

# Fencing Rules

Fencing is one of only four sports (the others being, track, field and swimming) that have been in every one of the modern Olympic games. The first modern Olympic games have been held since 1896.

There are three weapons used in the sport of Fencing, they are the Foil, Èpee and Sabre.

The blades on all three weapons differ from one another and there is also a difference in the length and weight between certain weapons. The foil and Èpee a touch is made with the tip of the weapon only, but with a sabre a touch can be made with the tip, the edge or the back of the blade. Men and women both compete in Fencing.

In Fencing the fencer attempts to score enough hits to win the match, while at the same time try's to avoid being hit by their opponent.

As mentioned earlier, six fencing disciplines are featured during the Olympics and they include six individual and four team events:

Men's Foil, both individual and team events

Women's Foil, individual events

Men's Èpee, both individual and team events

Women's Èpee, both individual and team events

Men's Sabre, both individual and team events

Women's Sabre, individual events

## Rules

### Rules for Individual Bouts

In the Individual competition each bout has three rounds and each round is three minutes in length, with a one-minute rest period in-between rounds. The fencer who is the first to score 15 valid hits on their opponent or is the one who scores the most number of hits by the end of the bout is declared the winner. If the players are tied at the end of the three rounds, then one minute of additional time will be fenced and the first fencer to score a touch on their opponent is the winner.

### Rules for Team Bouts

A team is made up of three fencers, and in a team bout, the winning team will be the one to first score a total of 45 hits or the one to score the most number of hits by the end of the bout. And just like in the individual competition if the teams are tied at the end of the three rounds, then one minute of additional time will be fenced and the first team to score a touch on their opponent is

the winner. In the event that neither team is able to get a hit at the end of the additional time, then the winning team is the team that won the coin toss before the start of the extra time.

## **Weapons**



## **Foil**

The foil is a thrusting weapon, which means that a foil attack is made with the tip of the weapon only and that touches can only be made with the tip. During a round the fencers are specifically prohibited from setting, prop or dragging the tip of the foil on the metal piste (The Piste is the fencing strip the fencers do battle on). Fencers are also not allowed to fix or repair their weapon on the piste during a round without having gained previous permission from the judge. In foil fencing a fencer is not allowed to bring their other arm in front of the arm that is holding the sword. If they do this any hit they make will not count.



## **Valid Target Area in Foil**

The valid target area in foil fencing is the trunk of the body, and does not include the arms, legs or head and only hits on the valid target area will count as a point.

Any hit landing on an invalid target area does not count and the bout is stopped.

## **Hits**

During a bout in foil fencing an electrical scoring apparatus is used, which registers the hits made by the fencers. It is this electronic scoring apparatus that must register that a hit has been made. And a judge may only declare a hit has occurred when the scoring apparatus indicates that a hit has in fact taken place.



## Epee

Like a foil the Èpee is a thrusting weapon, which means that a Èpee attack is also made with the tip of the weapon only and that touches can only be made with the tip. During a round the fencers are specifically prohibited from setting, prop or dragging the tip of the foil on the metal piste (The Piste is the fencing strip the fencers do battle on). Fencers are also not allowed to fix or repair their weapon on the piste during a round without having gained previous permission from the judge.



### **Valid Target Area in Epee**

In Èpee, unlike foil, the fencer's entire body, including their clothing and gear, is part of the valid target area. So any hit to any part of the body the clothing, or the equipment is a valid hit.

### **Hits**

Bouts in Èpee fencing are conducted with the aid of an electrical scoring apparatus, which registers the hits.

During a bout in Èpee fencing an electrical scoring apparatus is used, which registers the hits, made by the fencers. It is this electronic scoring apparatus that must register that a hit has been made. And judge may only declare a hit has occurred when the scoring apparatus indicates that a hit has in fact taken place. Unlike in foil, when both fencers receive a hit, with 1/25th of a second of each other, the scoring apparatus will show both hits as valid, and so a double hit is recorded, meaning one hit to each fencer.



## Sabre

Unlike the foil and Èpee the sabre is a thrusting, cutting, and slicing weapon, which means that a hit can be made with the tip, cutting edge or the back edge of the blade.

All touches or hits with the whole of the cutting edge, with the surface or with the back edge of the blade are called hits with the cutting edge (coups de taille) or back-edge cuts (coups de contre-taille)



## **Valid Target Area in Sabre**

The valid target area in Sabre is all of the body above the fencer's waist. When a hit is outside the valid target area it is of course not valid and stops the bout but it does not mean that any ensuing hit is invalid. Should a fencer hit an invalid target area instead of a valid target area, a proper penalty will be enforced according to the rules.

## **Hits**

Hits with the point of the sabre that are not direct hits but glance over the valid target area, including hits that only barely just touch the opponents body (unsuccessful hits) is not considered valid. Hits with the blade, those being hits that simultaneously hit the opponents sabre and a valid target area on the opposing fencer are only valid if they clearly land and terminate on the valid target area. A fencer may not under any conditions repair their weapon on the piste.

Hits are not allowed with the guard, which is the hollow metal surface between blade and grip that is there to protect the fencer's wrist. Any hit with the guard will not be counted as a hit and certain penalties can be assessed against a fencer. This will be a judgment call by the referee.

During a bout in sabre fencing an electrical scoring apparatus is used, which registers the hits made by the fencers. It is this electronic scoring apparatus that must register that a hit has been made. And a judge may only declare a hit has occurred when the scoring apparatus indicates that a hit has in fact taken place.

## **General Scoring Rules**

The Èpee and sabre competition will use red and green lights to indicate when a score or hit has taken place, one for each fencer. In the foil competition, a white light will be used that will indicate when a hit outside the target area takes place, and no point will be scored.

In Èpee both fencers are given a point if both lights go off within .04 seconds of each other.

If both lights should go off at the same time in foil and sabre, then the referee will award the point to the fencer who is on the offensive.

If the referee calls "halt," a hit will still scored if the fencer's motion started before the call was made.

Before and after the bout, fencers must salute each other, the referee and the crowd by holding up the swords guard to their chin.

## **Penalties**

The referee can issue one of three colored cards as a way of indicating and signaling that a penalty has occurred. A Yellow Card denotes a warning; a Red Card awards a penalty hit (one point); and a black card means the fencer is expelled from the competition or the tournament.

There are four levels of penalties. The higher the penalty level, the more severe the penalty will be. We describe the penalties for each group.

### **First Group**

On the First Group of penalties the first time the penalty is committed the fencer will receive a Yellow Card. On the Second Offense they will receive a Red Card and on the Third Offense and all those thereafter, they will receive a Red Card

Turning back on opponent.

Simple corps-a-corps, in foil and sabre

Corps ‡ corps to avoid being hit

Leaving piste without permission

Leaving piste to avoid being hit

Delaying the bout without a compelling reason

Unjustified appeal

Using non-weapon hand or arm

Covering / substitution of valid target

Placing the weapon on the piste in order to straighten it

Clothing /equipment not working or not conforming to the rules

Absence of second regulation weapon or body wire

Touching/taking hold of electric equipment

During foil & Epee competition, placing, bending, dragging weapon point on conductive piste

Bringing weapon into contact with conductive jacket

Sabre competition, a hit made with the guard and any forward movement crossing the legs or feet

Refusal to obey the Referee

Jostling, disorderly fencing

Removing mask before the Referee calls "halt",

Undressing on the Piste

Abnormal fencing Action

Touches made with violence or while falling

## **Second Group**

On the Second Group of penalties the first time the penalty is committed the fencer will receive a Red Card. On the Second Offense they will receive a Red Card and on the Third Offense and all those thereafter, they will receive a Red Card.

Dangerous, violent or malicious action, hitting with the guard or pommel  
Disruption of bout for claimed injury not confirmed by Doctor  
Deliberate hit not on opponent  
Absence of equipment control marks  
The absence of name on back, or the absence of national colors when required

## **Third Group**

On the Third group of penalties the first time the penalty is committed the fencer will receive a Red Card. On the Second Offense they will receive a Black Card.

Fencer disturbing order on the piste  
Falsified weapon inspection marks, intentional modification of equipment  
Dishonest fencing  
Offence against publicity code  
Any person not on piste disturbing good order  
Refusal of one fencer to salute their opponent after final touch scored  
Changing the order of bouts in a team match, either intentionally or unintentionally

## **Fourth Group**

On the Fourth Group of penalties the first time the penalty is committed the fencer will receive a Black Card.

Manifest cheating with equipment  
Non-presentation when called by the Referee at the time indicated, or having been warned that his time to fence will come, after three calls with a minute interval between each  
Offence against sportsmanship  
Deliberate brutality  
Profiting from collusion, favoring an opponent  
Doping  
Use of electronic equipment to allow a fencer to receive communications during a bout

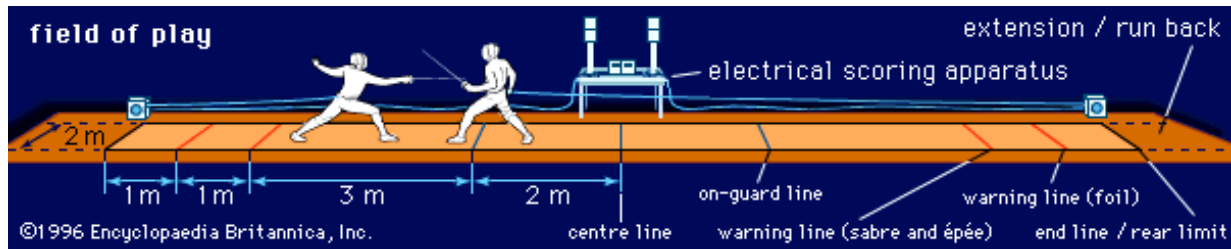
Notes: Indicates annulment of any hit scored by the fencer at fault.

For a complete list of Fencing Rules please see:

Fencing Rules

United States Fencing Association, Inc. [www.usfencing.org](http://www.usfencing.org)

## Field of Play



Fencing is contested on a piste (strip) or playing field as it is called. It measures 14 meters (46 feet) long by 1.5 meters (5 feet) wide with there is a centerline dividing the piste in half.

In major competitions the piste is raised to give spectators a better view of the bout.

The surface of the piste is covered with anti-slip metallic mesh. This mesh is grounded so any touching of the mesh by the fencing weapons would not register as an off target touch.

There are two on-guard lines located 2 meters (6.5 feet) on each side of the centre line. There is a colored zone that is two meters (6.5 feet) wide that at each end of the piste to warn fencers when they are getting close to the rear boundary.

There are safety zones around raised piste to help prevent falls off the piste by the fencers.

Scoreboards are sometimes located at each end of the piste, allowing spectators to easily follow the bout.

There are two reels, one at each end of the piste. These control the wire that is attached to the fencers that is recording touches. The reels keep the wire taut and let it out and reels it in as the fencers move back and forth.

There is also an electronic scoring device that records the number and location of touches.

## Officials'

One referee will preside at each duel.

There are two floor judges that assist the referee and to make sure that fencers are not making touches when they are out of bounds.

There are usually two time-keepers that keep the time and record touches.