thinking (poor tactics), and errors of execution (poor technique) are more important than learning new moves. Finding the sources of the errors such as too high arousal, not enough practice, poor conditioning and eliminating them are the goal of the coach and student. Uses of exercises that correspond to fencing activities help develop the student's initiative, conscious effort, and self-confidence.

Training activities include refining actions in training bouts and use of actions in new ways to increase speed of simple attacks, counter-time, changes of intention with unforeseen actions and speed of mental processing. The fencer co-directs his training with the coach - as advisor and helper- learning new capabilities and versatility.

Veteran

Adults who wish to continue and fence in their age category.



Classification of Fencing Actions

Summary of Czajkowski's monograph on the USFCA website.

The psychological basis (perception and ways of choosing the actions) of applying the actual actions in the bout lead to the division of these actions into three groups:

1. Foreseen actions.
2. Unforeseen actions.
3. Partly foreseen actions.

Foreseen Actions (preconceived or premeditated actions)

Foreseen actions are the actions executed according to a previously chosen tactical situation.

1. First intention actions (foreseen actions of first intention).
2. Second intention actions (Foreseen actions of second intention).

Unforeseen Actions (spontaneous or unpremeditated actions)

These actions are automatic, mostly applied in the form of defensive or counteroffensive actions. They are executed as "reflex"-motor response to unexpected offensive actions from the opponent—usually in the form of parry or counter-attack "on the spur of the moment". This is a response to an opponent's action which was neither expected nor foreseen.

Partly Foreseen Actions (actions containing both foreseen and unforeseen parts)

1. Actions, mostly attacks, with a known beginning but an unknown ending, so called "open-eyes attacks".
2. Actions, mostly attacks, with change of intention during their execution.

In partly foreseen actions, the beginning is known and the final part is unknown (or one of several options). The two above mentioned varieties of partly foreseen actions superficially are very similar and yet there is a striking difference between them. An open-eyes action begins with a foreseen and planned movement (feint or action on the blade) and ends according to the opponent's reaction. Actions with a change of decision are conceived, initially programmed and put into execution as preconceived actions (either first or second intention) and then, under the influence of the opponent's unexpected movement, are changed mid-way.

Training Lessons generally focus on Foreseen Actions and *Option Lessons* incorporate Partially Foreseen Actions. Both should include Unforeseen Actions as surprise.



Teaching Group and Individual Lessons

Stages of learning an action in the short-term

(Wojciechowski, chap. 3)

The basic three types of learning methods are:

- tactile/kinesthetic,
- visual/observational,
- auditory/analytical.

The steps to teaching an action are:

1. Introduction with understanding of the movement
2. Learning to achieve correct execution
3. Consolidating for automatic execution
4. Perfecting with practice in changing conditions

Types of Group Technique Drills

(Bradford p.14)

- **Preparatory Drills** warm-up and instruction and introduction of technique

Four types of group drills:

- **Technical (tutorial or mechanical) drills** analog of the one-on-one work of the student at the coach's plastron, one lets the other hit repeating the action
- **Exchange drills** alternate actions with an initiator and responder - students discover the time, speed and technique on their own
- **Bouting drills** like competing, they remove the exchange aspect of the drill and use the drill actions whenever they wish.
- **Commitment/Analysis drills** seven to ten attempts at finding out which of two solutions to use to defeat the two actions the coach gave your partner.

Individual Lessons -Types of lessons (Czajkowski chap. 13-15)

- **Option Lesson** (Training Lesson is the older term) is a lesson that enhances adaptability and tactics.
- **Teaching Lesson** is a technique lesson to perfect actions or enhance skill with mechanical repetition.
- **Bouting Lesson** the student fences the coach and has to figure out how to solve problems he presents.
- **Warm-up Lesson** is short with confidence building, point or blade control actions to prepare for a competition.

Methods of Drilling in the Lesson

- **Blocked or massed exercises** - many times repeating the same action
- **Serial** - repeat one action after another in ordered succession
- **Random** - interchanging various actions in any order



Teaching Methods

- **No reaction (blocked exercise):** Student does a mechanical repetition of actions from their initiative. Without the coach's signal, the student attacks head (standing, with advance, lunge and advance lunge) and the coach corrects footwork, hand position and return on guard. Coach stands still or keeps distance. Once the basic technique is understood, the Coach may react with a late parry, late counter attack, and late retreat so the fencer still hits.
- **Simple reaction (blocked exercise):** Same as above except now the student does the action on the coach's signal. The fencer knows the action to do and which order. The coach may open a target, make an invitation and close it, search for the blade, put out the point or attack.
- **Choice reaction (serial or random exercise):** Coach announces the actions and the signals are known to the fencer. Usually only two choices for the fencer to decide on with the student or coach starting the actions. For example, the coach moves back and forth and either searches for the blade in quarte or tierce and the fencer deceives the search and attacks. Coach follows the student and does not search when the student presents the blade, the fencer attacks direct. If the coach parries early then the student deceives to the open line.
- **Surprise or switching reaction (unforeseen and random):** Coach tells the fencer to do one action and messes it up with something unexpected. The fencer attacks and expects the coach to parry tierce. Instead the coach pulls distance and parries counter quarte or attacks on the preparation. Coach says to parry fifth on a head attack and instead does head feint flank or disengage with the point. The student has to change to the correct action to not get hit.
- **Coach initiated:** Coach's signal starts the action
- **Student initiated:** Student starts the action at the appropriate time during the coach's movements.

Teaching Lesson:

Select a theme or action to work on and use the teaching methods of blocked, serial, and random to improve the student's skill.

1. Explain the action
2. Demo fast, slow, and fast
3. Practical - student tries slowly
4. Fixing Actions at different distances standing still, advance, lunge, fleche, etc.
5. Perfecting (replicating the bout) faster coach initiation then student faster tempo and footwork, may also include following the tactical wheel

Short and long tactical wheel

The short version of the tactical wheel: Simple attack - parry riposte - compound attack - counter-attack

The long version of the tactical wheel: Simple attack - parry riposte - compound attack - counter-attack - counter-time - feint in-time



Option Lesson

A lesson that incrementally increases in difficulty and allows the student to make choices and adapt to different reactions that an opponent may attempt while fencing.

A. Introduction or warm-up

Engage the students' attention, judge their distance and blade skills, and present a simplified version of the options that will be utilized in the Main part of the lesson.

1. No reaction - the first part of the warm-up is given under very easy conditions.
2. Simple reaction - the introduction of the simple reaction strokes correlates with the strokes used in the main lesson. They are coach initiated.

B. Main Lesson

Include tactics and theory (p. 48-49 Czajkowski) in the option lesson as the coach uses foreseen, partially foreseen, and unforeseen actions.

- **Foreseen** moves are pre-conceived actions of the first intention and second intention executed according to a previously chosen plan.
- **Partially foreseen** moves are actions with a known beginning and change of intention during the execution, so called open eyes attacks.
- **Unforeseen** moves are automatic reflex moves, improvised, spontaneous and unpremeditated moves.

During the lesson, include the above in more and more realistic situations.

- Choice reaction (with at least 2 tactical possibilities)
- Choice reaction exercises may be coach initiated in the early phase of the drill, but most of the exercise should be student initiated.
- Surprise (or switching reaction) - Unforeseen circumstances should be presented during lesson to check the student's readiness, ability to rapidly switch attention and quality of technical execution.
- Another very important element that the examiners will be watching for is the candidate's awareness and proper use of distance.

C. Conclusion

Close down the lesson with change in tempo actions to cool down, stretch out and relax the student.



Steps in the Progression of a Skill

This progression is a sample of a progression series. Taken from the Canadian Coaching Manual, this is an example of a progression which could be partially demonstrated during the Prevot and Master examinations. It is important to demonstrate knowledge and proficiency at progressions.

1. PERCEIVING

The coach demonstrates the movement - engagement with step forward, disengage and hit delivered with a lunge. The athlete is asked to try it.

2. PATTERNING

The skill is practiced with a partner or the coach, in front of a mirror, etc. until the movement sequence is properly ordered. At this stage no preliminary footwork is involved and the attacking distance is constant (the partner is stationary).

3. ADAPTING

The athlete now has to perform the skill in the context of other movements, judging the time and distance with respect to a partner or coach.

- a. The athlete executes the movement against a partner who is moving in and out of the proper distance;
- b. The athlete moves in and out of correct distance while the partner stays in place before the athlete executes the attack;
- c. Both the athlete and partner move back and forth. The athlete selects the correct distance and timing to deliver the attack;
- d. The athlete employs a variety of blade preparation actions and incorporates them into exercises b) and c). At this stage the partner does not attempt any blade resistance or evasion;
- e. Exercise d) except now the partner has the option of presenting the blade at different distances and timings and keeping it in place for varying lengths of time.

4. REFINING

The coach presents the athlete with near competition level distance, timing, and blade movement conditions. The coach is allowed to give resistance to the engagement or move his blade to avoid the engagement altogether. The coach is allowed to attempt to parry the attack or evade the hit by side stepping, ducking, etc. An option could be:

The athlete must score ten (10) points against the coach. If the athlete misses an attack, one point is removed from his total *or* his total goes to zero. Further pressure can be placed on the athlete by imposing a time limit, e.g. three minutes, in which to reach the goal.

5. VARYING

The coach trains the athlete to place the action in the context of the bout by means of choice exercises. Possible options could include:

- a. If the coach stays in place when the engagement is made, the hit is delivered



- direct.
- b. If the coach stays in place and avoids the engagement to attempt an counter-attack, the athlete executes a counter-time (Quarte parry, Riposte direct).
 - c. If the coach attempts a counter-attack while moving back thus avoiding the engagement, the athlete performs a prise-dé-fer (direct, semi-circle, circle, or diagonal).
 - d. If the coach moves back and avoids the engagement (no attempt to hit), the athlete takes a second step before the lunge to execute a feint, disengage attack (the feint draws a quarte parry from the coach).
 - e. If the coach attempts to disengage and hit once the engagement is taken, the athlete completes the action without alteration.
 - f. If the coach parries the attack with quarte (no riposte), the athlete performs a remise (coach does not step back) or reprise (coach steps back) in the quarte line.
 - g. If the coach parries the attack with counter-sixte (no riposte), the athlete performs redoublement (coach does not step back) or reprise with disengage (coach steps back) in the sixte line.

6. IMPROVISING

The final stage in the progression is to help the athlete develop their own unique repertoire of actions that suits their particular style.

- a. The coach works with the athlete to develop a delivery of the action which suits the athlete's temperament. Some options are:
 - i. The opponent feels so threatened by the possibility of a direct attack from the engagement that he holds his blade position and steps back to prepare for the defence. The attack is delivered with such control and balance that the opponent has no other option.
 - ii. The opponent is lulled into a false sense of safety as the athlete takes the engagement. The athlete quietly steals distance in the step forward, then explodes with the scoring action from apparent calm.
- b. The coach devises bouting situations which allow the athlete to develop the attack. Some options could be:
 - i. The coach instructs two fencers to fence a regular bout up to 21 points. A successful counter-sixte engagement, disengagement attack is worth five (5) points while a counter-attack against the attempted counter-sixte engagement or a counter-time against the attempted counter-attack are worth three (3) points. Everything else is worth one (1) point. If a fencer exceeds the limit of 21 points, his or her score goes to zero.
 - ii. The coach tells the athlete (privately) that he or she can only count the points scored using the counter-sixte engagement, disengagement attack. The athlete's opponent is given another action of preference. The fencers fence a bout of five (5) points. They can hit the opponent with any action but can only count points scored with the action of preference. They keep track of their own totals secretly and attempt to reach five points before the opponent.



US Fencing Coaches Association

Study Aid for Practical Exams

- iii. Same as b) but the athlete's opponent can count hits scored with any action. In this case, the coach may choose to give the athlete two actions of preference.

- c. The coach combines the choice type of lesson with mobility, transition, and improvisation demands: The athlete has a choice of between three and five attacks - some with blade contact, some without, some with footwork preparation, some without. The counter-sixte engagement, disengage hit is among them. The coach presents a variety of distances, timings, and blade presentations but offers only slight resistance to the attack once it is launched. As soon as the hit arrives against the coach, the athlete goes on the defensive since the coach now delivers any type of attack he wishes - immediate or delayed, simple or compound, with or without blade contact. It is up to the athlete to score on the defense.



General Concepts on Fencing Technique (Handelman Chapter 7)

Lines

A line is defined as an area of target defined by the relative position of the weapon hand. Lines are the portions of the target considered in relationship to the hand and blade of the fencer (high-inside, high-outside, low-inside and low-outside) .

Six Distances

There are six "teaching " distances.

1. Riposte distance at which one can just hit the opponent by loosely extending the arm (close)
2. Advance distance (close)
3. Lunge distance (middle)
4. Advance-lunge distance (far or long)
5. In-fighting distance (foil/epee)
6. Out of distance

Footwork

Variability of footwork actions is emphasized. Vary size of steps (especially the back foot), speed, and timing. Lunge may be accelerating, explosive, slow gliding type. It is generally considered solid technique to score a hit before and at most simultaneously with the front foot striking the ground at the end of a lunge.

Preparation

Preparation is defined as movements of the blade and/or body preceding an action, which makes it easier for the attack to succeed. Literally anything one does, whether with the blade, the feet, the body, or the voice that enables the attack to succeed. The preparation precedes the final action, enhances its probability of success and may be defensive as well as offensive . Some examples of preparatory actions are: absence of blade, invitation, feint, false attack, attacks on the blade (beat, pressure), and glides.

Bladework Technique

- **Supination** is the position when the palm faces up.
- **Pronation** is the position when the knuckles of the hand are facing up.

Offensive or Attacks

An attack is defined as the initial offensive action, executed with the weapon arm extending and threatening the valid surface with a progressive forward motion. In sabre, the simple attacks are named for the targets they are trying to hit (chest, head, cheek, flank, *manchette* - forearm). In foil and epee, the simple attacks are named for the lines that they go into (disengage to the quarte, attack to the low line outside/eight).

- **Four simple attacks**
 - **Direct** or straight lunge attack is defined as a simple direct offensive action.
 - **Indirect** or disengage is changing blade line. For example, by dropping the point *under* opponent's blade (presuming he is in a high line) and then raising it on the *other* side.



Disengage deceives the opponent's search for the blade.

- **Coupé** is a cut-over attack defined as a simple indirect offensive action, which passes from one side of the opponent's blade to another by passing around the tip.
- **Counter-Disengage** is defined as an offensive action that consists of deceiving a change of engagement (rather than circular attempt of an engagement) or a circular parry by using a circular motion.

● **Compound Attacks**

Defined as an offensive action preceded by one or more feints or actions on the blade.

Definition of Feint (as defined by the USFCA) is a false thrust or cut designed to make the opponent parry or otherwise react. This is offensive in action. However, I prefer the definition that states a feint is a simulation of an offensive, defensive (feint of a parry) or counter-offensive (feint of a counter-attack) action, intended to draw a reflexive reaction, offensive, defensive, or counter-offensive.

Some examples of compound attacks

Foil/Epee: One-two, feint direct-disengage, high-low, low-high, double, coupe-coupe

Sabre: Feint head-flank, feint chest-head, feint to the tierce-disengage point

● **Attacks au fer (Attacks on the blade)**

These attacks are actions that are more or less violently executed against the adversary's blade. There are three kinds of attack au fer: beat, pressure and expulsion (*not used in modern fencing*).

- **Beats**

A beat is made for a number of tactical reasons and the technique differs for each.

1. **Open a line** - use a hard beat that completely moves the hand or slows the parry by loosening the grip, followed by a simple attack direct to the target.
2. **Make a reaction** - use a medium beat creates a reaction to help get a steady opponent's hand moving and open the line for a feint or disengage .
3. **Fix the opponent's hand so it stays in place** - use a light beat. The attack that follows is simple, indirect or composed after the light beat.

- **Prise de Fer (Blade Takes)**

Blade takes are executed on the opponent's blade with the object of securing and overpowering it while keeping contact until the final hit.

There are four that are used in the point weapons: opposition, envelopment, croise (transfer) and



lie (bind). In sabre, only the opposition and envelopment are practiced. Opposition is useful in sabre bouts while envelopment is used in teaching the sabre hand positions.

Defense

The defense consists of a combination of actions designed to block or push away the opponent's offense with the blade, or to avoid being hit (pulling distance or moving the body).

Four types of parries: Parry movements can be lateral, circular, semi-circular, or diagonal. For example: a lateral parry is defined as a parry made by moving the blade in a horizontal motion. Parries are made with a beat, lateral transfer such as in an opposition, or yielding (ceding) action.

In sabre, when teaching the parry, the thumb should oppose the opponent's blade with the thumb facing in the direction of the block.

In all weapons, the parry is made at the last second in the retreat, when the front foot lands. Tactically, one can make a parry stepping-in, to cut off the attack.

Thrusting weapon hand positions:

- **Sixth** is defined as position or parry that covers the high outside line. The point is higher than the hand with the hand toward supination.
- **Third** is defined as position or parry that covers the high outside line. The point is higher than the hand with the hand in pronation.
- **Fourth** is defined as position or parry that covers the high inside line. The point is higher than the hand with the hand toward supination.
- **Fifth** is the same as fourth except the hand is in pronation.
- **Eight** is defined as position or parry that covers the low outside line. The point is lower than the hand with the hand toward supination.
- **Second** is defined as position or parry that covers the low outside line. The point is lower than the hand with the hand in pronation.
- **First** is defined as position or parry that covers the high inside line. The point is lower than the hand with the hand past pronation.
- **Seventh** is defined as position or parry that covers the low inside line. The point is lower than the hand with the hand toward supination.

Sabre weapon hand positions:

- **Third** is defined as position or parry that covers the high outside line. The point is higher than the hand with the bell guard turned to the outside.
- **Fourth** is defined as position or parry that covers the high inside line. The point is higher than the hand with the bell guard turned to the inside.
- **Fifth** is defined as the position that covers the head target. The point is slightly higher than the hand and the hand is in pronation.
- **Second** is defined as position or parry that covers the low outside line and lower advanced target. The point is lower than the hand with the hand in pronation.
- **First** is defined as position or parry that covers the high inside line. The point is lower than the hand with the hand past pronation.



Pedagogical pointers for the instructor to note when the student performs the parry-riposte.

Parries

1. Hand stays in front of the body.
2. The parry riposte is made in the final part of the opponent's attack. (Parry ripostes made during the opponent's preparation are similar to a beat attack into the preparation.)
3. Move the blade parallel laterally or horizontally across the body.
4. Make sure there is a cross of perpendicularity to the blades.
5. Parry with the strong part of the blade, close to the guard.
6. Parry with the edge of the blade so that the parry is sharp.
7. For foil and epee parry with the point on or toward the target.
8. For all three make the parry tight and not too wide.

Ripostes

1. Don't bounce away from the parry. For example after the 4 parry, don't move back to 6 before the riposte. Stay in the 4 parry position, drop the point and riposte from there.
2. In the final part of the riposte the hand finds perpendicularity to the target.
3. Place the point before extending the arm.
4. Extend the arm with proper angulation to the target. This means extend as perpendicular as possible to the target when hitting it.
5. Keep the hand up after the hit or if the riposte is parried.
6. Make the riposte immediate.

Point-in-line

For right of way in foil and sabre the fencer must establish a point-in-line before the opponent begins the final attack.

Counter-Attack

- **Stop cut:** A countering action (in saber only) made at the moment the opponent initiates a preparation or feint. This can be in more than one tempo, but in any case, it must *land* before the final action of the opponent's attack/riposte begins in order to gain right-of-way.
- **Stop thrust:** A countering thrust made at the moment when the opponent initiates a preparation or feint. The limitations are the same as for the stop cut.



Tips For Taking The Practical Exam

From the USFCA "How to" Documents

- Be on time and have students ready.
- Warm up, you may need to demonstrate some movements.
- You have the right to ask any questions and express any concern during the exams in a polite and professional way.
- The examiner anticipates that you will introduce yourself, give a brief synopsis of your fencing program and your students.
- Your uniform should be sharp, clean and professional.
- Speak clearly and in a voice loud enough for the examiner(s) to hear you.
- Orient the lesson so that you face the student and the examiners as much as possible.
- Be confident, energetic and pleasant – an appropriate sense of humor never hurts.
- Be rested and ready for the exam so that it will be a positive and fun experience.
- Teach in a natural way – as you would do at your own fencing program. The examiners are interested in hearing your verbal explanations, seeing your demonstrations and seeing how you organize the lessons.
- At the conclusion of the exam the candidate should salute and shake hands with the examiner(s).
- Do your homework, study and feel free to seek help from others in the fencing community. Any member of the *Certification and Accreditation Board* will be glad to answer any questions.



Rules to know

Know the Penalty chart in the USA Fencing Rules Book, when to confiscate and give warnings, when to give touches with the halt. Size of the fencing strips and run off distance (14m long and 1.5 to 2m wide and run off).

The bout committee determines the minimum percentage of fencers in a pool promoted to the next round, usually 70% to 80%. The time allowed for a fencer to rest between two consecutive bouts in a pool is three minutes. The effective duration of a pool bout is 5 touches, maximum 3 minutes. Duration for direct elimination bouts, 15 touches, and maximum 9 minutes divided into 3 periods of 3 minutes, with one minute's pause between any two periods (Veterans fence to a maximum of 10 touches, for 2 periods). For team matches, 3 minutes total for each individual bout. A break for medical treatment is a maximum of 5 minutes once the medical professional has verified an injury.

Non-combativity in a bout is defined as one full minute of fencing without a touch being scored and only happens in Direct Elimination Bouts. Off-target lights reset the clock. Non-combativity results in a P-card for the fencer who is behind in the score, or if the score is tied, for both fencers. P-cards are "ungrouped" and do not affect the Group I-IV Yellow/Red/Black cards. The progression is P-Yellow, P-Red, P-Red, P-Black. A P-Red results in a touch for the opponent, and a P-Black results in a victory for the opponent. If both fencers receive a P-Black, then the fencers who was the initial higher seed *coming into the tournament* (before the pool round, if any) advances in the Direct Elimination Tableau.

The pressures exerted on the electrical tip to cause the apparatus to register a touch are in epee, 750g +/-3 and foil 500g +/-2. Max bend of epee or foil blade is 1 cm. Max bend of sabre blade is 4 cm.

The maximum weight and total weapon/blade lengths of the foil, less than 500g, 110cm/90; the epee, less than 770g, 111/90 cm; the sabre, less than 500g, 105/88 cm.