



**UNITED STATES  
FENCING ASSOCIATION**

## What Parents Should Know About The Youth Fencing Program



**.....Designed for Fun**

Published in the interest of better understanding by:

**THE UNITED STATES FENCING ASSOCIATION**

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Presented by the Youth Committee  
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**Thanks to all of you**

**Elaine Ingram Cheris, Chairman**

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## The USFA Parents' Introduction to Youth Fencing

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## A Program Designed for Fun...

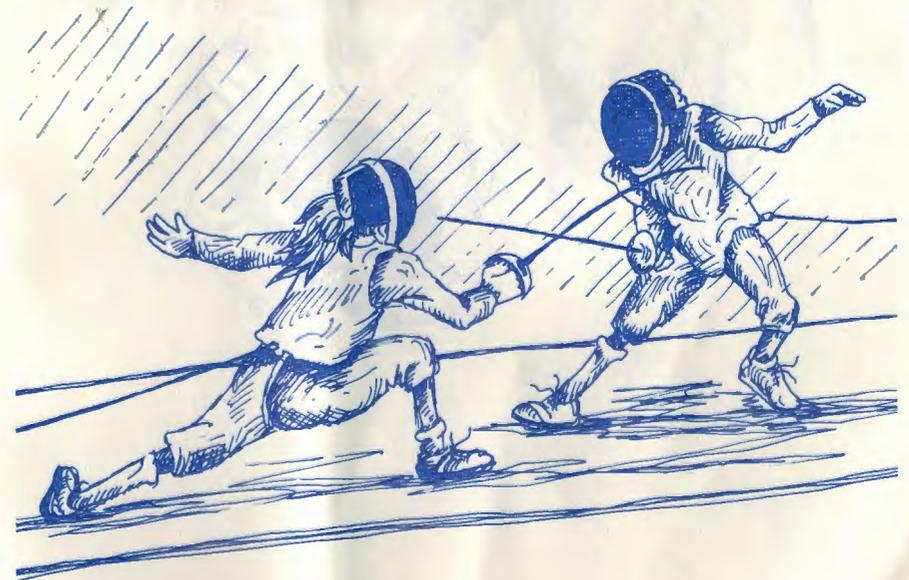
### A Special Note to Parents

**THIS INTRODUCTION TO YOUTH FENCING** has been prepared to acquaint parents with the programs involving fencers who are less than 15 years of age. This booklet will give parents and children the basic information necessary to allow both parent and child to enjoy participating in youth fencing.

Remember that the primary motivating factor for entering sports --particularly among adolescents-- is a desire to have fun. The following pages will help you assist them in reaching this goal.

With the right attitude and a good understanding of what is involved, everyone should have a pleasant experience.

Have fun!



## The United States Fencing Association

### Bill of Rights for Young Athletes

#### We believe youth have a right

- to participate in sports regardless of ability level.
- to participate at a level that is commensurate with each child's development level.
- to have qualified adult leadership.
- to participate in a safe and healthy environment.
- to share in leadership of their sport.
- to play as a child and not as an adult.
- to proper preparation for participation in the sport.
- to equal opportunity to strive for success.
- to be treated with dignity by all involved.
- to have fun through sport.



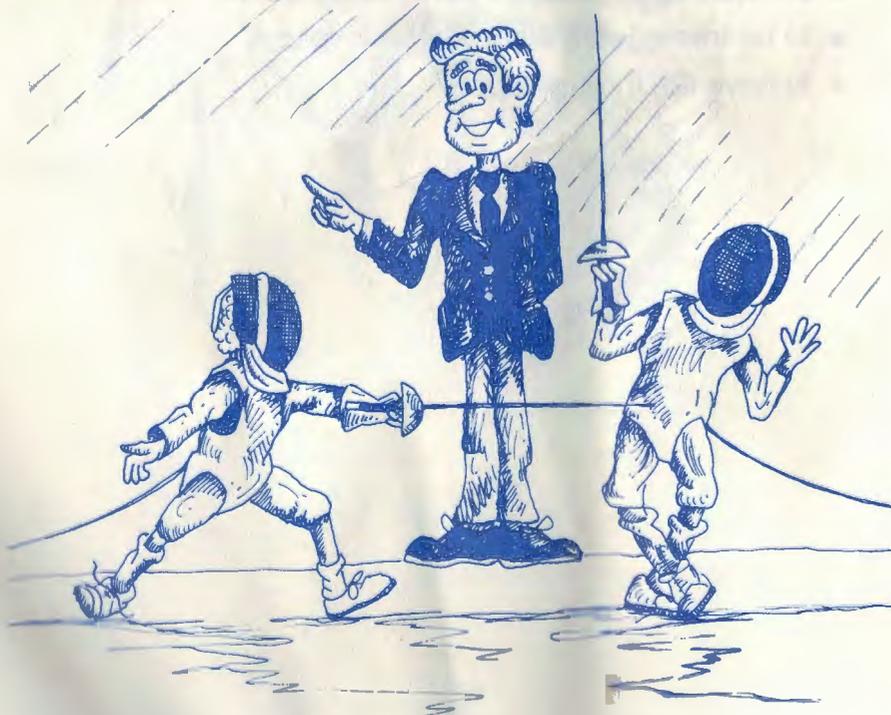
## Fencing ... The Game

**FENCING IS PLAYED ON** a metal **strip**, or **piste**, which measures 14 meters long and approximately two meters wide. Points scored in a bout are registered on an electric scoring machine. The machine receives an electrical impulse when the spring in the tip of the weapon is depressed. The strip is grounded to prevent touches being accidentally scored on the playing surface.

A fencing bout is fenced for five touches, with a time limit of six minutes in the preliminary rounds. Bouts may be fenced for eight (girls) touches or ten (boys) touches in later rounds with time limits of eight and ten minutes respectively.

### The sport involves three skills:

1. Blade work
2. Footwork, and
3. Tactics.



The skills can be learned at any age and are skills a good fencer is always striving to improve. Physical size is not considered an important factor due to the nature of the game and the variety of ways in which touches can be scored. Successful fencers come in all shapes and sizes.

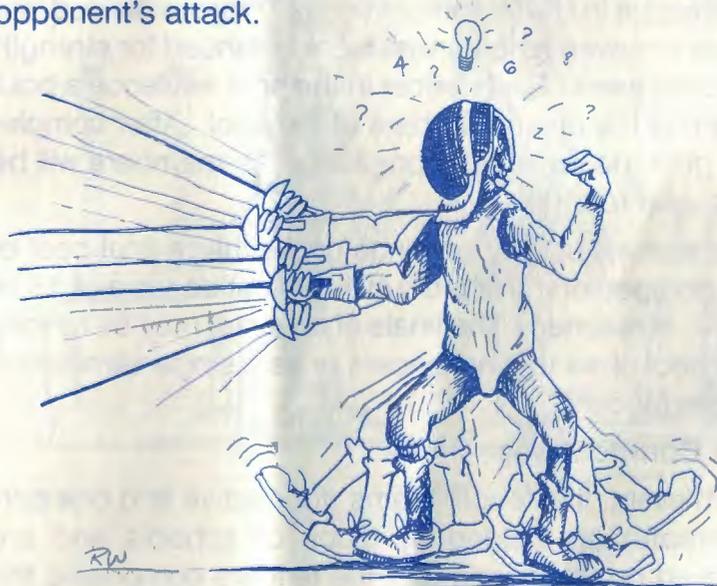
## The three skills

### Blade work

Blade work is perhaps the most difficult of the essential skills to master. It permits a skilled fencer to deceive his opponent and reach the target despite attempts of an opponent to defend himself.

### Footwork

Footwork, the most physically demanding of the skills, is the one which permits a fencer to move into appropriate positions and distances to allow him to effectively utilize blade work to touch the opponent and to allow him to "get away" to avoid the opponent's attack.



## Tactics

Tactics consist of the plans and counter plans utilized by fencers to coordinate use of blade work and footwork against the fencing style of opponents.

## The Team

All fencers are both individuals and teammates. On the strip, each individual must handle situations presented him without the opportunity to huddle or receive detailed instruction. As a member of a team, individuals who are not on the strip at a given time are encouraged to assist teammates who are participating by cheering, assisting with their equipment and exchanging information and observations that may prove useful in future bouts.

### The Tournament

#### — Individual Competitions

At an individual event, all of the entries are seeded based on past performance in USFA competitions. They are divided into **pools** of five to seven fencers which are balanced for strength pursuant to the seed. Each fencer in the pool will fence a bout against each of the other members of the pool. After completion of the pool, no fewer than one half of its members will be elevated to next round.

This process will usually continue until either a final pool of six to nine competitors — or a double elimination table of 16 or 32 fencers — is reached. The finals of an event may be fenced as either a pool of six to nine fencers or as a single elimination table of eight fencers.

#### — Team Competitions

At a team event, five-fencer teams (four active and one permitted alternate) are fielded by clubs or schools and are seeded based on the strength of the fencers comprising the

teams. The preliminary round(s) are fenced under the pool format and the later rounds are usually fenced pursuant to a single elimination procedure.

In a team match each of the four fencers of a team fence each of the four fencers of the other team. The match continues until one team wins nine bouts. In case of an 8-8 tie, the team scoring the most touches is the victor.

## The Strip

Five lines cut across the strip. Two meters on either side of the center line are the en garde lines where fencers begin each touch. Three meters behind the en garde line is the beginning of the warning area. This two meter area is brightly marked and serves to remind fencers they are approaching the end line of the strip. A fencer passing the end line with both feet is counted as touched.



## The Officials

Two types of officials are present at competitions: the **directors** or **presidents** of jury and the **bout committee**. The director describes the actions made by the fencers and awards the touches based on the rules of priority and registration of hits on the scoring machine.

The bout committee is responsible for seeding the participants, establishing the format of the competition and resolving any rules disputes.

## The Rules

The rules are divided into four basic categories

- **The strip rules** dealing with the position of the fencers.
- **The rules of right of way** which determine priority if both fencers make a touch during the same action.
- **The penalty rules** where touches may be subtracted from the fencer committing the fault or touches added to the score of the opponent. More severe sanctions may be awarded for serious offenses, and
- **The organizational rules** which regulate the manner of conducting a competition.

## Strip Rules

All fencing action takes place on the fencing strip or piste described earlier. The director, or president of the jury, will stop the bout each time a fencer crosses the lateral boundaries of the strip with one or both feet, or passes an opponent while remaining on the strip.

When a fencer leaves the strip with one foot, the director will simply center him on the strip at en garde with the center point of the action remaining as it was prior to the infraction.

When a fencer leaves the strip with both feet, the director will

center him again on the strip with his opponent entitled to gain one meter of distance from his placement prior to the infraction.

When a fencer intentionally leaves the strip to avoid allowing an opponent the opportunity to score a touch, he receives a warning the first instance. On subsequent infractions of this same rule during the same bout, an opponent is awarded a penalty touch.

When a fencer crosses his own end line, his opponent is awarded a touch.

## Right of Way

The rules of **right-of-way** in judging the priority of hits made in foil fencing are based on the generalized theory that an individual being threatened with a real sword will first defend himself before initiating his own offensive action. The following is the order of priority:

**A point in line** is a fully-extended arm — pointing toward the valid target of the opponent (both front and back of the torso) — in place prior to initiation of an opponent's attack and has the highest priority. An advance or retreat by an individual who has established a point in line has no effect on its priority.

**An attack** is an offensive action made with the arm extending and the point threatening the valid target of the opponent.

The attack continues to have priority until either it misses the opponent or the opponent parries.

**A parry** is a defensive action made by deflecting the blade of the attacker away from the target. After successfully parrying the attack, the defender will attempt to score a touch with a riposte.

**A riposte** is an action technically executed in the same manner as an attack, but which must be preceded by a parry.

A defender may also respond to an attack by making a

counter attack. Although the counter attack is technically executed in the same way as an attack, the counterattacker does not initiate the action but is merely responding to the attacker. The counter attack does not have priority over the attack. Therefore, if both fencers arrive on the target (valid or invalid), only the action of the attacker will be considered. If, however, the attacker fails to hit either valid or invalid target, the action of the counter attacker will be counted, and, if it arrives on the valid target, he will be awarded the touch.

## Penalties

**PENALTIES ARE DIVIDED INTO** three categories: simple, severe and special.

### Simple

Each simple penalty is independent. Upon first occurrence of a simple offense during a bout, the fencer is warned. Repetition of the same offense during the same bout will generally result in loss of a touch already scored – or to be scored – by the person committing the offense.

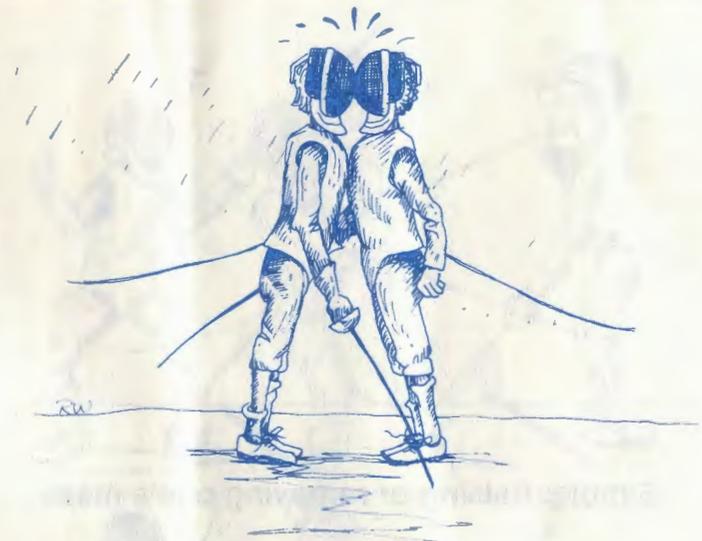
### Severe

All severe penalties are interdependent. A fencer is warned upon first infraction during a bout. The warning applies to all infractions in that category. A subsequent infraction in that category generally results in award of a penalty touch in favor of the opponent.

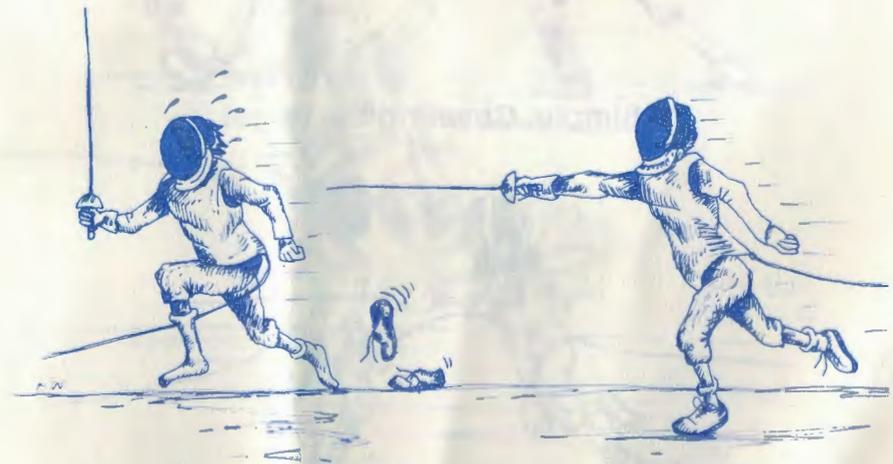
Both simple and severe infractions can also cause annulment of a touch made by the offending fencer during the infraction.

### Special

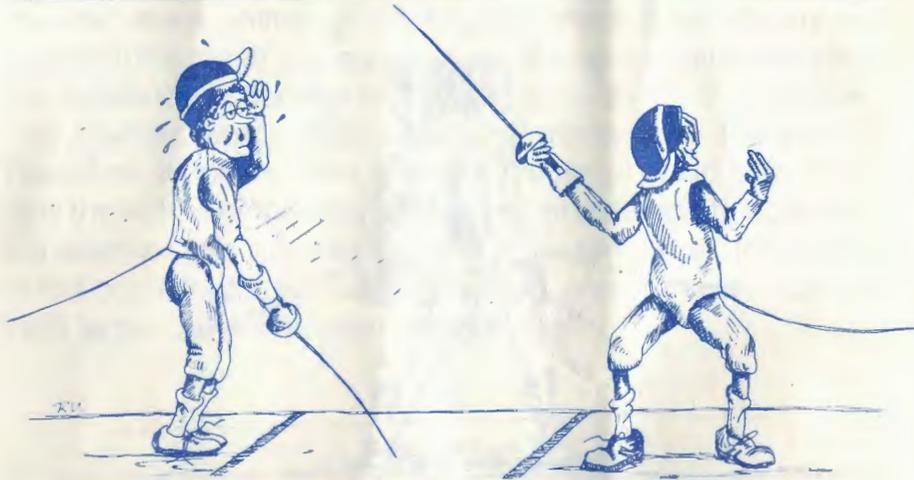
Special penalties may be assessed for infractions against safety or the order of the competition. Such infractions can result in penalty touches or expulsion from the tournament.



**Simple: Incidental corps-a-corps (accidentally causing body contact with the opponent).**



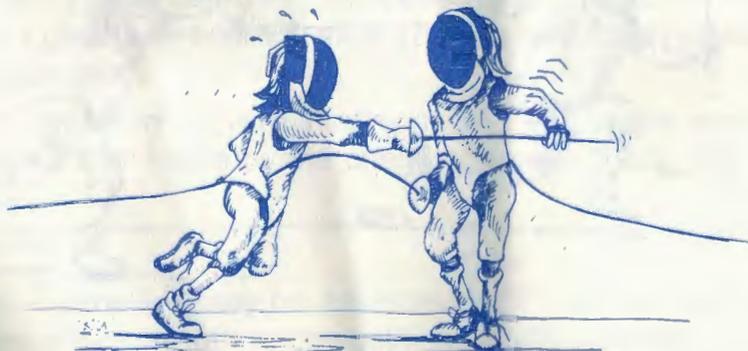
**Simple: Turning one's back to retreat.**



**Simple:** Raising or removing one's mask.



**Simple:** Covering the target.



**Severe:** Using the unarmed hand.



**Severe:** Intentional corps-a-corps (deliberately causing body contact with the opponent).



**Severe:** Intentional, brutal corps-a-corps, fleche (running attack) that jostles opponent.



**Special:** Any person (fencer, spectator, trainer, etc.) disturbing the order.



**Special:** Leaving the strip without permission.



**Special:** Not present after two calls given at one minute intervals.



**Special:** Unsportsmanlike behavior.



RW

## Your Role as a Parent

**THERE ARE MANY BENEFITS** to participating in youth fencing. Boys and girls learn good sportsmanship and self-discipline. They learn to compete independently as well as for the team; they learn to enjoy winning and profit from defeats, while becoming physically fit and healthy children.

For your child to gain the most from his youth fencing program, it is important that you support and encourage him by showing an interest in his school or club.

While parents are not necessarily participants, they greatly contribute to the success experienced by their children. Parents' attitudes are often adopted by their children, who consult them for advice and approval. Parents, aware of this, strive to become positive models. Most importantly, this includes showing good sportsmanship at all times and respecting coaches, officials and opponents.

## Enthusiasm and Support

**Remember your child is participating** in a sport.

It is important to let him establish his own goals and play the game for himself. Help your child establish and achieve the goals he sets for himself. Avoid imposing your own goals on him.

## Let the Coach Coach

**Be careful not to emphasize** winning to the exclusion of your child having fun and learning about himself while enjoying the exciting sport of fencing. Encouraging a healthy environment that emphasizes learning and fun can develop a more positive self-image, an invaluable asset throughout your child's life.





### Show your child positive reinforcement

The best way to help a child achieve his goals and reduce his fear of failure is through positive reinforcement. No one likes to make mistakes. When your child makes one, remember that he is still learning. Encourage his efforts and highlight his successes and the things he did well. As long as he gave his best, you should make him feel like a winner!



## Equipment Fencers Need.

**SELECTION OF FENCING EQUIPMENT** is a key issue among coaches, parents and fencers. When purchasing and fitting fencing equipment, remember two important factors:

1. The fencer should be adequately protected.
2. The uniform should allow freedom of movement to properly perform the necessary skills.

By carefully considering these two factors, you can assure your child more comfort, safety and enjoyment of the sport.

A full set of fencing equipment can be purchased for a relatively reasonable cost. You need not buy the most expensive equipment for your child to be protected and enjoy the sport. Inquire at your local fencing club to see if used equipment is available. Properly maintained equipment can normally be resold. Some clubs may provide basic equipment for their novice classes.

## Typical Prices

### Basic Equipment

Underarm .....	\$10 to \$20
Jacket.....	45 to 90
Knickers .....	20 to 45
Mask.....	50 to 90
Practice Foil.....	22 to 40
Practice Pad .....	25 to 40
Glove .....	8 to 20
Chest Protector (women) .....	7 to 48

### Competition Equipment

3 Electric Foils .....	\$120 to \$185
2 Replacement Blades.....	35 to 50
Lamé .....	75 to 135
2 Body Cords .....	35 to 60
Sweatsuit.....	35 to 60
Fencing Bag.....	20 to 45
Fencing Shoes .....	50 to 90

## The United States Fencing Association (USFA)

Established in 1891, the United States Fencing Association is the national governing body for fencing. A non-profit organization, the USFA coordinates all competition and administers programs for thousands of fencers, coaches and officials.



The USFA is the exclusive representative of the International Fencing Federation (FIE), and the United States Olympic Committee (USOC). It is responsible for the selection and training of the U.S. National and Olympic Teams for world competition.

**The USFA is governed** by officers and a board of directors elected by the members. The board of directors establishes the by-laws and rules and regulations.

Each state or other geographic unit has a division which is authorized by the USFA to govern and administer amateur fencing in its territory in accordance with the USFA regulations.

The day-to-day activities are directed by the National Office in Colorado Springs, Colorado in accordance with the policies set by the board of directors.

### USFA age classifications are

#### Boys and girls

Under 11	Under 17
Under 13	Under 20
Under 15	Open

## The USFA

- Conducts clinics and publishes training manuals for coaches, fencers and officials.
- Publishes "American Fencing" magazine which is distributed to more than 10,000 fencing enthusiasts in the US.
- Publishes an operations manual, by-laws, rules and regulations and a directory of the board of directors, officers, committees and staff.
- Makes available an insurance program with maximum benefits at minimum cost.
- Studies and makes recommendations for protective equipment through the FIE.
- Promotes uniformity in playing rules and interpretations.
- Acts as a clearing house of information to assist local organizations in finding solutions to problems at the grass roots level.
- Coordinates activities with the other fencing federations throughout the world.
- Conducts annual regional and national championships.

## Designed for Fun...

**FENCING IS A UNIQUE** activity that can provide great enjoyment for your child . Fencing helps develop sound bodies as well as increased endurance and improved agility. Moreover, fencing teaches a healthy attitude toward competition and immediately rewards youngsters when they employ their best judgment. With a proper attitude and good understanding of this fascinating sport, everyone will enjoy a pleasant experience.

**And have fun!**