

# FENCING CLINIC



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## **introduction**

Regular exercise is good for health. Studies have suggested that adults who exercise at least 30 minutes at least 5 days a week decrease the risk of bad things (like death) 20% compared to people who are sedentary.<sup>1</sup> However, the most recent governmental data from 2016 suggests that only 26% of men and 19% of women in the United States engage in sufficient physical activity.<sup>2</sup>

## **footwork**

**Basic footwork.** Advance. Retreat. Lunge. Check forward. Check backwards. The ultimate goal is to change steps, size of steps, and tempo independently. Make your opponent try to follow you rather than following your opponent. Technique is more important than speed.

## **distance**

**Make sure the *en guard* is good.** Front foot straight towards opponent, back foot 90 degrees turned from front foot, feet shoulder width apart. Heels should be in a straight line. Knees bent. Fencers should be able to easily recover after a lunge (if really good the fencer can recover backwards, forwards, or even do another lunge). With a lunge one pushes with the back foot to gain some distance.

**Importance of distance.** Basic movements get a fencer into distance to score on the opponent and to be too far when the opponent tries to score on you. With the right distance one does not need to

necessarily parry. Goal of practice is to reinforce good footwork. Slow is better than sloppy practice.

## **drills**

**Ping pong ball.** Hang a ping pong ball ideally on a doorway with thread or dental floss taped at a height of opponent's target. Make sure nobody will be stabbed in the eye when someone walks in the area. Finish with straight arm.

**Tick tick.** By Olympian Jason Pryor. Coach has blade in *en guard*. Student hits one side of blade then the other. Can also do two hits on each side. Can add footwork. Can do it from fencer *en guard* position. Can do it with a half-extended arm. Can do it with arm fully extended. This teaches fine motor control to get around opponent's blade. Do it with footwork.

**Dana Sanford distance lunge drill:** one fencer is stationary with a blade. The other fencer moves in and out of distance trying to avoid getting hit with a straight lunge. Moving fencer may be without a blade or with a blade. No blade contact allowed.



**Dana Sanford infighting:** one minute of no footwork with fencers starting with crossed blades then trying to hit partner

**4-4 *la belle*:** done at Columbia where it is a one minute one touch drill. Loser at Columbia does push-ups that increase with each loss. One Pacific Northwest variation is a 10 push-ups penalty for each loss, loser stays up.

<sup>1</sup> Fihn *et al* "2012 guidelines for diagnosis and management of patients with stable ischemic heart disease." *J Am Coll Cardiol*. 2012; 60:e44-164

<sup>2</sup> Piercy *et al*. "The Physical Activity Guidelines for Americans" *JAMA*. 2018; 320 (19): 2020-2028.

## games

**The Glove Game.** (advance-lunge drill). Each fencer is allowed one advance and one lunge trying to hit the partner. Point for a hit to torso (target area). No parrying. Good to fine tune footwork, direction changes, and tempo changes. Sometimes penalty for hitting face. Make sure to keep balance. Can do with gloves or blades.

**No beat, must riposte:** train young fencers not to simply beat with an attack and also to train not to parry without riposte. Bout where one loses a point for a beat and loses a point for a parry without riposte attempt.

**Attack/defend:** helps fencers who only like to attack or defend branch out. One fencer must attack to get a point and the other fencer must defend to get a point. Then switch. No points unless the fencer is successful in mission.

**The Drill:** distance and timing drill to find "the moment" when a fencer should attack. Two fencers start *en guard* and can only use footwork and a straight lunge. No advance lunge (or the fencer loses a point). No parries. No beats. Fencer who steps behind first warning line loses a point.

**Bouting +/- (plus minus):** fitness and focus drill where in 3 minutes each single touch gets a fencer a point and the loser -1 points. Goal is first to 5 points.

**Bouting drill two in a row:** fitness and focus drill where one needs two touches in a row to get one point. Goal is 5 points.

**King of the hill:** 5 point touch and winner stays up. Each round the winner stays up the opponent starts with one extra bonus point for each victory. If the score is 0-5 to start the king is truly the champion and switches out which means that that fencer won 5 in a row despite penalties. For a large group there is a 5 point bout and the winner moves "up" and the loser moves "down" the line.

## variations

**Mission:** certain actions get extra credit for a touch to encourage fencers to work on a weakness while still going for 5 or 15 points. Missions can be decided by the fencer, the opponent, or coach. Can be worked into any of the games.

**Take away:** one or more actions are taken away from a fencer who cannot score doing their favorite move. Generally, the opponent can take

away the action. Can be worked into any of the games.

## coaching

**Solutions 101:** drill to creatively work on various potential responses to a certain action. A student gets one single action repeated by the coach over and over again. For example, the coach may just straight attack. The student may do a parry-riposte, counter attack and parry, fleche into the preparation, just get out of distance, duck, etc.

## tactics and strategy

**TTTSD:** from Northwest Fencing Center. Technique (small perfect movements and accurate hits), timing (when to perform action), tactics (correct choice of actions in a particular situation), speed (good speed for action such as slow feint and fast attack), and distance (perfect distance--not too close and not too far).

## videos on youtube

"The Rules of Fencing (Olympic Fencing) – EXPLAINED!" by Ninh Ly

"How to Fence: The Basics of Fencing, Taught by Olympians." by THINKR. I prefer the lunge by Miles Chamley-Watson.

"The Super Mario Effect – Tricking Your Brain into Learning More." by Mark Rober.

## more information

Go to [www.tacomafencing.com](http://www.tacomafencing.com) and check out the Beginner Fencer's Guide.

Buy "Fencing Foil: A Practical Training Guide for Coaches, Parents and Young Athletes" by Rob Handelman and Connie Louie.

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