

Fencing clothing

The clothing which is worn in modern fencing is made of tough cotton or nylon. Kevlar was added to top level uniform pieces (jacket, breeches, underarm protector, lame, and the bib of the mask) following the Smirnov incident at the 1982 World Championships in Rome. However, Kevlar breaks down in chlorine and UV light, so the act of washing one's uniform and/or hanging it up in the sun to dry actually damaged the Kevlar's ability to do the job.

In recent years other ballistic fabrics such as Dyneema have been developed that perform the puncture resistance function and which do not have Kevlar's weakness. In fact, the FIE rules state that the entirety of the uniform (meaning FIE level clothing, as the rules are written for FIE tournaments) must be made of fabric that resists a force of 800 Newton (1600N in the mask).

The complete fencing kit includes the following items of clothing:

- Form-fitting jacket covering groin and with strap (*croissard*) which goes between the legs (note that in sabre fencing, jackets that are cut along the waist and exclude the groin padding are also sometimes used), a small gorget of folded fabric is also sewn in around the collar to prevent a blade from slipping upwards towards the neck.
- Under-arm protector (plastron) which goes underneath the jacket and provides double protection on the sword arm side and upper arm. It is required to not have a seam in the armpit, which would line up with the jacket seam and provide a weak spot.
- One glove for the sword arm with a gauntlet that prevents blades from going up the sleeve and causing injury, as well as protecting the hand and providing a good grip
- Breeches or knickers which are a pair of short trousers. The legs are supposed to hold just below the knee.
- Knee-length or Thigh high socks which should cover knee and thighs.
- Shoes with flat soles and reinforcement on the inside of the back foot and heel of front foot, to prevent wear from lunging.
- Mask, including a bib which protects the neck. The mask can usually support 350 Newton's, however FIE regulation masks must withstand much more, 1600 Newton's. Some modern masks have a see-through visor in the front of the mask. These can be used at high level competitions (World Championships etc.).
- Plastic chest protector, mandatory for female fencers. While male versions of the chest protector are also available, they were, until recently, primarily worn by instructors, who are hit far more often during training than their students. Since the change of the depression timing (see above), these are increasingly popular in foil, as the hard surface increases the likelihood of point bounce and thus a failure for a hit to register. Plastrons are still mandatory, though the chest protector must be worn next to the skin.
- Fencing Masters will often wear a heavier protective jacket, usually reinforced by plastic foam to cushion the numerous hits an instructor has to endure. Sometimes in practice, masters wear a protective sleeve or a leg leather for protection of their fencing arm or leg.
- Electric Fencing-In electric foil and sabre there is a layer of electrically conductive material (called a lamé) worn over the fencing jacket, and entirely covers the valid target

area. In foil the lamé is sleeveless, and in sabre the lamé has sleeves and ends in a straight line across the waist. In all weapons, a body cord is also necessary to register scoring: it attaches to the weapon and is worn inside the sleeve of the normal jacket, down the fencer's back and is then attached to the scoring box. In sabre and foil, the body cord is connected to the lamé in order to create a circuit to the scoring box, where another part of the body cord attaches, can record where one has been hit.

Traditionally, the fencers' uniform is white in color (black being the traditional color for instructors). This may be to some extent due to the occasional pre-electric practice of covering the point of the weapon in dye, soot, or colored chalk in order to make it easier for the referee to determine the placing of the touches. Recently the FIE rules have been relaxed to allow colored uniforms (black still being reserved for the coaches). The guidelines delineating the permitted size and positioning of sponsorship logos are however still extremely strict.

Fencing Jacket



Fencing Mask



Fencing Glove



Plastron (Underarm Protector)



Fencing Pants (Breeches)

