

Fencing Terminology

Advance

The 'advance' is the basic forward movement. The front foot moves first, beginning by lifting the toes. Straighten the leg at the knee, pushing the heel out in front. Land on the heel, and then bring the back foot up to en garde stance. Also, the term advance is used in general for any movement forward by either step, cross, or ballestra.

Advance-Lunge

An advance followed immediately by a lunge. An Advance, followed by a lunge might have a tempo of 1-2—3, but an advance-lunge should have a tempo of 1--2-3.

Attack

The initial offensive action made by extending the sword arm and continuously threatening the valid target of the opponent.

Beat

A simple preparatory (and offensive) motion. A sharp controlled blow to the middle or 'weak' of the opponents blade, with the objective of provoking a reaction or creating an opening. The action should knock the opponent's blade aside or out of line.

Counter-Attack

An attack into an established attack (that already has right-of-way). In foil and sabre, a counter-attack does NOT have the right-of-way, and will not gain a touch if the opposing fencer's attack lands. Retracting the arm in the middle of a perfectly good attack can turn your attack into a counter-attack without right-of-way. Counter-attacking is a common tactic in *épee*, where one may gain a touch by hitting first, and avoiding the opponent's attack. Counter-attacks, especially in *épee*, are often accompanied by an action on the blade (beat, opposition, prise-de-fer, transfer).

Counter-Riposte

A second, third, or further riposte in a fencing 'phrase' or encounter. A counter-riposte is the offensive action following the parry of any riposte.

Coupé

also Cut-Over. Another indirect attack, being an attack or deception that passes around the opponent's point.

Disengage

A simple indirect attack made in one motion by passing the point into the line opposite to the engagement under the opponent's blade in the high line, or over the opponent's blade in the low line.

Feint

An offensive movement resembling an attack (a false attack). It is an attack into one line with the intention of switching to another line before the attack is completed. A feint is intended to draw a reaction from an opponent. This is the 'intention', and the reaction is generally a parry, which can then be deceived.

Foible

The top third of the blade. This section of the blade is weaker in terms of leverage, and is used for beats, presses, and other motions where speed is needed and leverage is not crucial.

Forte

The bottom half of the blade, so named for the strength and leverage that it provides.

Line

The main direction of an attack (e.g., high/low, inside/outside), often equated to the parry that must be made to deflect the attack

The means of referring to a position or area on a fencer's body. The idea behind 'lines' is that the torso, as facing the viewer in 'en garde' is bisected both laterally and vertically. There are then four quadrants of the body. The quadrants which are above the lateral line are referred to as 'high line,' those below as 'low line.'

Lunge

The most basic and common attacking movement in modern fencing. This description adheres basically to the French school of fencing, and describes the legwork involved. The actions of the hand/arm/blade are considered separately from this discussion. From en garde, push the front heel out by extending the front leg from the knee. Do not bend the front ankle, or lift up on the ball of the front foot. This means that the front foot must move forward prior to the body weight shifting forward. As the front leg extends, energetically push body forward with

the rear leg. Rear arm extends during forward motion as a counterbalance. Land on the front heel and glide down into final position, with front shin perpendicular to the ground, and both heels on the floor. During this action, the torso should remain relatively upright, and not be thrown forward. Often, the back foot can be pulled along behind during an energetic lunge. It is important, and a fundamental characteristic of the lunge, to fully extend the back leg, obtaining full power from this spring-like extension.

Parry

A simple defensive action designed to deflect an attack. A parry is usually only wide enough to allow the attacker's blade to just miss; any additional motion is wasteful. In sabre, the guard should be turned appropriately using the fingers to protect the wrist. Parries generally cover one of the 'lines' of the body. The simplest parries move the blade in a straight line. Other parries move the blade in a circular or semicircular manner. There are eight basic parries, and many derivatives of these eight. (Prime, Seconde, Tierce, Quarte, Quinte, Sixte, Septime, Octave).

Point-in-Line

An established threat made with the extended arm. A point-in-line is a static threat, created by one fencer by extending the weapon and arm prior to any actions in a phrase. In foil and sabre, a Point-in-line has right of way, therefore, if the line is not withdrawn, any attack launched by the opponent does not have right of way. This can be likened to a spear poking up from the ground: If you throw yourself upon it, you have only yourself to blame. A successful attack on the blade will invalidate a point-in-line or causing the opponent to withdraw his/her arm. In epee, Point-in-line has no right of way advantages, but is still an effective tactic.

Preparation

Any action that precedes the actual launch of an attack. Preparation usually consists of actions against the opponents blade to take it out of line, or to provoke a reaction. In foil and sabre, any action that occurs during a phrase or conversation that precedes the establishment of right-of-way on the part of a fencer, often accompanied with a movement forward. In calling the actions in a foil or sabre bout, a referee may indicate preparation on the part of one fencer, meaning the fencer was moving forward without establishing right-of-way, and was vulnerable to an attack made during this time.

Priority

awarded when regulation time expires with a tied score. The priority is determined by the flip of a coin at the start of an additional minute of fencing, and the winner of the toss wins the bout if the score is tied when this additional expires.

Pronation

The position of the hand when the palm is facing down.

Remise

An immediate, direct replacement of an attack that missed, was short, or was parried, without withdrawing the arm. A remise is a direct continuation, meaning that no deceptions or changes of line occur with the continuation (replacement) of the attack. This may be done with a simple further extension of the arm, or may be accompanied with additional forward footwork (e.g. a reprise). In foil and sabre, a remise does not have right of way over a direct riposte.

Retreat

The basic backwards movement. Rear foot reaches backwards and is firmly planted, then front leg pushes body weight backwards smoothly into 'en garde' stance.

Riposte

An attack made immediately after a parry of the opponent's attack.

Salute

A gesture of respect and civility performed with the weapon. Performed at the start and end of a bout (match, assault, etc.), and also at the start and end of a lesson. At the start of a bout, it is traditional, and expected, to salute the adversary, the referee of the bout, any additional judges for the bout, and then, optionally, others (the timekeeper, scorekeeper, etc.). The FIE rules now state that failure to salute an opponent and shake his/her hand at the end of a bout is an offense punishable by removing a touch, and therefore, possibly, the bout.

Simultaneous

In foil and sabre, two attacks for which the right-of-way is too close to determine.

Supination

The position of the hand when the palm is facing up.