

Safety rules

One: Immediately stop whatever you're doing when you hear the word halt. Halt=STOP.

Two: Full protective gear must be worn at all times.

Three: Safely walk around other fencers. Keep your mask until it's safe to remove it.

Four: Keep the tip of your foil down below your knees when you're not fencing. The top of your foot is a good resting spot. The tip should NOT touch the floor.

Touching on-target, off-target

Once fencing has started, you're trying to score a point by making the tip of your sword hit your opponent on the valid target area. Your blade should bend slightly.

The valid target area is the entire fencing jacket except the arm sleeves. The off-target area is everywhere else, such as the arms, the head, the legs, etc.

Whenever a touch happens, either on-target or off-target, the fencing stops. When you get poked, raise your back hand up in the air to stop the fencing.

En garde and footwork

When two people are ready to fence, they get into an en garde position.

A good en garde means your knees are bent, your feet are shoulder-width apart, and your body is upright, not hunched over. Also, the arm holding your foil is out in front, with your elbow away from your body. This is called hand position 6 (see the fencer on the left in the drawing below).

Your front foot and knee point forward, toward your opponent. Your back foot is pointing to the side, at a 90 degree angle. Your feet are in the shape of the letter "L", heels in the same line.

Fencing footwork: the advance, the retreat, the lunge and the recovery. You will learn and practice these in class.

You are expected to fence in a good engarde position and use fencing footwork every time you fence, the whole time you fence.

Attack, defense, and right of way

No one has the right of way at the beginning of the fencing. The right of way must be earned each time. The right of way goes to the fencer who attacked first or defended last.

Attacking is when you point your tip at your opponent's target area while straightening your arm and trying to score a touch, usually while lunging at them. This is called a straight (or direct) attack.

Warning! A common beginner mistake is to bang on your opponent's sword. When you attack, aim for their chest or belly. Go around their sword!

If two people try to attack, the person who started the attack first gets the point. Starting the attack gives you the right of way. (Having the right of way means that your touch counts and whatever your opponent does doesn't count.)

If your opponent attacks you, you should defend yourself by blocking their attack. In fencing, a block is called a parry. The parries are numbered 4, 6, 7, and 8. You will learn them in class.

If you parry, you gain the right of way, and are able to score by touching your opponent. Touching your opponent after you've parried is called a riposte. If you riposte straight toward their target, that's called a straight (or direct) riposte.

You can also use a retreat to make your opponent's attack fall short. This means that they lunge at you, but you make them miss by moving back.

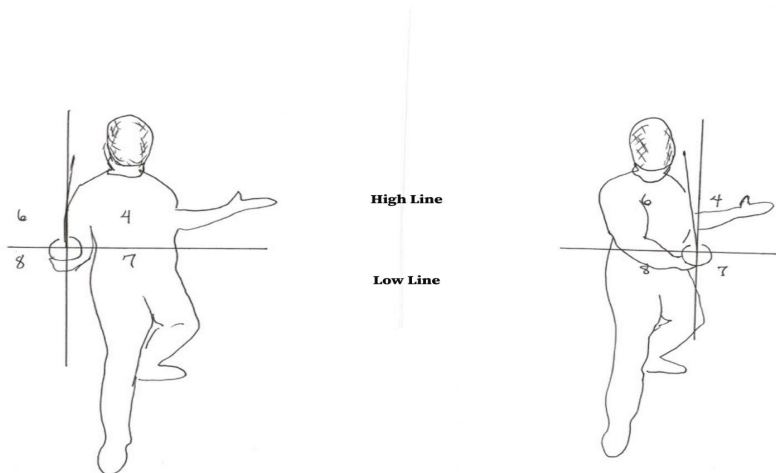
When you parry or make your opponent fall short, you gain the right of way.

If two fencers both hit, we only count the hit of the person who had the right of way.

In summary, you gain the right of way if you are the first one to attack or if you parry someone's attack. If you parry, you get the right of way, and can score a touch by using a riposte.

Warning! A common beginner mistake is to parry and freeze up. Nope! Parrying ends your opponent's attack. If they push through and hit you, it won't count IF YOU RIPOSTE. But you must use the right of way, or you lose it. Parry, then riposte! Don't be afraid of the push-througher!

If the fencer with the right of way scores an on-target touch, they get a point and both fencers go back to their en garde lines before beginning again. If the fencer with the right of way touches off-target, no point is awarded, and the fencers extend their foils to get the reset distance before beginning again.



Classical Four Line System

Right of way questions

Q: If only one person hits, how do we figure out right of way?

A: Right of way doesn't need to be figured out. If one person hits, that's the only hit we count.

Q: I attacked but my opponent parried. Should I push through the parry and try to score anyway?

A: No. When your opponent parries your attack, they now have the right away, and can score a point against you by doing a riposte. If you push through after they've parried, and they hit you with a riposte, your attack will not be counted, because their riposte has the right of way..

Pushing through is called a remise. A remise does not have the right of way.

Q: How do I gain the right of way?

A: You can gain the right of way by being the first one to start an attack. You can also gain it by parrying. If your opponent attacks you, you can parry and then you will have the right of way. The rule of thumb is: the right of way goes to the fencer who was the first to attack or the last to parry.

If your opponent parries your attack, you can take the right of way back by parrying their riposte. If they don't riposte, just pretend that they did and beat their blade. This will give you the right of way back.

Q: I have the right of way. Is it still possible for my opponent to score a point?

A: Yes. Having the right of way does not automatically get you a point, you have to touch your opponent. If you have the right of way but you miss, you don't get a point, and the right of way now belongs to your opponent.

Right of way goes back and forth, like a tennis ball going back and forth over the net. You get one “swing” using your right of way, then your opponent gets one, until someone hits.

Q: Who cares about right of way, I should just fence faster and I will win! True or False?

A: False. You might score points that way, but understanding and using the right of way is required in Youth Academy Level 1 class.

Many of the tactics and strategies you will learn in Youth Academy Level 2 depend upon your understanding of right of way. If you want to get better at fencing, you must understand how the right of way works, and be able to use it in your fencing.

Warning! Right of way mistakes to avoid when fencing: when your attack is parried, don't push through, and when you parry, please understand that you can riposte and that you don't have to worry about your opponent pushing through.

Disengage and coupé: going around your opponent's bellguard or tip

The disengage is when your tip goes around your opponent's bellguard during an attack or during a riposte. You can do one disengage, or link several together. As long as your tip continues to move forward towards your opponent's target, you will maintain the right of way.

A coupé can be used to avoid your opponent's parry, as well. The coupé goes around the tip of your opponent's blade instead of around their bellguard.

Requirement checklist in order to move up to Youth Academy Level 2

- ___ Obtain “basic kit”: jacket, glove, underarm protector, and chest plate (females).
- ___ Demonstrate basic core fitness/exercises (pushups, planks, jumping jacks, etc).
- ___ Demonstrate working well with others, trying your best, and behaving.
- ___ Name the four club safety rules. Follow the rules throughout class.
- ___ Demonstrate a good en garde position, advance, retreat, lunge, recover.
- ___ Explain the two main ways to gain the right of way.
- ___ Demonstrate a direct attack and a disengage attack against a coach.
- ___ Demonstrate parries 4, 6, 7, 8, using good technique against a coach.
- ___ Demonstrate a direct riposte and a disengage riposte against a coach.
- ___ Coach observation of you fencing a student using Level 1 tactics (right of way actions).