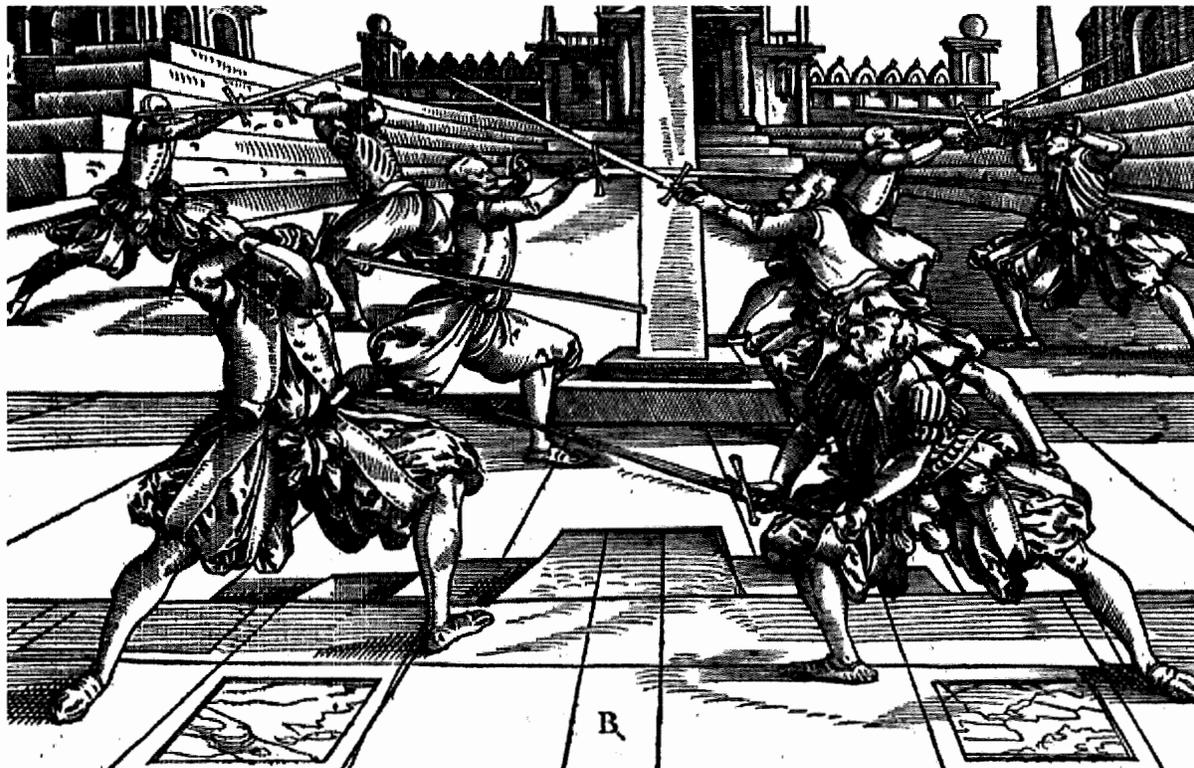


# DC DUELING CLUB\*

\*Not to be confused with The Dueling Club of DC, who coincidentally meet in the same SECRET LOCATION on alternating Saturdays



*The DC Dueling Club is not a school, nor a reenactment society.  
We are a group of advanced Western Martial Arts practitioners keeping our skills honed  
whilst we await the coming Apocalypse, when such skills will be needed again.*

Dedicated to practicing and upholding the manly† European arts of defence as practiced by our Medieval and Renaissance forebears, with REAL STEEL ARMAMENTS and with sufficient skill and control to ONLY BRUISE EACH OTHER or break the occasional finger tip or thumbnail of our opponent, keeping our great anger in check at almost all times,‡ since safety is first when you live in a CITY FULL OF LAWYERS.

† Except for Mr. Hounsell.

‡ Except for Mr. Busch, who sort of has anger issues, which he's dealing with.

## **OUR FRIENDS**

Virginia Academy of Fencing  
MASHS  
Order of the Seven Hearts

## **OUR ENEMIES**

Dueling Club of DC  
We HATE the Dueling Club of DC

## Table of Contents

- p.2 Essay: “Historical European Swordsmanship (HES) as a Western Martial Art”  
An Introduction  
What Historical European Swordsmanship is Not  
Historical Background  
Longsword Combat  
Western Swordsmanship Resources
- p.7 Virginia Academy of Fencing (VAF): HES Beginning I Syllabus  
Session Topics, General Information, Safety Rules & Legal Notices  
VAF Information  
HES Coach Biographies  
HES Camps & Classes Info

### **Medieval Martial Arts: Use of the German Longsword and Companion Weapons** *(based on training manuals of Johannes Liechtenauer Master Swordsman, b.1300 - d.1389)*

- p.15 Use of the Shinai (*Longsword training practice*): “Parts of the Shinai and How to Hold it Properly”
- p.24 Curriculum for the German Longsword and Other Companion Weapons
- p.28 Drills for Use in the Training of the German Longsword and Other Companion Weapons
- p.35 MyArmour: Call to Arms: The German Medieval Martial Arts - Longsword Illustrated & Explained
- p.47 A Concise Dictionary of Terms used in the German Longsword Tradition

### **Renaissance Martial Arts: Use of the Italian Rapier and Companion Weapons** *(based on training manuals of Salvator Fabris, Master Swordsman, b.1544 d.1618)*

*(Use a traditional Olympic-style foil for training)*

- p.60 Curriculum for the Italian Rapier
- p.64 Drills for Use in the Training of the Italian Rapier and Other Companion Weapons
- p.77 MyArmour: Call to Arms: The Italian Renaissance Martial Arts - Rapier Illustrated and Explained
- p.82 Order of the Seven Hearts: More information about the Italian Rapier and Renaissance Fencing

## Historical European Swordsmanship as a Western Martial Art

Historical European swordsmanship is one branch of the Western martial arts (usually abbreviated WMA). The notion that there are *Western* martial arts requires some explanation, as it sometimes raises eyebrows.

To most people, the term "martial arts" is synonymous with fighting styles developed in Asia, such as Kung Fu, Aikido, and Tae Kwon Do. But *martial art* simply means "art of war." Every society has its distinctive fighting systems, adapted to its needs and to the technology available. Asian martial arts became enormously popular in America and Europe during the sixties and seventies, partly because of the New Age embrace of Eastern culture and partly because of the popularity of martial arts films and charismatic practitioners like Bruce Lee. (Now, it seems like Tae Kwon Do – a Korean fighting system synthesized in the 1950s from older Korean and Japanese forms – is as American as Apple Pie and pizza.)

But in the past, Europeans developed and practiced martial arts of the sword, staff, dagger, and bare-hand that were just as deadly, precise, and elegant as the fighting systems of the East.

Why don't most people know about them? Being a fairly pragmatic, forward-looking civilization, Europe let its martial arts die out when they became obsolete. As technology (most importantly, gunpowder) altered the face of warfare, and as changing fashions altered the way people defended their honor in personal combat, European swordfighting styles either were abandoned as impractical or evolved into newer forms. In Europe and America today, the most familiar – and, arguably, most relevant or practical – martial arts are those involving firearms. (Yes, knowing how to shoot a gun is to know a martial art.) European swords have been largely demoted to the status of heirlooms and ceremonial objects, and the only widely practiced European form of swordplay is the sport of fencing (see "What HES Is Not").

In contrast, the much more conservative cultures of Asia kept their unarmed and bladed-weapon systems relatively alive even when their relevance in war diminished; thus their martial arts represent living traditions. In Japan, for instance, warriors continued to be trained in the use of the katana or samurai sword up until WWII. And the class of fighting man for whom this weapon originally arose in the middle ages, the samurai – the direct equivalent of the European knight – remained a living tradition and social class in Japan until the late 19th century.

But largely because of the Internet, reviving, practicing and teaching the lost martial arts of Europe has lately become possible. Sharing of old fighting manuscripts among scholars and enthusiasts has made it possible to reconstruct period fighting styles with a high degree of accuracy; and the small (but rapidly growing) number of people interested in interpreting these texts has been united in electronic forums devoted to the subject. Many of the most important texts are rapidly coming out in facsimile editions, with modern translation, interpretation and commentary. Across North America, Europe and Australia – and even in Asia – fencers, martial-artists, historians, and other enthusiasts have embraced historical European swordsmanship (abbreviated HES) as an exciting alternative to the widely-practiced Asian arts – an alternative that speaks more directly to our Western cultural heritage.

## What Historical European Swordsmanship (HES) Is Not

**HES is not reenactment or role-play.** Modern medieval reenactment groups, most notably the Society for Creative Anachronism (SCA) practice and promote swordfighting, and the shared interest means that there is a certain amount of overlap between the historical swordsmanship and reenactment communities; but reenactment groups by and large do not study or follow historical styles. Also, safety requirements impose limitations on fighting in reenactment groups (no leg shots allowed when using sword and shield in SCA, for example) that make their styles unrealistic from a martial-arts standpoint. And because HES (or Western martial arts in general) is not reenactment, there is no need to dress in period clothing; most historical swordfighters dress in modern fencing or athletic gear.

**HES is not a sport.** Sports also are governed by conventions – rules – that dictate how the game is scored and what constitutes winning the game. In most sports, death and injury are specifically *not* the objective, and the rules provide proper parameters to prevent or minimize harm to players. (Modern sport fencing, for example, has strict rules governing what constitutes a hit, or "touch," and how touches are scored; and fencers are limited to fighting on a strip or piste, like the playing fields of other sports.)

Martial arts, in contrast, are designed to defend the fighter and kill or debilitate one or many opponents. As such, there are no "rules" per se, only techniques proven to work. And because of the historical component, the practitioner of a historical martial art also submits him- or herself to an added restriction: attempting to follow, as much as possible, the style and techniques taught by the period master being studied. The reason for this adherence to the teachings of the masters is not simply a striving for period authenticity (WMA is not reenactment, remember). The reason is that the systems worked.

Every martial arts system is a coherent whole, internally logical, and effective, so long as it is adhered to faithfully. Martial arts are like languages in this way: Communication is achieved by adhering to a certain language, not picking and choosing words from different languages. Despite the inevitable supplementation by cross-training mentioned earlier, the basic assumption made by the serious WMA practitioner, and an assumption borne out by application in sparring, is that the masters knew what they were writing about.

Because it is not a sport, HES is not competitive in the same sense that sport fencing or other sports are. There are no national or international authorities that govern HES, and there are no regional, national or international competitions. There are also no universally recognized grading systems, such as the colored belts in Asian systems.

**HES is not stage combat.** This is a significant point: The swordfighting depicted in movies, from Errol Flynn's swashbuckling to the rapier duels in *The Princess Bride* to the longsword-wielding of Aragorn in *The Lord of the Rings*, all follow a tradition of theatrical swordplay that is long and hallowed – going back to the theaters of Elizabethan England. But this tradition is fundamentally unlike the *martial* arts of the sword.

The reason is simple: The aim in stage fighting is *to not hit your opponent*. From the earliest days of stage combat, for instance in Shakespeare's Globe Theater, the aim of actors depicting swordfights was to cross blades in a visually exciting way while not endangering their fellow actors. The formula of repeated clashing – or crossing – of blades works well for this: Stage combatants never aim at their opponent, but only at their opponent's sword. Crossing of blades in this relatively harmless manner is more or less what any filmed swordfight (or light-saber fight) consists of.

In a real swordfight, on the other hand, when (at least theoretically) life and limb – or honor – is on the line, it is pointless to aim at your opponent's blade. In fact, one of the common instincts that beginning HES students are immediately broken of in their training is the instinct to aim at their opponent's blade instead of their opponent – an instinct nurtured by a lifetime of seeing swordfights in movies.

(Which is not to disparage – at all – the great swordfighting films. *The Princess Bride*, *Star Wars*, *The Lord of the Rings* all are well worth seeing for countless other reasons besides their swordplay.)

## Historical Background

Reconstruction of historical European martial arts would not be possible had period fighting masters not left detailed instruction manuals. The earliest such instruction book – in fact, the oldest known martial arts manual from anywhere in the world – was written in Germany around 1300. Known by its call number in the Royal Armouries of Leeds, England, the manuscript "I.33" details, with lavish illustrations, how to fence with the short sword and buckler, a deadly weapon combination typical of the middle ages. (Note that the term *fencing*, from the Latin *defendere* via the French *defense*, originally meant warding, defending, or fighting in general; only in modern times has the general meaning been limited to swordplay as a sport.)

In the 12th and 13th centuries, the period in which plate armor came to be increasingly used on the battlefield, a new, longer, two-handed sword, the longsword, evolved. Longer both in the blade and handle (generally between 3.5 and 4.5 feet) and generally more tapered than earlier single-handed swords, the longsword (and its variants, the hand-and-a-half or bastard sword, and the greatsword) was effective both as a cutting weapon and as a thrusting weapon, able to pierce into the joints of plate armor. It was also used for unarmored combat.

The quintessential knightly weapon and symbol of chivalry, the longsword was used both in war and in civilian and judicial duels from the 13th through the 16th centuries – the high middle ages and Renaissance. Late in the 16th century, as it waned in significance on the battlefield due to changing tactics in warfare, blunted longswords became a popular sporting weapon in fencing clubs or guilds, such as the *Marxbruder* and *Federfechter* in Germany.

The longsword is the first European weapon whose use was amply documented in numerous texts from across Europe. As a result, modern practitioners working in many countries have been able to reconstruct the martial arts of longsword fencing with a high degree of confidence and consensus.

## Longsword Combat

Since it required two hands to use effectively, the longsword was not used in conjunction with any kind of shield or buckler, as earlier swords had been. Instead, the sword itself had to take on the defensive role of shield, and this simultaneously defensive and offensive use of a single blade came to characterize European swordsmanship ever since. Even after the longsword gave way to later types of single-handed sword, such as the rapier (the long civilian dueling weapon of the 17th century) and its descendants the smallsword and epee, the basic principle that the swordsman relies on the sword for defense as well as attack has remained operative. There are, however, different ways – and different philosophies – of how to attack and defend.

Historically, European martial arts were no more uniform than those of Asia. The Alps were a major cultural dividing line across Europe during the heyday of the longsword. Just as the paintings of the 15th-century Italian masters Botticelli or Fra Angelico look very different from their northern contemporaries such as Durer or van Eyck, different regional sword arts of the 15th century also look very different.

The Italian masters of the period, Fiore de Liberi and Filippo Vadi, taught a style of longsword that had a distinctive Latin elegance and flair; as the modern longsword teacher and writer Guy Windsor puts it: "Though Italy as a unified political entity was four hundred years in the future, the Italian style, which would culminate in Ferrari and Armani, breathes life into the pages of [their] long-forgotten treatises." Several modern schools teach the Italian style, including, in the U.S., Schola St. George and the Chicago Swordplay Guild; and in Europe, Schola Gladiatoria (London) and Windsor's School of European Swordsmanship, Helsinki.

The northern school was quite different. If Fiore's proud and elegant style of swordfighting breathes the same spirit as Armani or Ferrari (i.e., glorifying the human body, in keeping with humanistic principles that were central to the Italian Renaissance), the efficient German style reflects the cultural spirit of Bauhaus or BMW. Most authors of German fighting manuals – or *fechtbücher* – acknowledge the founder of their art to be the 14th-century German fencing master Johannes Liechtenauer.

Little is known about Liechtenauer. He was probably a traveling fencing teacher, who may or may not have actually invented the method that is associated with his name; it is possible he simply codified and recorded a system that was already in wide use. Either way, he earned his place in history by setting down his teachings in a cryptic poem – a typical pedagogical device of the time – which promoted both retention of material by his students (it was a mnemonic poem) as well as secrecy from the uninitiated: You couldn't understand it unless you had already been taught the fighting system by somebody. Fortunately, several heirs to the Liechtenauer tradition (who may or may not have been his actual students) not only recorded this poem but also wrote their own commentaries on it. The mid-15th-century *fechtbuch* of Sigmund Ringeck, for example, explained in detail what each line of Liechtenauer's poem meant. Ringeck's work, as well as books by Hans Talhoffer, Hango Dobringer and several others (all paying homage to Liechtenauer), have been the basis for the modern reconstruction of the "Liechtenauer" fighting method.

The German efficiency of swordplay engineering can be seen in the overriding preference for single-time as opposed to double-time attack and defense. Single-time means attacking with the same motion with which you defend yourself; double-time means using separate motions for each purpose. Modern foil or saber fencing, for example, utilizes double-time attack and defense, and thus you may see sport fencers fight in a rapid alternating rhythm: attack-parry-attack. In the German longsword system, there is ideally no attack that does not simultaneously close off a line of attack from your opponent, and there is no defense – no parry – that does not at the same time threaten (ideally, hit) your opponent. This produces a very distinctive-looking sort of fight, with a distinctive temporal flavor and rhythm. As a result of the preference for efficient single-time motions, the German system is built around five *meisterhau* or "master-strikes" – moves that fulfill a simultaneous offensive and defensive function. (There is nothing similar to the master strikes in the Italian system, although the Italian masters also laud single-time, or *mezzo-tempo*, actions.)

Schools that teach the German method include, in the U.S., the Virginia Academy of Fencing and MASHS (both in the Washington, DC – Baltimore area), the Selohaar Fechtschule (CT), and the Rocky Mountain Historical Combat Guild (CO), as well as Ochs Historische Kampfkunste in Germany, and Stoccata School of Defence in Australia.

# Western Swordmanship Resources

## **Books**

### **Rapier:**

Art of Dueling - Salvatore Fabris' Science & Practice of Arms, 1606—trans. by Tommaso Leoni

### **Longsword:**

Fighting with the German Longsword—derived from Sigmund Ringeck and Johannes Liechtenauer, compiled by Christian Henry Tobler

## **General Websites**

<http://www.vafinc.com>

<http://www.revival.us/>

<http://www.myarmoury.com>

<http://www.wmaillustrated.com/>

<http://forums.swordforum.com/>

<http://www.oldswords.com/>

## **Swords and Equipment Suppliers**

<http://www.darkwoodarmory.com>

<http://www.armor.com/index.html>

<http://www.zenwarriorarmory.com/> (Jackets, masks and gloves; swords offered are not accurate.)

## **Videos**

<http://www.ericwargo.com/sword/bouts/> (Bouts by VAF students and coaches in the advanced rapier and longsword classes. Includes links to some decent information.)

<http://www.gladiatores.de/Movies.html> (The rest of the site is also worth checking out for the pictures, but it is in German.)

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KKA-FRuDuLQ> (Very nice Czech interpretations of Fabris)

[http://www.youtube.com/user/janicina#p/a/u/1/EKM\\_tXIYiag](http://www.youtube.com/user/janicina#p/a/u/1/EKM_tXIYiag) (Same Czech group, this time doing Talhoffer longsword)

## **VAF Historical Program E-mail List**

[VAF\\_Historical\\_Sword@yahoogroups.com](mailto:VAF_Historical_Sword@yahoogroups.com)



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5401-B Port Royal Road  
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E-Mail: [FENCE@VAFinc.com](mailto:FENCE@VAFinc.com)

## BEGINNING I INTRODUCTORY CLASSES

Dear Beginning Student,

Welcome to VAF, and thank you for choosing to fence with us. VAF is the world's largest fencing school: we have over 700 members, 200 beginners, and 20+ people on our coaching and administrative staff. We teach all fencing disciplines including Olympic Sport and Historical Swordsmanship.

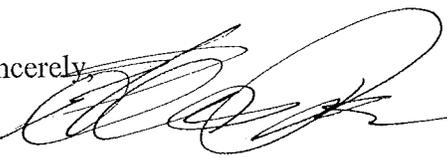
The Olympic Sport class is designed to introduce you to the world of fencing. It is a moderately paced approach to basic footwork, handwork, and strategy formulation. While the foil is the primary sword used in this class, you also will be introduced to the other two Olympic sport weapons: sabre and epee. By the end of this class, you will know the fundamentals of fencing, the rules of competition, etiquette, and terminology, and will be able to fence and direct bouts with each other.

The Historical Swordsmanship class is designed to introduce you to historical fencing based on Medieval and Renaissance techniques. Students will learn early European sword fighting styles including the rapier and the two-handed sword.

Our main goal is for you to enjoy your time with us and have the best possible fencing experience. Understanding what to expect is the first step. The following information will help familiarize you with your class and other VAF services and programs.

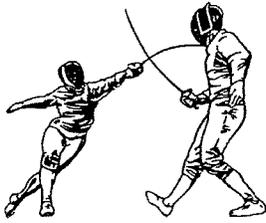
Communication is the key to a successful partnership. Please don't hesitate to bring up any questions or concerns you might have. The office staff and coaches will be glad to help in any way.

Yours sincerely,

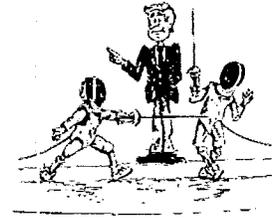
  
Alexandre Ryjik  
Head Coach

**Business Office Hours:** Monday – Friday 9:30 am to 2:30 pm

**Training Facility Hours:** Monday – Friday 4:30 pm to 11:00 pm  
Saturday & Sunday 9:00 am to 3:00 pm



## **BEGINNING I OLYMPIC SPORT SESSION TOPICS**



**Introduction to Fencing**

**Footwork**

**Handwork**

**Right of Way**

**Strategy**

**Sabre & Epee**

**Bout Rules**

**Directing Bouts**

**History, Safety, Equipment**

**En Garde, Advance, Retreat, Lunge**

**Salute, Attacks, Parries**

**When to attack and when to parry**

**Controlling your opponent's actions**

**Introduction to the other Olympic sport weapons**

**Rules and etiquette governing bouts**

**Determining touches and points**



## **BEGINNING I HISTORICAL SWORDSMANSHIP SESSION TOPICS**



**Introduction**

**Footwork**

**Handwork**

**Two-Handed Sword**

**Rapier**

**Bouting**

**History, Safety, Equipment**

**Introduce the Two-Handed Sword**

**Cuts and Parries**

**Master Cuts, Bouting, and Rules**

**Basic Cuts, Lunges, and Sword Placement**

**Outsmarting your Opponent**

## **BEGINNING I - INTRODUCTORY LEVEL GENERAL INFORMATION**

- **Try not to miss any classes** because we cover something new in every class. However, if you do miss one class, you can usually catch up during the next class when material is reviewed.
- **There are absolutely no make-ups in other group classes.** If you would like to make up a missed class, 20 minute private lessons are available at \$50 per lesson.
- **Appropriate athletic attire** is required (this does not apply to the first class). Comfortable athletic pants such as sweatpants, warm-ups, or leggings must completely cover your legs and allow you to stretch and move with ease, clean athletic shoes with non-marking soles, and a glove for students in sport classes, or a pair of gloves for students in historical classes are necessary. Work or gardening gloves that completely cover your hand(s) can be used. Fencing gloves also may be purchased from our on-site store. **Students without gloves or those wearing shorts, jeans, dress or casual pants, or non-athletic shoes will not be allowed to participate.**
- **Rental equipment** is \$29, payable to VAF, and due at the first class. Rental equipment includes either a foil, epee, saber, or shinai, and a mask and jacket. It does not include a glove, which you must bring from home or purchase; gloves start at \$20. Sanitary hospital spray is available for you to use on the rental masks.
- **Beginning equipment packages and gloves may be purchased** in our store. The office staff will help you with selection and fitting. The store also carries a line of gift items.
- **If you have your own equipment,** please let your instructor inspect it for safety.
- **Safety is highly important.** Fencing is one of the safest sports. We use protective equipment and we adhere to strict safety rules. You must sign the Safety Rules and Notices form (see reverse of this page) in order to participate in class. A parent or guardian must sign for a minor. Failure to abide by the safety rules is cause for dismissal from the class.
- **Only experienced fencers are allowed on the fencing floor.** Beginners, guests, and parents must remain in the seating area. The coach will call for Beginners when class is ready to start.
- **Discipline and attentiveness** during class are key to having a good time. Respect and good sportsmanship also play an important role in assuring a good experience for everyone.
- **Videotaping and the taking of photographs** are not allowed without the permission of the Virginia Academy of Fencing.
- **VAF generally follows Fairfax County Public Schools' policy for weather related closings.** Occasionally, due to the evening and weekend operation hours, weather conditions do not warrant an automatic closing. Please call (703) 321-4922 after 8:00 am for a confirmation message.
- **We encourage you to observe different classes** on other days of the week. This will help you see where you can go with your fencing and what VAF has to offer. You will find a schedule of classes posted on the bulletin board.
- **You will receive continuing information** before the end of this course. There are plenty of opportunities to continue with fencing in your current discipline or in a new one. We have classes in foil, sabre, epee, two-handed sword, and rapier. Continuing papers will include information about classes, schedules, and sign up procedures.

## SAFETY RULES

1. The fencing floor is a restricted area; only fencers may be on it. Non-participants (and parents) must stay in the designated observation/seating area.
2. No equipment, bags or personal items are permitted on the fencing floor area.
3. Swords must be carried point down or in a fencing bag.
4. Minors may not hold swords unless they are wearing masks.
5. Warm up stretches are required before a lesson or practice.
6. No running is permitted without the coach's permission and never with a sword.
7. A mask, glove, fencing jacket, fencing pants, sweatpants or similar long pants and athletic shoes must be worn while fencing. No jeans are allowed.
8. No type of movement with the sword is allowed if any person within 6 feet of the action is unmasked, except in a private lesson under the strict direction of a VAF coach.
9. When fencing, especially in a group, a student **may not under any circumstances**, remove a mask while another fencer's sword point is raised or when other fencers are making any type of movement with their swords.
10. Walking or standing close to a fencer in a bout or practice when sword points are raised or swords are in motion is prohibited.
11. Fencers should all fence in the same direction, never "against the grain".
12. Fencing outside of group classes or private lessons must be confined to designated areas.
13. Unsportsmanlike behavior, horseplay (falling down), or improper rough or strong movements, whether intentional or not, are prohibited and will result in expulsion.
14. Each fencer has a duty to report any unsafe area or unsafe activity to the staff.
15. Any illness, injury or the taking of medication must be reported to the instructor before a lesson or practice.
16. No drugs and no alcohol are allowed.
17. No participation in any fencing activity within the time limits for medicine to leave the participant's system, and in no case within 6 hours of using alcohol or any other prescription or nonprescription drug that comes with a warning label that actions may be slowed or impaired.

## LEGAL NOTICES

1. You represent that you are in good physical condition, have no physical or mental health problems that will preclude your participation in fencing activities. Specifically, you represent that you have no underlying cardiovascular, neurological or any other illness that will prevent or inhibit your participation in fencing classes in the same manner as a participant without such conditions.
2. VAF represents that its personnel are trained in providing fencing programs and instruction. VAF represents that its personnel have no expertise in diagnosing, examining or treating medical conditions of any kind or in determining the effect of any specified exercise on said medical condition. You fully understand and agree that in participating in any fencing program, there is the possibility of accident, injury, disability or death. You agree to assume these risks and release and discharge the owners, operators, the United States Fencing Association and sponsors of the premises, activities, etc. and their respective servants, agents, officers and all other participants in the stated activities of and from all claims, demands, actions, and causes of action of any sort, for injuries sustained to the member's person and/or property during the member's presence on the premises and the member's participation in the stated activities.
3. You give consent to VAF and its representatives to obtain medical care at your expense from any licensed physician, hospital or clinic for you and/or the above mentioned student for any injury or illness that may arise during activities associated with VAF.
4. VAF generally follows Fairfax County Public Schools' policy for weather related closings. Occasionally, due to the evening and weekend operation hours, weather conditions do not warrant an automatic closing. Please call (703) 321-4922 after 8:00 am for a confirmation message.
5. You agree to be bound by VAF equipment, facility and safety rules.

## Our Academy

Founded in 1991, by Russian National Champion, Fencing Master Alexandre Ryjik, the Virginia Academy of Fencing (VAF) is the World's Largest Fencing School with over 1,000 students and over 30 people on our coaching and administrative staff. VAF has introduced fencing to thousands of adults and children in the Washington metropolitan area in our state-of-the-art 13,000 square foot fencing facility conveniently located on the Capital Beltway.

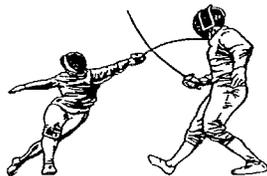
VAF is a place where experienced fencers can greatly improve their skills and where those who are just starting to learn fencing can do so in a safe, friendly, and fun environment.

## Want More Information?

Visit our web site  
or call today!

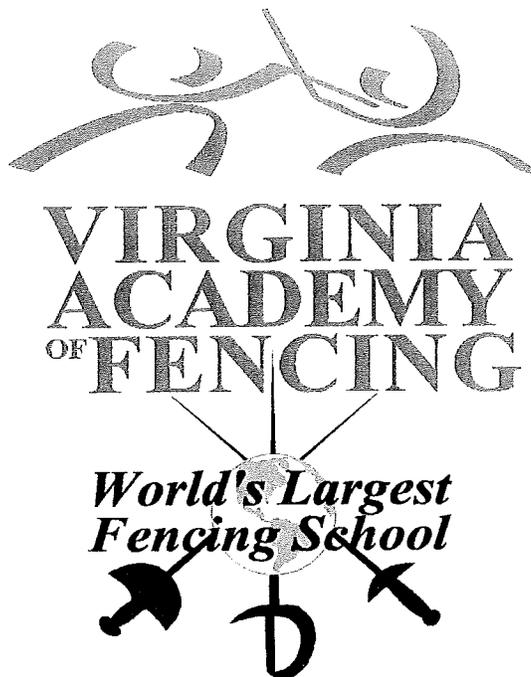
## The Olympic Sport

Known as "the physical game of chess," and the fastest martial art, fencing provides a tremendous physical and mental workout through skillful swordplay, using a foil, sabre, or epee. Each sword has different rules and target area. A fencer needs the reflexes and coordination of a boxer, and the concentration and strategic abilities of a chess player. The fencer's goal is to hit the opponent on a valid target without being hit. All movements involve handwork, footwork, and strategy formulation. Reflexes, speed, and cunning are integral parts of this sport which is excellent for building coordination, balance, and agility. Protective masks, jackets, and safety tipped swords make fencing one of the safest sports for adults and children alike.



## Our Students

Men, women, girls, and boys, from ages 6 to over 80 come here! Both avid competitors and recreational students feel at home at VAF while enjoying their fencing experience. Our students have varied backgrounds and include recreational athletes, U.S. national and international champions, World Cup competitors, as well as historians and thespians. At VAF, students develop both the intellectual as well as the athletic aspects of this unique sport.



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E-Mail: [FENCE@VAFinc.com](mailto:FENCE@VAFinc.com)

## OUR PROGRAMS

## Our Head Coach

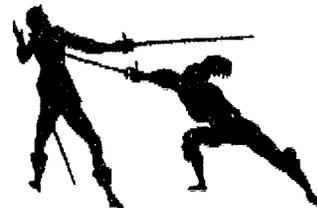
Fencing Master Alexandre Ryjik began fencing at age eight in St. Petersburg, Russia. At age 17, he earned a Master of Sport in Fencing of the USSR, one of the most prestigious certifications in this Olympic sport. He holds many championship titles: All Republic Champion, Army Champion, Leningrad Champion, and National Youth Champion of the Soviet Union. In addition to coaching elite athletes that include the highest level of national and international champions and world competitors, he coached at the Carnegie Mellon Institute in Pittsburgh from 1990-91 and currently is Professor of Fencing at American and George Mason Universities.

## Sign Up Now!

Ages 6 years to Adult  
Open 7 Days a Week

## Historical Swordsmanship

Explore the use of swordsmanship the way it was originally practiced as a martial art. Students practice and fence with the art of the Renaissance rapier and the Medieval two-handed sword. Historical swordsmanship recreates the techniques used by fencers who lived before the modern sport was created, bringing these fighting arts to life in a safe and fun environment. Each sword has its own characteristic methods of attack and defense, and students will develop both physical and mental precision in mastering them. Just like in the sport of fencing, balance, control and strategy are developed in both drills and free fencing, but with a focus on how the art was used in history. Classes are therefore both physically intensive as well as educational. Protective equipment includes a fencing mask, jacket and safety tipped sword simulators.



## Our Equipment Store and Gift Shop

We have an on-site, full-service store offering a wide selection of quality and affordable Olympic sport and Historical swordsmanship fencing equipment. We also have a variety of unique gift items that include replica historical swords, books, and artwork.



## COACHES BIOGRAPHIES

**Head Coach Russian Fencing Master Alexandre Ryjik** began fencing at age eight in St. Petersburg, Russia. At age 17, he earned a Master of Sport in Fencing of the USSR, one of the most prestigious certifications in this sport. He holds many championship titles: All Republic Champion, Army Champion, Leningrad Champion, and National Youth Champion of the Soviet Union. From 1990-91, Coach Alex coached at Carnegie Mellon University, in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. Currently, he is Professor of Fencing at American and George Mason Universities. Coach Alex teaches Master Sabre Classes and his students include numerous national and international champions. He also is the founder of VAF, which has grown from just a few students in 1991 to the world's largest fencing school.

**Senior Coach Frank Kelley** was trained by the Fencing Master. He has been with VAF since 1996 and brings a wealth of teaching experience from other athletic disciplines. He also heads the VAF armory. Coach Frank teaches intermediate foil and electric foil classes.

**Coach Bill Grandy** heads our Historical Swordsmanship and Beginning Olympic Sport programs. He has an extensive martial arts and historical swordfighting background, which enables him to bring a unique perspective to fencing and its origins. He has been with VAF since 2001 teaching rapier and two-handed sword classes. Coach Bill also instructs beginning Olympic sport fencing classes.

**Coach Losha Muravyev**, with over 20 years of fencing and coaching experience, has earned the prestigious title of Master of Sport of Fencing of the USSR. He actively competes himself and teaches foil classes and private lessons at all levels.

**Coach George King** was trained by the Fencing Master. As a former NFL professional football player, he brings his dedication to athletics to his position. He fences sabre and competes nationally. He teaches intermediate sabre classes.

**Coach David Rowe** was trained by the Fencing Master and has been with VAF since 2000. Coach David teaches both Historical Swordsmanship and Olympic Sport Beginning Classes.

**Coach Pamela Muir** was trained by the Fencing Master as well as the head of the Historical Swordsmanship program. She has an extensive teaching background as well as a fencing background in Historical Swordsmanship and Olympic Sport. Coach Pamela teaches both Historical Swordsmanship and Olympic Sport Beginning and Intermediate Classes. She also is available for private lessons.



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Web: [www.VAFinc.com](http://www.VAFinc.com)  
E-Mail: [FENCE@VAFinc.com](mailto:FENCE@VAFinc.com)**

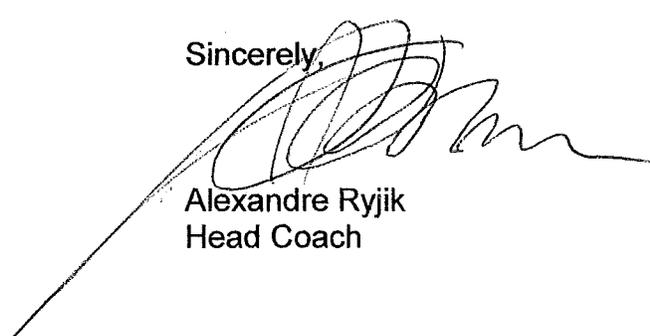
## **BEGINNING I TO BEGINNING II CAMPS & CLASSES INFORMATION**

Dear Beginning Camp Student,

We hope that you are enjoying your time with us so far. The next level, Beginning II, will prepare you for the intermediate level where **you will become a fencer**. It will be more challenging with a concentration on terminology, rules, the etiquette of bouts, and developing your skill level to enable you to fence and direct bouts without the need for close coaching supervision. We also will introduce you to the other fencing disciplines so that you will be able to decide which fencing program you like best.

We look forward to your continuing with us at the Beginning II level. Please call us for additional information or with any questions at 703/321-4922.

Sincerely,



Alexandre Ryjik  
Head Coach

- **There are absolutely no make-ups in other group classes.** If you would like to make up a missed class, 20 minute private lessons are available at \$50 per lesson.
- **Beginning II private lessons** may be taken instead of the group classes. Six 20 minute lessons with a coach allow for flexible scheduling and personalized attention. They can start as soon as you complete Beginning I.
- **Appropriate athletic attire** is required: Comfortable athletic pants such as sweatpants, warm-ups, or leggings that must completely cover your legs and allow you to stretch and move with ease; clean and dry athletic shoes with non-marking soles; and a glove for students in sport classes, or a pair of gloves for students in historical swordsmanship classes is necessary. Work or gardening gloves that completely cover your hand(s) can be used. Fencing gloves also may be purchased from our on-site store. **Students without gloves or those wearing shorts, jeans, dress or casual pants, or non-athletic shoes will not be allowed to participate.**
- **Rental equipment** is available on the Beginning II level for \$29 and includes a foil, epee, sabre, or shinai along with a mask and jacket. **Rental equipment does not include a glove**, which you must bring from home or which can be purchased from our on-site store. Additional chest protection equipment also is available for sale.
- **If you have your own equipment**, please let your coach inspect it for safety.
- **Beginning equipment packages and gloves may be purchased** in our store. The office staff will help you with selection and fitting. The store also carries gift items.
- **Safety is our highest priority.** Fencing is one of the safest sports. We use protective equipment and we adhere to strict safety rules. You must sign the Safety Rules and Notices form in order to participate in class. A parent or guardian must sign for a minor. Failure to abide by the safety rules is cause for dismissal from the class.
- **Discipline, attentiveness, respect, and good sportsmanship** are key to having an enjoyable and productive experience for everyone. They are a necessary part of fencing.
- **Videotaping and the taking of photographs** are not allowed without the permission of the Virginia Academy of Fencing.
- **VAF generally follows Fairfax County Public Schools' policy for weather related closings.** Occasionally, due to the evening and weekend operation hours, weather conditions do not warrant an automatic closing. Please call (703) 321-4922 after 8:00 am for a confirmation message.
- **A Registration Form for Beginning II Group Classes is attached.** In order to be placed on the class roster, payment must accompany the registration. If the class of your choice is full, please register anyway listing a second choice. Your name will go on a waiting list in case there is a cancellation. If we cannot accommodate your request, we will refund your money or transfer your registration to the next session at your discretion.
- **Tuition and Equipment Rental:**

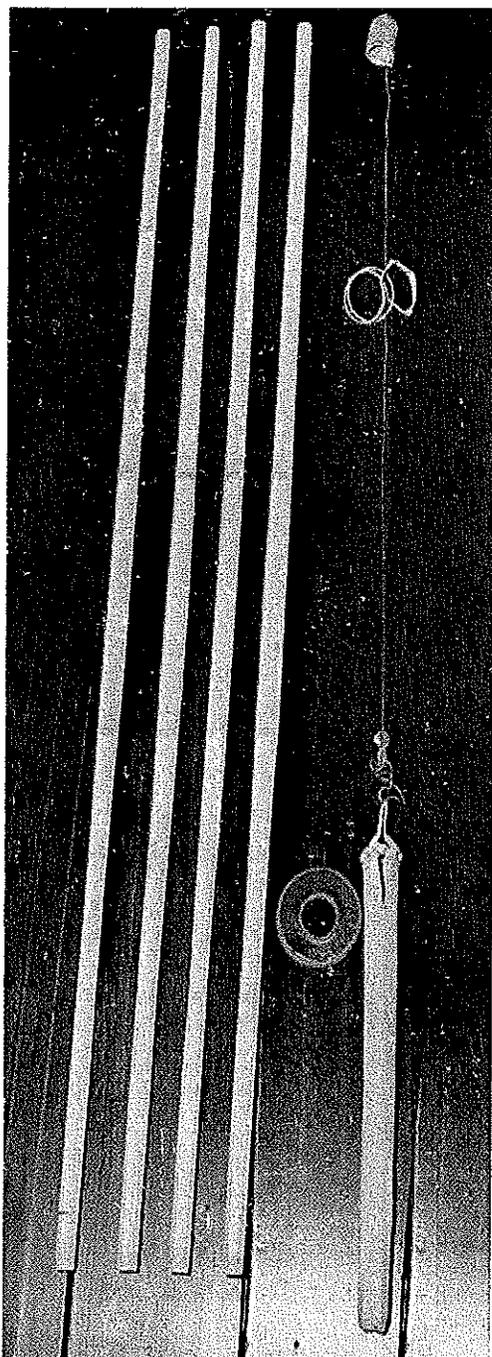
**Beginning II Camp Tuition is \$219 plus a \$29 equipment rental**  
**Beginning II Group Class Tuition is \$129 plus \$29 equipment rental**  
**Beginning II Private Lesson Tuition is \$270 plus \$29 equipment rental**

- **How to register:**

**In person:** Visit us at the Virginia Academy of Fencing  
Weekdays from 9:30 am to 2:30 pm and 4:30 pm to 11:00 pm  
Saturdays and Sundays from 9:00 am to 3:00 pm  
**By phone:** Call (703) 321-4922 to sign up with a VAF representative  
**By FAX:** Send completed form to (703) 321-3585  
**By mail:** Send to VAF @ 5401-B Port Royal Road, Springfield, VA 22151

# The Parts of the Shinai, and How to Hold it Properly.

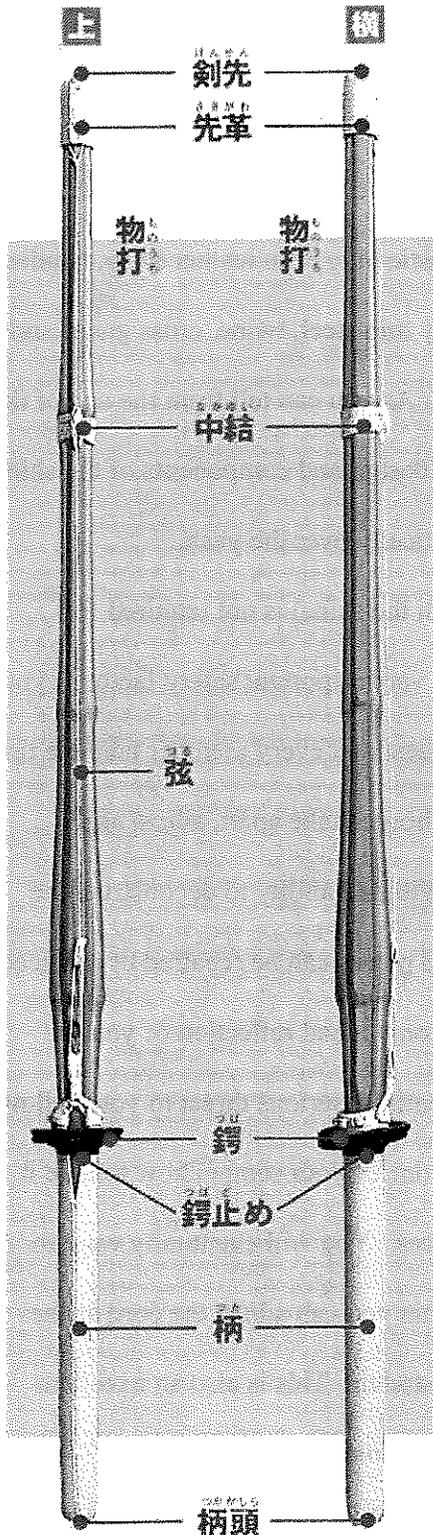
## PART 1:



Pictured to the left you will see an exploded version of the typical shinai. It is generally comprised of: 4 slats of bamboo, leather cap, plastic plug, thin leather strap, handle, a very small square of very thin steel, twine, cross guard and the cross guard support. As you can tell from the age of the picture used, the overall design and components of the shinai have not changed dramatically over the years.

Although familiarity with the shinai is not required for promotion testing, it is a very important safety factor in your Kendo practice. We request that every member take the time to become familiar with how to take apart, adjust and reassemble the shinai. With the ability to deconstruct the shinai, faulty or damaged pieces can be repaired or replaced. A damaged shinai is not only a bad reflection of you the Kendoist, but also a potentially serious threat to your fellow sempei and kohai. Ask one of your sempei how to take it apart and inspect the pieces. You will eventually want to take the shinai apart so that you can adjust the cord as the leather handle begins to stretch. This is also an excellent opportunity to adjust the handle length if needed.

Pictured below is a back view and a profile view of a typical shinai. The correct names of each of the red points are given in English to the right. Becoming familiar with these terms. Having a common reference for discussion greatly reduces confusion in conversation ...



**Kissaki** – this is the thrusting surface of the shinai, also the tip of the sword.

**Sakigawa** – the name of the leather cap that covers the tip.

**Monouchi** – this is the valid striking area of the shinai. It starts at the very tip of the sword and goes to the top most edge of the Nakayui. Note: since the shinai only has a single blade, this region only applies to the face of the shinai. You may not achieve a point hitting someone with the side of the shinai, even if it is in the Monouchi.

**Nakayui** – the narrow leather strap, used to indicate the lowest portion of your shinai’s striking/cutting surface.

**Chikama** – Any point below the Nakayui to the Tuba which is not a valid scoring surface.

**Tsuru** – the twine or strong cord that denotes the back of the shinai. This string also holds most of the major components in place.

**Tsuba** – this is the cross guard or hand guard of the shinai, unlike western style guards this is generally round and small.

**Tsubadome** – this is the supporting piece that holds the tsuba in place so it does not travel during use.

**Tsuka** – is the name of the handle, generally leather, that acts as the grip for the shinai.

**Tsukagashira** – is the name of the end of the shinai, generally referred to as a pommel. The bottom edge of your left hand wraps around here while holding the shinai.

PART 2: How to correctly hold the shinai.



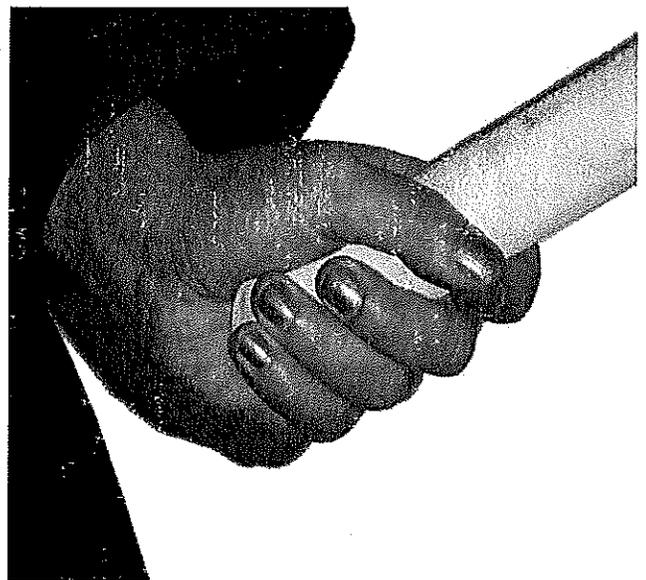
Lets begin this portion of the discussion with an exercise. Stand up with your hands at your belt level. Place your open hands together as if you were going to pray. Fingertips are all together. Your arms are comfortably relaxed and naturally bent at the elbows. Keep your shoulders and elbows relaxed

Like the pictures to the left and right.

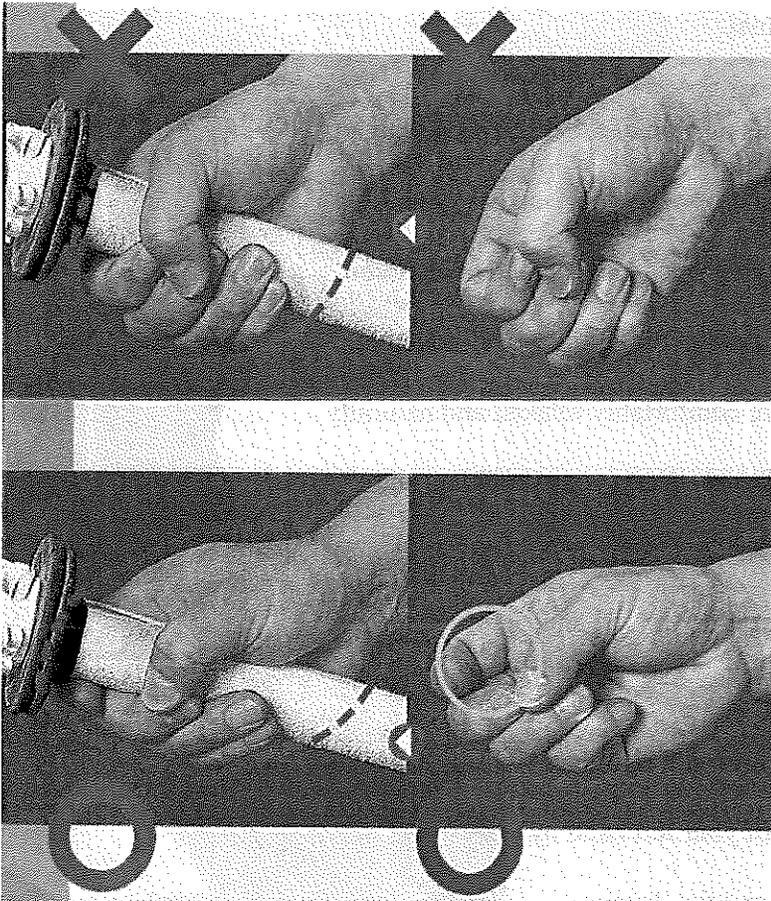


Now move you right hand ahead of your left hand by an imaged fist distance between them.

The shinai goes into the left hand as show on the right. This positioning is very important.



Note how the left hand comes over the edge slightly and that the handle is actually at an angle in the hand. We do not hold a shinai as you would a flashlight or a baseball bat. The angle allows us to strike at the top of our opponents Men and also to have greater range in our attack. Also notice that the hand is not tightly clenched, only the final two fingers are exerting pressure on the tsuka/handle.



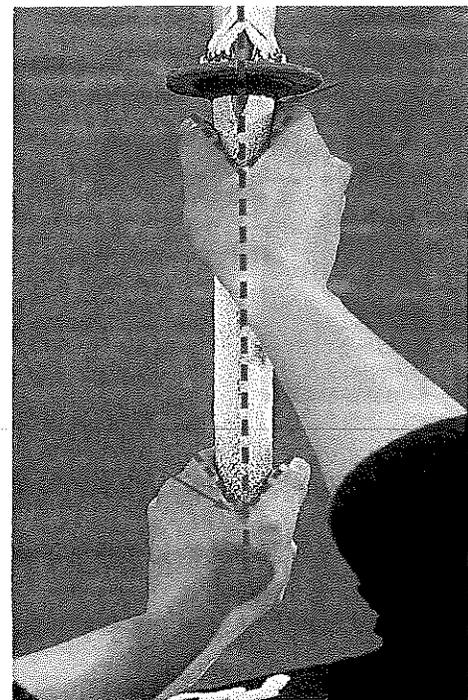
The left hand grip is displayed here. The picture is from the other side for clarity. Correct positioning is marked with an "O" where common mistakes are marked with the "X".

As with the left hand, the right hand is not clenched tightly either.

Notice in the second picture where the fingers are noted to be relaxed, , but not open.

At any point during cutting, you should be able to open your fingers and they should be pointing directly away from you at every moment in cutting. Looking top down you hands should look like this.

In bogu it is difficult to see correct placement of the hands, because of the kote. But your cuts will reflect to everyone else if you positioning is incorrect. It is important to always be aware of correct grip on the shinai. Check yourself, until it becomes second nature to you.

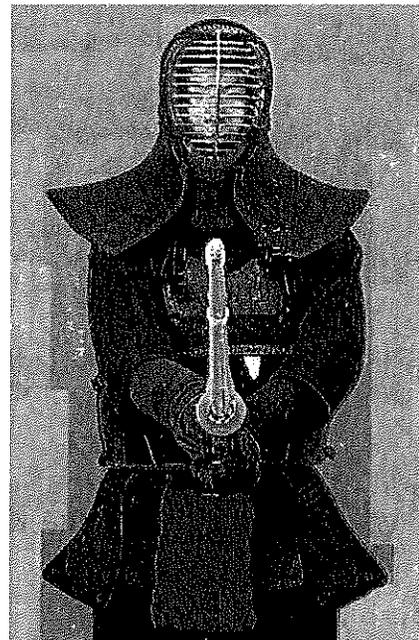




**Make every effort to avoid gripping the shinai as shown to the left. They are all excellent examples of what not to do.**

When gripping the shinai correctly you will naturally develop a strong kamae and be much less open to attacks.

Now that the hands are gripping the shinai properly, let's focus on the final aspect of holding the shinai. The tip of the shinai or Kissaki is always pointed toward your opponent's throat. If the two of you were to walk directly at each other, when you met you should both have the kissaki touching each others throat. When practicing alone, picture a perfect reflection of yourself as your target and adjust the height of the tip of the shinai accordingly.



If you have any further questions, feel free to address them to your sempei or email them to us.

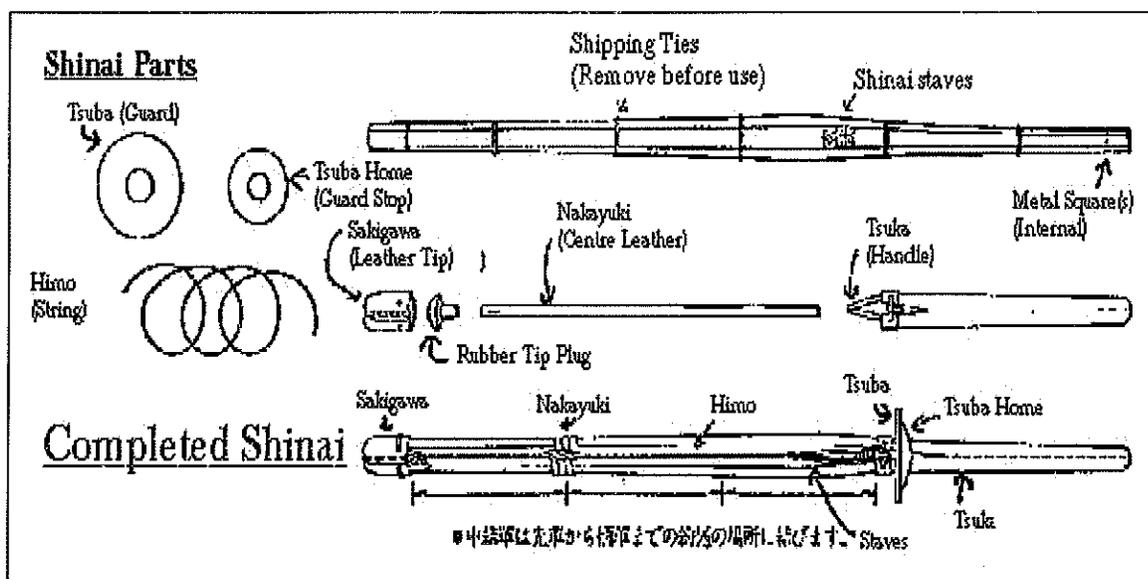
## How To Care For Your Shinai

Your new shinai is not ready to use right away. The bamboo is usually very dry and needs a bit of TLC (tender, loving care) before you use it in practise, or it will crack very soon after you start using it. If you want your spiffy new shinai to last, then you must prepare it before use. You should also clean and maintain your shinai every few weeks.

Your fellow kendoka will also appreciate you taking care of your shinai because it is a big safety issue. The worst kendo accidents are caused by broken shinais, so you should check your shinai every practice! You should also take your shinai apart every couple of months to sand out any dings and dents, reapply some oil and check the string tension. That's also a good time to rotate the handle and spread the wear and tear out over all four staves.

A good shinai can last as long as a year, even with heavy practice.

OK, first, lets learn the basic parts and the terminology:



The shinai is made from 4 staves of bamboo, held at both ends with a leather cover, and tensioned by a string. There are a couple of hidden parts: inside the handle end, a thin metal square keeps the staves aligned, and inside the tip, a rubber grommet kept the staves from collapsing against each other. Most folks use the Japanese terminology so they will look more knowledgeable to beginners when explaining this stuff. I bow to tradition in this regard, but I'll slip in a translation where I can.

English Name	Japanese Name	English Name	Japanese Name
Bamboo	take	Hand guard	tsuba
Handle	tsuka	Guard retainer	tsuba dome
String	Tsuru or himo	Tip insert	saki-gomu
Leather tip	sakigawa	Leather strap	nakayue

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### Taking Apart a new Shinai:

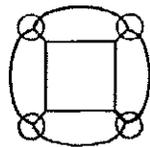
Yes, you do have to do this. Relax, it's very easy and takes about 20 minutes from start to finish, once you have some practice.

1. Remove the hand guard (tsuba and tsuba dome).
2. Untie the (tsuru) string from the handle. Do NOT undo any other knots!
3. Pull off the sakigawa (shinai tip) and nakayui (leather strap) with the string all in one piece. It is not necessary to untie any of these knots, unless you are replacing one of these parts.
4. Pull off the tsuka (handle).
5. Mark the ends of each bamboo stave so you remember the assembly order (Which one is top, bottom, left and right).
6. Separate the staves. Be careful to keep the small metal square that holds the handle ends together.

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### Getting a New Shinai Ready to Use:

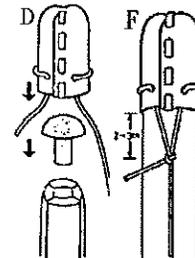
1. Use a foam sanding block, or a piece of fine-grit sand paper. Gently sand the edges of the shinai down so they are round, not sharp see below and right for an end-view of the staves to see the difference. Be careful not to get splinters in your fingers !!



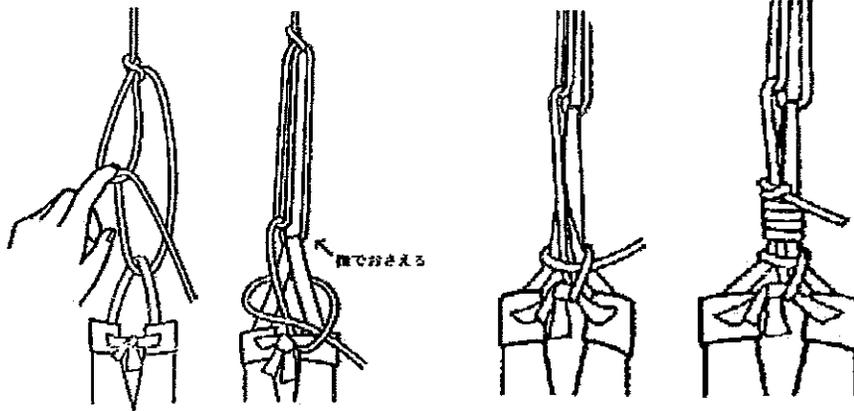
Sand these edges down.



2. After sanding, lightly oil the staves with furniture oil, vegetable oil, or even light machine oil. For new shinai, it is best to let the oil soak in for a few days. Be careful with vegetable oil, as it soaks in fast, and you can make the shinai too heavy by over-oiling.
3. After sanding and oiling, wipe the shinai with a clean rag to remove the excess oil, and begin to re-assemble. Put the staves back in their original order, and slide the handle partway on, just to hold the handle ends together.
4. Slide the nakayue (leather strap) down over the shinai, then insert the saki-gomu (rubber grommet) and cover it with the sakigawa (leather tip). If you untied all this stuff, then you'll have to read the maintenance section below to figure out how to re-tie all those knots and align everything again.



5. Push the tsuka (handle) the rest of the way on (it is supposed to be a bit tight). Make sure, the bamboo goes all the way into the bottom of the leather.
6. Finally, tie the knot as shown below. Keep the tsuru (string) tight as you tie. If it is loose, the shinai will have no spring, and can actually be more prone to breaking. Loop the excess string around and around the base until you can tuck in the end to keep it from un-raveling.

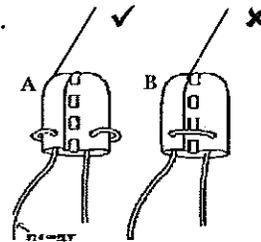


## General Repairs and Maintenance

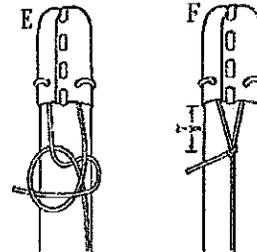
Sometimes, you will need to overhaul a shinai for preventive maintenance: the nakayue can loosen up, or the sakigawa (leather tip) can get worn, or you might buy a funky purple tsuru from one of the bogu stores, to replace your boring old white one. The steps below show you how to work on the rest of the shinai.

Thread the tsuru (string) through the sakigawa as shown in method A. Method B is not as good as method A for a couple of reasons.

In method A, the tsuru tightly holds the sakigawa all the way around the tip. In method B, the tension of the tsuru stretches the leather, and pulls the sakigawa unevenly - only from the top. This can make the sakigawa have a loose fit.



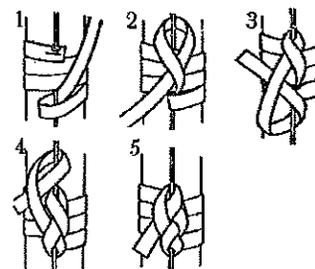
Tie the tsuru knot as shown at right. The knot should be about 2 cm below the sakigawa, and have only a little left over at the loose end. Don't cut a lot off the end or you will have a short string with not enough at the handle (especially size 39 shinais). Instead, undo the knot and tie it again. The knot below the sakigawa will not slip if it is tied properly. It will also be easy to undo when you need to replace parts.



The nakayue (leather strap) is held in place by a knot in the tsuru, about 1/3 of the way along the shinai. This knot keeps the nakayue from sliding up the shinai towards the tip. Thread the tsuru through the slit in the end of the nakayue, then tie the knot at the point where you need to anchor the nakayue. This point is usually a little bit below the first bamboo joint of the staves. See the picture on page one for a general idea.



The nakayue knot looks hard, but it is actually very easy. You should undo this and re-tighten it every so often, as the leather does stretch over time. You should also apply a bit of mink oil or another leather conditioner to keep the nakayue from drying out and getting weak. Just loop the nakayue under the tsuru, and then fold it back under itself. Be sure to keep the leather flat, not twisted when you do this. Repeat the looping as shown in the drawing, until you run out of leather. If you are superstitious, they say that three or five wraps are lucky, and four wraps are bad luck.



Sometimes you may need to replace a nakayue that has broken without wanting to undo the tsuru and take the whole shinai apart; here's a short-cut method. Basically, just use the slit at the end of the nakayue, and make the first loop through itself, instead of sliding the tsuru through the slit.



I actually prefer the long way, because it's a chance to inspect the rest of the shinai, but if you are in a hurry, this is an acceptable quick-fix.

There is a tension loop in the tsuru near the handle. This is what you use to tighten the tsuru and give the shinai a lively feel. I do not like the usual method of tying this knot (shown at right), because the loop can move or change size on you. I prefer to use a bowline, like the one at the sakigawa. It takes a bit of fiddling to get the length right, but the loop will never move on you. That's worth something when you are trying to tension a shinai with sweaty fingers, 5 minutes before practice starts.



That's all folks, just a few simple tips to keep your shinai working well, and your fellow kendoka safe. It only takes a few seconds to check your shinai every practice, and a few minutes once a month to tune it up. Look after your gear, and you'll have a much better time.

# The MID-ATLANTIC SOCIETY For HISTORIC SWORDSMANSHIP

## A Curriculum for the German Longsword And Other Companion Weapons

May, 2003; Revised September, 2006

### **PREFACE:**

This curriculum is based on the manuscript of 14<sup>th</sup> century German Master Johannes Liechtenauer, as interpreted in the commentary by Sigmund Ringeck, and embodied in the recent books Secrets of German Medieval Swordsmanship and Fighting with the German Longsword, both by Christian Tobler (Chivalry Bookshelf, 2001 and 2004).

The curriculum is designed to be progressive and cumulative, so that each lesson builds upon the previous one. Novice level includes Lessons 1 through 7, Intermediate level includes Lessons 8 through 10 and Advanced level includes Lessons 11 through 15.

### **LESSON 1. THEORETICAL BASIS:**

*Goal/Milestone: Understanding the basic theory of Longsword play and learning Larry's four "cardinal rules" of longsword (see below)*

- Merkeverse of Lichtenauer, the commentary by Ringeck, and the interpretation by Christian Tobler.
- Fluidity in motion: footwork, transitioning through the guards and the three wounders.
- Concepts of the Before and the After (Vor und Nach).
- The art of wounding: Cutting with Oberhau, Mittelhau, and Unterhau; Thrusting; Slicing with Oberschnitt and Unterschnitt
- Working from engagement, or the bind; the concepts of hard and soft.
- Close quarter combat.
- Hierarchy of defense.
  1. Attack before your opponent.
  2. Void the attack and counter-attack in time.
  3. Deflect the attack and immediately counter-attack.
  4. Static parry and immediately counter-attack.
  5. Void the attack without counter-attack.
  6. Static parry with flat or edge without counter-attack.
- Larry's four "cardinal rules" for longsword:
  1. If your sword is on your right side, lead with the left leg; and if your sword is on left side, lead with your right leg. Conversely, which ever your lead leg, make sure your sword is on the opposite side of your body.

2. As much as possible keep your sword in between your opponent's sword and your body.
3. As much as possible, keep the edge or tip of your sword threatening your opponent.
4. In moving, do not cross your feet.

## **LESSON 2. MOVEMENT**

*Goal/Milestone: Developing the ability to move with fluidity and stability in multiple directions.*

- The stance.
- Learning the principal footwork of passing steps, slope pace, gathering steps, compass steps.
- Learning the additional steps of transverse and change steps.
- Concepts regarding distance and measure.
- Concepts regarding timing and tempo.

## **LESSON 3. THE FOUR PRIMARY GUARDS (Vier Leger):**

*Goal/Milestone: Practicing the four primary guards until they become second nature, and understanding their tactical applications.*

- Holding the sword.
- Vom Tag (from the roof)
- Ochs (ox),
- Pflug (plow)
- Alber (fools)

## **LESSON 4. THE SECONDARY GUARDS:**

*Goal/Milestone: Practicing the four secondary guards until they become second nature, and understanding their tactical applications.*

- Langenort (long point)
- Schranckhut (barrier guard)
- Nebenhut (near guard, aka tail guard)
- Kron (the Crown)

### **LESSON 5. THE THREE WOUNDERS:**

*Goal/Milestones: Learning how to wound with cutting, thrusting, and slicing actions; and understanding the tactical applications of each. Developing the ability to move from defensive actions into attacks, while maintaining balance and fluidness in motion.*

- Understanding the four openings.
- Cutting Oberhau, Mittelhau, and Uberhau.
- Thrusting with the Sword
- Slicing with the Sword

### **LESSON 6. INITIATIVE:**

*Goal/Milestones: Understanding how to gain the initiative and regain it if you lose it.*

- Vor, Nach and Indes
- The concept of Fuhlen.

### **LESSON 7. DEFENDING WITH ATTACKS:**

*Goal/Milestones: Learning how to defend and counterattack in the same action.*

- Defenses from the right side.
- Defenses from the left side.

### **LESSON 8. THE FIVE MEISTERHAU (Master Strokes)**

*Goal/Milestone: Learning how to execute all five of the Meisterhau and understanding the tactical applications of each strike.*

- Zornhau (strike of wrath)
- Krumphau (crooked strike)
- Zwerchhau (cross strike)
- Schielhau (squinting strike)
- Scheitelhau (parting or scalp strike)

### **LESSON 9. THE SPRECHFENSTER (Speaking Window)**

*Goal/Milestone: Learning fuhlen with langenor, and learning to probe without contact with your opponent's blade.*

- Sprechfenster at the Sword
- Sprechfenster Disengaged

### **LESSON 10. THE EIGHT WINDINGS (Winden Techniques)**

*Goal/Milestone: Learning to fight off the bind, using the two hangers (high and low).*

- The windings from right ochs.
- The windings from left ochs.
- The windings from left pflug.
- The windings from right pflug.
- The three wounders and the eight windings.

### **LESSON 11. WRESTLING**

*Goal/Milestone: Learning the various unarmed combat techniques and their application to longsword.*

- Principles of medieval wrestling.
- The three wrestlings at the sword.

### **LESSON 12. ARMoured COMBAT AND THE HALF-SWORD**

*Goal/Milestone: Learning to fight with the longsword in close measure.*

- The half-sword guards.
- Thrusting with the half-sword.
- Wrestling at the half-sword.
- Grabbing the sword.
- Disarming techniques.
- Pommel strikes.

### **LESSON 13. THE SPEAR**

*Goal/Milestone: Learning the use of the spear.*

- The three guards.
- Thrusting with the spear.
- Winding at the spear.

### **LESSON 14. THE DAGGER**

*Goal/Milestone: Learning the use of the dagger*

### **LESSON 15. SWORD AND BUCKLER**

*Goal/Milestone: Learning to fight with the single sword and buckler.*

# The MID-ATLANTIC SOCIETY For HISTORIC SWORDSMANSHIP

## Drills for Use in the Training of the German Longsword And Other Companion Weapons September, 2006

**PREFACE:** The following drills are to be considered foundational. Over time, other variations of these drills, as well as new drills, will be added. These drills come from a variety of sources. Many were developed by MASHS instructors. Others come from Christian Tobler's book Fighting with the German Longsword, and are credited as such. Drills from other sources are also credited. Unless noted otherwise, all drills are with weapons.

**NOTE:** For two-person drills the Agent is the one who initiates the action (the attacker), and the Patient is the one who responds to the action (the defender). During training sessions, the solo drills will be performed in a group. Away from training, the solo drills can be done individually.

### **LESSON 2: MOVEMENT**

#### **DRILL 1: FOOTWORK, LINEAR MOVEMENT, SOLO, WITHOUT WEAPONS**

1. Participants are set in lines facing the instructor, in the proper stance with left leg forward. At the instructor's count, and at a moderate pace, the participants take passing steps forward until impeded. Participants turn. Repeat at the instructor's discretion. Variation: Increase the pace between repetitions.
2. At the instructor's count, and at a moderate pace, the participants take passing steps backward until impeded. Participants turn. Repeat at the instructor's discretion. Variation: Increase the pace between repetitions.
3. Participants begin with the left leg lead. At the instructor's count, the participants take gathering steps forward until impeded. Participants turn and take a right leg lead. Upon the instructor's count, the participants take gathering steps forward until impeded. Repeat at the instructor's discretion. Variation: Increase the pace between repetitions.
4. Repeat No. 3 gathering backwards.

#### **DRILL 2: FOOTWORK, MOVING OFF LINE, SOLO, WITHOUT WEAPONS**

1. Participants are set in lines facing the instructor, in the proper stance with left leg forward. At the instructor's first count, the participants take a slope pace forward and to the right. At the instructor's second count, the participants recover back to their starting stance. Repeat at the instructor's discretion. Variation: Increase the pace between repetitions.
2. Participants face the instructor, in the proper stance with right leg forward. At the instructor's first count, the participants take a slope step forward and to the left. At

- the instructor's second count, the participants recover back to their starting stance. Repeat at the instructor's discretion. Variation: Increase the pace between repetitions.
3. Participants face the instructor, in the proper stance with left leg forward. At the instructor's first count, the participants take a slope step backwards and to the right. At the instructor's second count, the participants recover forward to their starting stance. Repeat at the instructor's discretion. Variation: Increase the pace between repetitions.
  4. Participants face the instructor, in the proper stance with right leg forward. At the instructor's first count, the participants take a slope step backwards and to the left. At the instructor's second count, the participants recover forward to their starting stance. Repeat at the instructor's discretion. Variation: increase the pace between repetitions.
  5. Participants face the instructor, in the proper stance with left leg forward. At the instructor's first count, the line takes a compass step forward with the right foot, pivoting on the left foot. At the instructor's second count, the participants recover back to their starting stance. Repeat at the instructor's discretion. Variation 1: Switching to right leg lead, participants will compass forward by stepping with the left foot while pivoting on the right. Variation 2: Increase the pace between repetitions.
  6. Participants face the instructor, in the proper stance with left leg forward. At the instructor's first count, the line takes a compass step backward and to the left, pivoting on the left foot. At the instructor's second count, the participants recover back to their starting stance. Repeat at the instructor's discretion. Variation 1: Switching to right leg lead, participants will compass backward by stepping with the left foot while pivoting on the right. Variation 2: Increase the pace between repetitions.
  7. Participants face the instructor, in the proper stance with left leg forward. At the instructor's first count, participants take a transverse step to the right. At the instructor's second count participants take a transverse step to the left. Variation: Increase the pace between repetitions.
  8. Repeat No. 7, however at the start of each count, the participants do a change step before each transverse step. Variation: Increase the pace between repetitions.

### **LESSON 3: THE PRIMARY GUARDS**

#### **DRILL 1: THE GUARDS, SOLO**

1. Participants are set in lines facing the instructor, in right Vom Tag. At the instructor's count, the participants take passing steps forward, alternating from left Vom Tag to right Vom Tag. Repeat at the instructor's discretion. Variation 1: Increase the pace between repetitions. Variation 2: Repeat stepping backwards.
2. Participants are set in lines facing the instructor, in right Ochs. At the instructor's count, the participants take passing steps forward, alternating from left Ochs to right Ochs. Repeat at the instructor's discretion. Variation 1: Increase the pace between repetitions. Variation 2: Repeat stepping backwards.
3. Participants are set in lines facing the instructor, in right Pflug. At the instructor's count, the participants take passing steps forward, alternating from left Pflug to right Pflug. Repeat at the instructor's discretion. Variation 1: Increase the pace between repetitions. Variation 2: Repeat stepping backwards.

**DRILL 2: CHANGING GUARDS, FOOTWORK FIRST, SOLO**

1. Participants are set in lines facing the instructor, in right Ochs. The instructor calls out passing steps or changes in weight distribution. Participants determine what guard to shift to based on the footwork.
2. Weight forward, shift to Pflug.
3. Weight back, shift to Ochs
4. Pass forward, shift to same guard on other side.
5. Variation 1: Start in Vom Tag with left leg lead. Pass forward results in Alber with right leg lead. Variation 2: Pass backwards.

**DRILL 3: WORKING THROUGH THE GUARDS, SOLO**

Use Christian Tobler's Drills No. 1, 2 & 3, found on pages 37 and 38 of Fighting with the German Longsword.

**LESSON 4: THE SECONDARY GUARDS**

**DRILL 1: THE GUARDS, SOLO**

Use Christian Tobler's Drill No. 4, found on page 48 of Fighting.

**LESSON 5: THE THREE WOUNDERS**

**DRILL 1: CUTTING, SOLO**

1. Participants are set in a line facing the instructor, in right Vom Tag. At the instructor's count, the participants take a passing step forward and cut an Oberhau to the left to Alber, then recovers into left Vom Tag. At the next count, the participants will be cutting from left Vom Tag to Alber and recovering into right Vom Tag. Repeat at the instructor's discretion. Repeat the same drill cutting Unterhau. Repeat the same drill cutting Mittelhau. Variation 1: increase the pace between repetitions. Variation 2: repeat stepping backwards.
2. Repeat all three cuts from Nebenhut and then from Schranckhut.

**DRILL 2: CUTTING AGAINST A PELL, SOLO**

1. Participants line up in front of a pell, in right Vom Tag, in measure (one step back). Participants then take a passing step forward to strike an Oberhau. After the strike the participant recovers backward into right Vom Tag. Each participant should do at least five repetitions, then move to the back of the line. The drill can be repeated at the discretion of the instructor. Repeat the drill starting from left Vom Tag.
2. Repeat the drill cutting an Unterhau, from both right and left Vom Tag.
3. Repeat the drill cutting a Mittelhau, from both right and left Vom Tag.
4. Repeat the drill, performing all three cuts from right and left Nebenhut.
5. Repeat the drill, performing all three cuts from right and left Schranckhut.
6. Variation: The Participants can strike making multiple cuts into different quadrants.

**DRILL 3: STRIKING WITH THE SWORD**

Use Christian Tobler's drill No. 5, found on page 65 of Fighting.

**DRILL 4: THRUSTING WITH THE SWORD**

Use Christian Tobler's drill No. 6, found on page 70 of Fighting.

**DRILL 5: SLICING WITH THE SWORD**

Use Christian Tobler's drill No. 7, found on page 73 of Fighting.

**DRILL 6: 'PUTTING IT TOGETHER' MOVEMENT DRILL, SOLO**

*NOTE: At this stage of training, it is important that the participant be able to move into all the actions with fluidity and mobility. This is an important drill that will help achieve this goal.*

Participants are asked to spread throughout the training area making sure they have ample room to move around without interference. At the instructor's command, each participant should move freely, moving from and into all the guards, cuts, and thrusts, using all the footwork patterns. They should move from defensive positions into offensive actions, and visa-versa. All this should be done without stopping. During this drill, the instructor should observe each participant carefully to ensure that they are moving in multiple directions with their footwork, and that their sword work maintains proper form. Instructors should stop the drill periodically to share general observations. Start this drill slowly at first and then speed up the pace at subsequent repetitions.

**LESSON 6: INITIATIVE**

**DRILL 1: FUHLEN**

Use Christian Tobler's drill No. 8, found on page 81 of Fighting.

**DRILL 2: "TIC-TOC" TWO PERSON DRILL**

1. Participants pair up in two opposing lines. Select one line to be the Agent and the other to be the Patient. The Agents assume right Vom Tag, while the Patients assume right leg lead Alber.
2. Start slowly. On the instructors count, the Agents throw an Oberhau with a passing step forward. At the same time the Patient responds by cutting upward from Alber, with a passing step backwards. The blades should make contact with each other.
3. Since the Patient is now in right Vom Tag and the Agent is now in right leg lead Alber, the roles are reversed and at the instructors next count the drill is repeated.
4. Repeat at the Instructor's discretion.
5. Variation 1: Both the Agent and the Patient switch to left Vom Tag.
6. Variation 2: Repeat drill cutting Unterhau, with both the Agent and the Patient in right Vom Tag.
7. Variation 3: Both the Agent and the Patient switch to left Vom Tag.

**LESSON 7: DEFENDING WITH ATTACKS, TWO PERSON DRILLS**

**DRILL 1:**

Use Christian Tobler's drills No. 9 through 16 starting on page 85 of Fighting.

**DRILL 2: DEFENDING AGAINST A SELECTION OF ATTACKS, IN ROTATION**

1. Participants pair up in two opposing lines, in right Vom Tag. Instructors select one line to be the Agents and the other to be the Patients. Start slowly.
2. On the instructor's count, Agents throw one of five possible attacks: Vertical Oberhau, diagonal Oberhau, Mittlehau, or Unterhau, or leg cut at their choice without announcing it.

3. Passive agents must recognize the attack and provide the appropriate defense; Ochs, Pflug, or Schranckhut.
4. After five repetitions, rotate clockwise to give new partners. Do this until everyone has had a chance to be a Patient 3 times.
5. Variation 1: Patients may start in the guard of their choice.
6. Variation 2: Start with all participants in a left side guard.
7. Variation 3: Constrain the Patients to start in Ochs, Pflug, Nebenhut or Schranckhut.

### **DRILL 3: DEFENDING AGAINST A SELECTION OF ATTACKS WHILE MOVING.**

1. Participants line up in pairs in close measure, with room for the Patient to move backward. This drill must start slowly, with the more experienced person being the Agent.
2. Starting in right Vom Tag, at the instructor's count, the Agent steps forward while the Patient steps backward. The Agent throws one of four attacks; a vertical Oberhau, diagonal Oberhau, Mittlehau, or an Unterhau. The Patient must determine which attack is presented and provide the proper defense; Ochs, Pflug, or Schranckhut.
3. At the instructor's next count, the Agent recovers into the over the head version of Vom Tag and then attacks to the other side. Again, the Patient must identify the attack and provide the proper defense.
4. When impeded, change directions so that the Patient becomes the Agent.

### **LESSON 8: THE FIVE MEISTERHAU, SOLO AND TWO PERSON DRILLS**

*NOTE: The solo drills would be very effective against a pell.*

#### **DRILL 1: ZORNHAU:**

Use Christian Tobler's drills No. 17 on page 96 of Fighting, and No 18 on page 104 of Fighting.

#### **DRILL 2: KRUMPHAU**

Use Christian Tobler's drills No. 19 on page 108 of Fighting, and drills Nos. 20 and 21 on page 117 of Fighting.

#### **DRILL 3: ZWERCHHAU**

Use Christian Tobler's drills No. 22 on page 120 of Fighting, and No 23 on page 124 of Fighting.

#### **DRILL 4: SCHIELHAU**

Use Christian Tobler's drills No. 24 on page 131 of Fighting, and Nos. 25 and 26 on page 135 of Fighting.

#### **DRILL 5: SCHEITELHAU**

Use Christian Tobler's drills No. 27 on page 138 of Fighting, and No. 28 on page 142 of Fighting.

#### **DRILL 6: THE WALLER-DUCKLIN DRILL**

*NOTE: This is a drill based on a stage combat scenario developed by John Waller and Keith Ducklin, authors of the book, Sword Fighting: A Manual for Actors and Directors (Applause Books, 2001). This drill gets the participants moving around each other as opposed to just moving linearly, incorporates many of the cutting actions, and many of the primary and secondary guards. It also enhances the concepts of measure and tempo, and introduces some half-sword techniques.*

1. The Agent (A) stands in right Vom Tag, while the Patient (P) assumes right Nebenhut.
2. A takes a slope pace to the right and proceeds to cut at P's leading leg.
3. P blocks A's cut with a left Schranckhut. P takes a passing step forward and cuts at A's leg.
4. A blocks P's cut with his own left Schranckhut, and counters by taking another slope pace cutting an Oberhau towards the left side of P's head.
5. P blocks A's Oberhau with a hangen guard (Ochs with tip very low) on the left side so that the Oberhau glances off P's blade.
6. P counters with a Mittelhau from the right.
7. A pivots and blocks the on-coming Mittelhau with a low Kron. A counters by pushing P's blade away, pivots so that he is facing P and thrust to P's chest.
8. P passes back, performs a Krumpshau catching the inside surface of A's blade and sets the thrust aside to the outside. Continuing the action without stopping P attempts an Oberhau to the top of A's head.
9. A quickly blocks the on-coming Oberhau by bringing his sword up to his head into a modified 1<sup>st</sup> guard of the Half-sword (aka, St George). A counters by quickly snapping his sword to the left, setting aside the blocked Oberhau and thrusting into P's face with the pommel.
10. P performs a passing step back. P stops the pommel strike by extending his left arm and catching the elbow of A's right arm, in the midst of the pommel strike. At the same time, P brings his sword up to thrust A in the torso.
11. Partners reverse roles.
12. Repeat at the instructor's discretion.

#### **DRILL 7: ATTACK/COUNTER-ATTACK, TWO PERSON DRILL**

*NOTE: This drill requires the use of padded wasters. Participants must wear the minimum safety equipment which includes a mask, hand protection, groin protection for the men, and chest protector for the ladies. Extra padding such as a jacket, tunic, or gambeson is recommended.*

1. The instructor chooses the Agent and the Patient.
2. The instructor gives the Agent specific area to attack. Likewise, the instructor gives the Patient a specific target area in which to counter-attack. These instructions are given so that neither participant is aware of the other's assigned targets.
3. At the instructor's the Agent commences to attack to his/her assigned target area. The patient must defend (using any of the techniques in the Hierarchy of Defense in Lesson 1), and if successful can counter-attack at his/her assigned target.
4. Depending on the number of participants, this can be repeated. The roles are then reversed with different target areas assigned.
5. The entire drill is repeated until all participants have had an opportunity to perform this drill as both Agent and Patient.

**LESSON 9: THE SPRECHFENSTER, TWO PERSON DRILLS**

*NOTE TO INSTRUCTORS: Have participants practice and perform the techniques shown in the photographic illustrations in Chapter 15 of Fighting.*

**LESSON 10: THE EIGHT WINDINGS, TWO PERSON DRILLS**

*NOTE TO INSTRUCTORS: Have participants practice and perform the techniques shown in the photographic illustrations in Chapter 16 of Fighting.*

**LESSON 11: WRESTLING, TWO PERSON DRILLS**

*NOTE TO INSTRUCTORS: Have participants practice and perform the techniques shown in the photographic illustrations in Chapter 14 of Fighting. Also refer to Section 3 on wrestling in Secrets of German Medieval combat.*

**LESSON 12: HALFSWORD, TWO PERSON DRILLS**

*NOTE TO INSTRUCTORS: Have participants practice and perform the techniques shown in the photographic illustrations in Chapter 14 of Fighting. Also refer Section 4 on armored combat in Secrets.*

**DRILL 1: FUHLEN**

Use Christian Tobler's drill on page 206 of Fighting.

**DRILL 2: USING THE THIRD GUARD**

Use Christian Tobler's drill on page 217 of Fighting.

**DRILL 3: USING THE POMMEL**

Use Christian Tobler's drill on page 223 of Fighting.

**LESSON 13: THE SPEAR, TWO PERSON DRILLS**

*NOTE TO INSTRUCTORS: Have participants practice and perform the techniques shown in the photographic illustrations in Chapter 19 of Fighting. Also refer to Section 4 on armored combat in Secrets.*

**DRILL 1: THRUSTING**

Use Christian Tobler's drill on page 196 of Fighting.

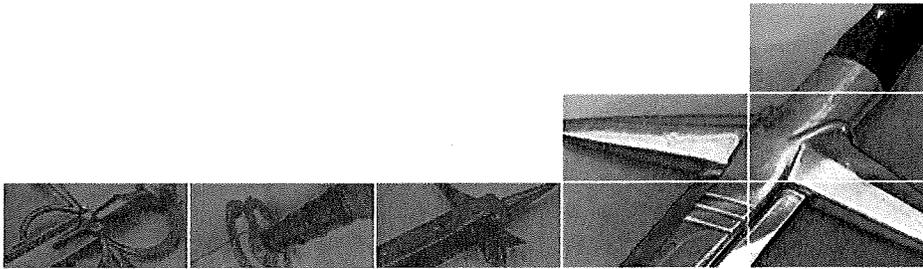
**DRILL 2: FUHLEN**

Use Christian Tobler's drill on page 199 of Fighting.

**LESSON 14: THE DAGGER**

**LESSON 15: SWORD AND BUCKLER**

*NOTE TO INSTRUCTORS: Have participants practice and perform the techniques shown in the photographic illustrations in Section 2 in Secrets.*



## Call to Arms: The German Longsword

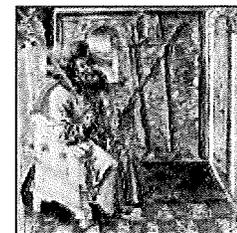
An article by Bill Grandy



Despite the grandeur surrounding the idea of the sword, such weapons are often thought to be heavy and unwieldy. It is often believed that the medieval warrior was crude, relying on brute strength more than skill to survive. If one stops to think about it, though, this would betray common sense: why would a medieval fighter not try to use speed and guile to defeat a slow, awkward opponent? Such myths can be dispelled when one takes a look at period fencing treatises and manuscripts, which provide an insight into the incredibly sophisticated and effective martial arts that were used in deadly combat. There were many masters from different countries, from Italy to England, who taught various styles. This article is intended to give a broad introduction to the German master Johannes Liechtenauer's teachings on the use of the double-edged, two-handed cruciform-hilted sword most commonly referred to as the longsword.

### *Kunst des Fechtens*: The German Medieval Martial Arts

Not much is known about the 14th century fencing master Johannes Liechtenauer. We do know that he taught a martial art that he kept secret from all but his own students. In order to preserve his teachings, Liechtenauer composed a series of verses which in reality were a secret code for his students. As Liechtenauer's students went on to become masters themselves, the teachings spread and other masters in the Liechtenauer style put down their teachings on paper. Today we know of this martial art, often referred to as *Kunst des Fechtens*, or "The Art of Fighting," through their writings. Some of their manuals are reliant primarily on illustrations, such as those by Master Hans Talhoffer, and others primarily on text, including one in particular by a master named Sigmund Ringeck, who recorded his own commentaries on Liechtenauer's original verses so that others could decode the meaning. These manuals detail many forms of fighting such as fighting with the longsword (both in and out of armour), the *messer* (a single-edged sword similar in form to a falchion), sword and buckler, or the dagger, as well as unarmed combat and fighting from horseback.

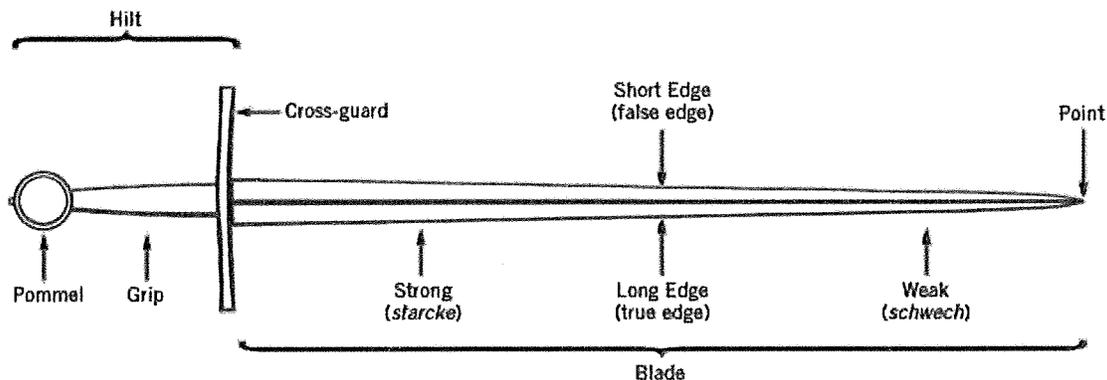


Fencing master, likely Johannes Liechtenauer

While not all of the German masters followed a straight lineage from Liechtenauer's teachings, the majority of surviving manuscripts at least reference him, and many masters who taught techniques that are different from Liechtenauer's direct tradition were still clearly influenced by Liechtenauer. We know that *Kunst des Fechtens* was practiced in the 14th and 15th centuries, and the 16th century German masters Jacob Sutor and Joachim Meyer produced manuals that show longsword fencing from the same lineage. Therefore we know that this style existed in at least three centuries. The manuals primarily focus on the judicial duel and personal combat, though they are complete systems, and it would seem logical that such techniques would also have been used in warfare.

### Parts of the Sword

The longsword can take several forms, and each user may have different tastes in length and balance. A few things are clear from the period treatises, though: the ideal sword should be double-edged, should have a grip long enough for two hands and yet should also be maneuverable with one hand.



The sword is divided into two main parts: the hilt (comprised of the grip, the guard or cross and the pommel) and the blade. Most attacks will involve the blade, though in some circumstances the pommel or cross will be employed, such as when one's opponent has moved in too close to allow effective use of the blade.

The blade itself is divided into two halves: the strong (*starcke*), which is the half closest to the hilt, and the weak (*schwech*), which is closest to the tip (many longsword practitioners use the modern fencing terms for the strong and weak—*forte* and *foible*). The strong of the blade is not physically stronger, but is named so because of the stronger leverage you have against another sword here, whereas the weak can be pushed aside easily. Despite this, the weak moves much faster than the strong, and your attacks should ideally be made with this faster-moving portion.

The longsword's edges are also named. When you grip the sword, the edge closest to your second knuckles is the long edge. The edge closest to your forearm is the short edge (other martial art forms use the term true and false edge, respectively). While many would expect to mainly use the long edge, in *Kunst des Fechtens* it is quite common to use both edges in attacks.

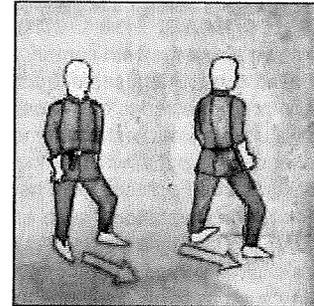
## Basic Footwork

The existing German fencing texts do not go into great detail about proper footwork, so in some cases a reasonable amount of extrapolation is necessary, sometimes drawing from similar martial art forms of the same time period. For the sake of this article, we will only get into the basics.

Different stances will be used for different reasons, but you should start with your feet roughly shoulder-width apart. Take a step forward with one foot, which will point forward, and pivot the back foot so that it points out forty-five degrees or so (for now it does not matter which foot is forward, as this will change depending on circumstances). This will give you balance both forward and backwards as well as side-to-side. Bend the knees slightly, as this will allow you to move much more easily and fluidly (an important aspect often ignored by beginners). For now, keep your weight centered. Stand upright with your body relaxed. Relaxation is very important. Oftentimes beginners tense their shoulders when holding the sword, which results in choppy motions and slowed reactions. In fact, when first practicing footwork, do not hold the sword, as you will most likely become distracted by how you are holding it, which isn't important yet.

The first type of movement will be a simple step forward or backward. Keeping the feet in the same orientation, step forward with the front foot, pushing with the ball of the back foot, and letting the back foot follow so that you finish in the same position you started. Then do the opposite, starting with the rear foot moving back, pushing with the ball of the front foot, which follows after. Do this smoothly, without bobbing the head up and down. This is the simplest type of footwork, and should not take long to master. Once you have practiced this, try moving left and right, as well as diagonally forward and backwards. Afterwards, switch whichever foot is the leading one and practice this again.

The next type of footwork is called the *passing step*, and is also simple. Start in the basic position described above, then pass the rear foot forward in front of the other. Finish in the basic stance, but with a new foot leading. This is a pass forward. To pass back, simply bring back the front foot.



*Passing step*

The passing step can be modified to step diagonally as well, and in fact this is usually how it will be performed to avoid being struck. For example, if you begin in a left foot forward guard, and your opponent cuts to your head, you can pass forward to the right to dodge the sword. In case of large steps, let the left foot trail behind and come back into your guard. Be sure to practice passing with both feet. Again, be sure to practice movement smoothly and fluidly, and finish your steps in a solid, balanced position.

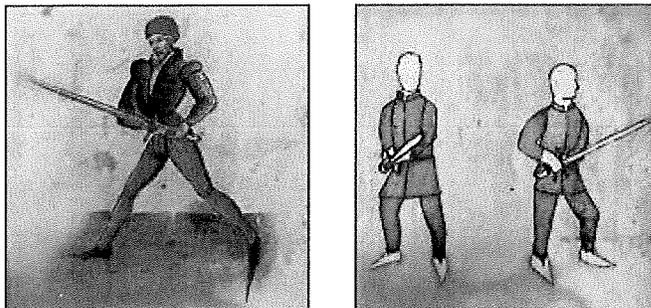
## The Four Guards

When gripping the hilt, place the dominant hand near the guard. The off-hand can hold the grip either near the pommel or can grip the pommel itself. It is obvious from the fencing manuals themselves that masters had different opinions on which grip was best. The Döbinger manuscript mentions that when fighting one should always hold the grip itself, not the pommel:

*And you will also strike harder and truer, with the pommel swinging itself and turning in the strike you will strike harder than if you were holding the pommel. When you pull the pommel in the strike you will not come as perfect or as strongly.*

However, fighters in some *fechtbuch* illustrations are clearly seen gripping the pommel. Experiment with both grips and do whichever makes you feel more comfortable.

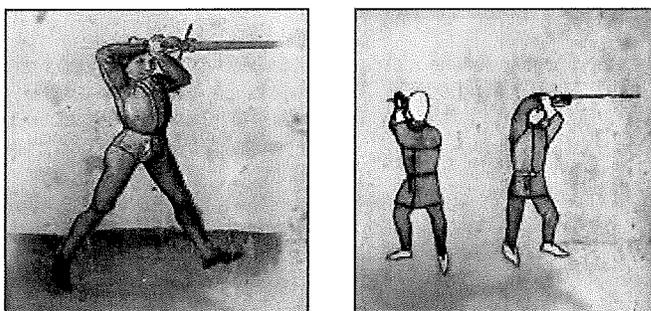
The thumb of the dominant hand is often placed on the flat of the blade to provide control for many techniques. This may feel slightly odd at first, but you will get used to it, and certain cuts require it. When the thumb is on the blade, sometimes it must be flat against the sword. At other times it will naturally roll so that the side is pressed against the flat. There are other times where having the thumb against the blade is not necessary at all. For now, simply do what is most comfortable. Now that we have gripped the sword, there are four primary positions, or guards, in which to stand: the Plow guard (*Pflug*), the Ox guard (*Ochs*), the Roof guard (*Vom Tag*, literally "from the roof"), and the Fool's guard (*Alber*). A guard is essentially a defensive position that also allows you to launch your attacks. Always remain in a guarded position.



*Plow guard (Pflug)*

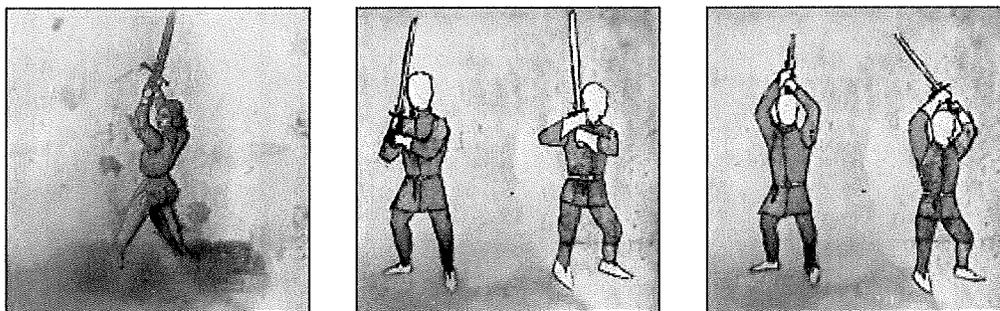
The Plow guard gets its name from the similarity of its blade orientation to a plow. In this guard, hold the sword hilt below your waist, with the tip pointed forward and up towards your opponent's face. The sword will always be on the side of the back foot, so in a right foot forward stance your hilt should be on the left side. Should you switch sides, merely pass forward or back, otherwise you will be twisted up.

The Plow guard will defend the torso against attacks and allow you to make quick thrusts from below. When standing in the Plow on the right side, assuming you are right-handed, the long edge faces down, and on the left side it faces up. Reverse this for left-handers. The thumb will be on the side of the blade that is facing you.



*Ox guard (Ochs)*

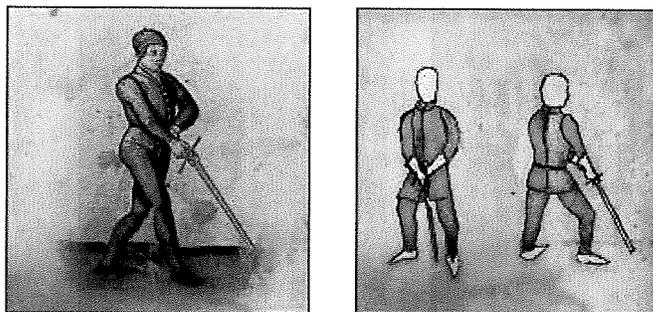
The Ox guard gets its name from the sloping horns of an ox. To take this guard, start in the plow guard and curl your arms up. The sword hilt will be held to the side and slightly above your head, on the side of your back foot. The tip will point forward at your opponent's face. If you switch sides, pass forward or backwards so that the sword is always on the side of the back foot. When standing in the Ox, the edges will be parallel to the ground and, assuming you are right-handed, the long edge will face the right. Your thumb will be on bottom side of the blade. The Ox guard will defend against attacks coming from above and allow you to make quick thrusts from above.



*Roof guard (Vom Tag) — Low and high*

The Roof guard derives its name from the fact that it is poised to strike down from above. To stand in the Roof guard, hold the sword tip up, pointing just slightly back. Your hands and hilt should be above your head. Alternatively, the hilt can be held at the side of your head, but otherwise in the same position. Either way is correct, though if you choose the first, the sword should be in the center, and if you choose the second, the sword should be held on the side of your head that is also on the side of the back foot. The long edge faces your opponent.

Unlike the Ox or Plow, the Roof guard does not protect by intercepting an oncoming blade. Rather, the Roof guard protects by offense. Should an opponent blindly charge in, the Roof guard allows you to make a quick and powerful downward stroke. Your opponent most likely will see this and therefore will have to plan around this.



*Fool's guard (Alber)*

Lastly there is the Fool's guard. Point the tip of your sword forward and down towards the ground. This guard gives the appearance that you are open to attack, hence it "fools" your opponent into attacking. There are many things you can do from this position, such as lifting the tip into a thrust, or stepping aside and cutting up into the arms of your opponent's downward strike. When standing in this guard the long edge faces the ground.

## Attacking

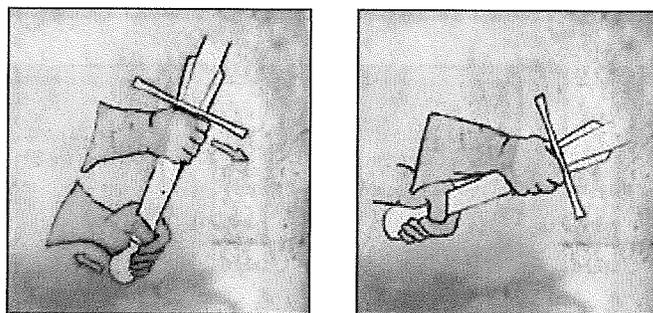
The Liechtenauer tradition speaks of the Three Wounders (*Drei Wünder*)—the strike, the thrust, and the slice—which are the three ways in which to attack an opponent. When to use each must be thoroughly understood.

### The Strike

To strike is to make a hard cut with percussive momentum, unlike a slice (detailed below). This can also be referred to as a cut. Striking with the sword is not just a simple action of swinging the arms. A cut must be controlled and precise, because anytime you attack there is a moment of opportunity for your opponent to strike you. Therefore you must never attack wildly and must always recover into a guarded position.

There are a few important things to keep in mind when cutting. The first is to make sure you are striking with the edge. This may seem obvious, but many beginners have a tendency to twist their sword mid-swing, resulting in a strike with the flat, or they will hit with the edge at an angle where the blade will not easily cut. As you begin the cut, you will always want to extend the arms first. Imagine that you are trying to reach out to strike your opponent, but do not lock the arms in doing this. You will be aiming to strike with the weak of your blade, as it is the faster portion, and therefore it will hit with the most power (despite its name, which is not referring to its use in the cut).

When cutting, the dominant hand will guide the blade in its direction, but the major cutting power comes from the off hand, as it will create the leverage to get the tip moving faster. A simple drill to practice this mechanic is to grip the sword so that it points forward and slightly upwards. Take the off hand and pull up on the pommel. This will cause the tip to lower. When you cut, you will have to balance guiding the sword with a slight lifting of the pommel in order to get a proper cut.

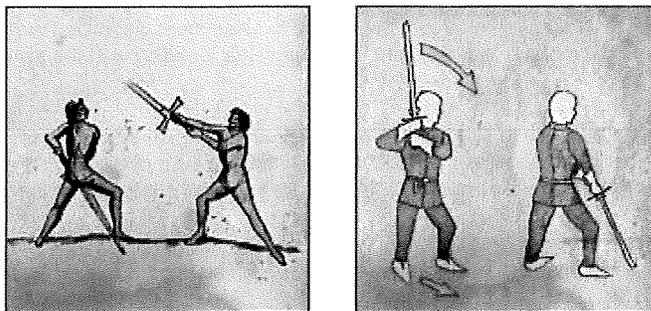


*Leveraging the hilt*

If you only swing with your arms, you are probably fencing too close, and may throw yourself off balance. The cut comes from the body, not the shoulders, and therefore when possible a step should follow after the sword begins to move. You will generally want the sword to finish on the side of the back foot. Let's assume that you are standing in a left foot forward stance and performing a cut that is moving from the right side to the left. You will want to follow the cut with the right foot, ending in a right foot forward guard; therefore, you must make a passing step (in this case we will make the step by moving forward, though one can just as easily pass backwards should the situation demand it). This allows your entire body to be put behind the cut, and more importantly gives much greater control over the weapon. Time the step so that your foot lands at the exact moment you strike your opponent (arms extended), and then relax into a guard (the guard you relax in will be dependent on the direction of the cut).

It is important that you begin to move the sword before you step. If you begin to move your foot first, this is an opening your opponent will see. At the very least it gives the enemy time to defend; at the worst your opponent will strike you. By starting the motion with the sword you are moving the most offensive part of your action first, giving your opponent less time to react. Likewise, your opponent cannot attack without defending now, potentially giving you the advantage.

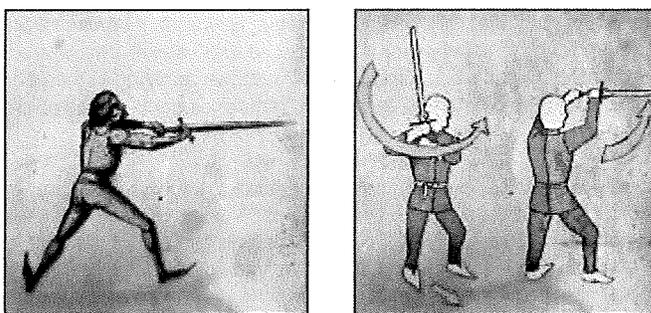
For the moment, we will practice cutting with the long edge only as this tends to be the most natural motion. There are three main types of cuts: the over-cut (*oberhau*), the under-cut (*unterhau*) and the middle-cut (*mittelhau*). Each of these can be made from any guard, but for simplicity we will start out in the Roof guard at first with the left foot forward.



*Over-cut (Oberhau)*

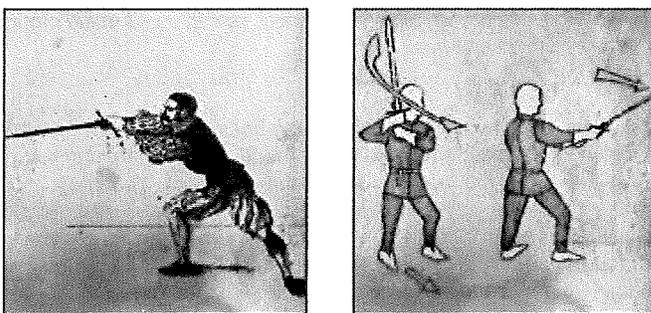
For your first cut, an over-cut, extend your arms as the sword moves downward. Pass forward and finish in the Fool's guard. For the sake of this drill, cut along a slightly diagonal path from upper right to lower left.

After you have practiced the over-cut, practice the under-cut up into the Ox guard. This cut is reminiscent of a golf swing to the casual observer, though the body mechanics are very different. Begin once again in the Roof guard with the left foot forward. As stated above, you should cut so that the sword finishes on the side of the back foot. We are going to cut from lower right to upper left, finishing in the left Ox guard, so that will require a passing step forward. As always, though, the sword must be in motion first.



*Under-cut (Unterhau)*

To make this cut, one cannot simply change into the guard. The tip of the sword must move in an arc to get the tip of the sword up to speed for an effective cut. To achieve this, you will slightly bring the tip back to the side, similar to the aforementioned golf swing, though not nearly as far lest you be struck for leaving yourself open. As you cut, align the long edge to face forward and begin to cut upwards, passing forward so that you strike at the same time your foot lands, extending the arms outwards to reach the opponent from a safe distance, then relaxing into the Ox guard. Your long edge will finish facing upwards, and your right foot will now be forward.



*Middle-cut (Mittelhau)*

Last will be the middle-cut into the left Plow. Begin in the Roof guard and start to make a slightly diagonal, but mostly horizontally cut with the arms extended (but, again, not locked). Pass forward with the right foot and step as you extend to strike. After you strike, continue the motion of the sword into the Plow guard on the left.

Each of these cuts must be performed over and over and over again. They are very simple, yet if you do not have the sense of timing and movement down, you will easily be evaded and struck. A good swordsman has practiced these cuts thousands of times against the air alone, not counting against a still target or a practice partner. Be sure to start out slowly to get the basic mechanics right. Only after you have developed a strong feel for this should you speed up, otherwise you may be training your muscles to do the wrong things.

As mentioned earlier, all three of these cuts can be performed from any guard, and they can also finish in any guard. A simple drill is to go through the three cuts as already described. Pick a cut, pick a guard in which to finish, and perform the cut. Then, from that guard, pick another cut and guard and continue. Occasionally start in a guard and make a cut that finishes in the same guard (for example, start in a left Ox guard and make an under-cut into a right Ox guard). Certain variations will make more sense to use than others, but the important thing for now is to understand the basic movement.

Thrusts will generally be performed in either the Plow or the Ox guards due to the fact that the tip is already pointed forward. To thrust with the sword, extend the sword's tip in a straight line to the target. If you need to close more distance, follow this with a step of the lead foot. As always, lead with the sword, and follow with the body and feet afterwards. Leading with the sword will also make it easier to aim. Recover into a guard after thrusting.

As a general rule, if you are at the appropriate distance to strike with a cut from your guard, do so. However, should your sword be in a position in which the thrust can be made faster, do this instead. You also should thrust if your cut falls short of your opponent. If, for example, you cut down at your opponent, who steps back to avoid the cut, simply turn your cut into a thrust.

### The Slice

The last of the Three Wounders—the slice—is something less than a full-power cut. The edge is placed against an exposed area of your opponent's body (primarily the hands), then pulled or pushed with force to cut. The slice can be used to good effect when there is no room to make a full cut. Imagine you are in the Fool's guard, and your opponent strikes down from above. He closes in very quickly, so you step to the side as you lift your edge into his unarmoured hands, slicing hard into them. This would cause enough of a wound that he would be unlikely to hold the sword any longer, allowing you to finish him.

### Defending

Those who fence "to the touch" often forget that survival is the primary objective of a sword fight. It is one thing to strike your opponent without regard for your own safety, but quite another to defeat your opponent and be able to walk away unscathed.

Merely standing in a guard is not an effective defense. Liechtenauer and all of the masters who followed in his tradition taught that the best way to keep your opponent from hitting you is to hit your opponent first. Therefore you should do your best to maintain the initiative and not simply wait around to react to an attack that may be unpredictable. However, if survival were only a matter of who strikes first, then there would be no need to learn fencing, as whoever is fastest and luckiest will always win. If your opponent takes the initiative you must do everything in your power to take it back. This concept is known as being in the *vor* (the "before" time) or the *nach* (the "after" time). If you are in the "after" timing, you must try to regain the "before" as soon as possible by defending and going back on the offense.

Movement is the most important element of defense. Stepping out of the way of attacks, known as voiding, and immediately attacking from your new position is one of the more efficient means of defense. Unfortunately, voiding alone is not always effective, as quite often your opponent will change the angle of his attack to follow you. So, although, you should not feel that you must make blade contact with your opponent, you will often need to do so in order to set it aside as you void. Remember, you are fighting your opponent, not your opponent's sword. Do not strike the weapon without attacking the person as well. Liechtenauer clearly states:

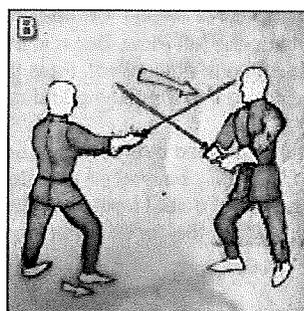
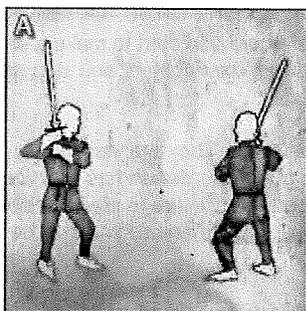
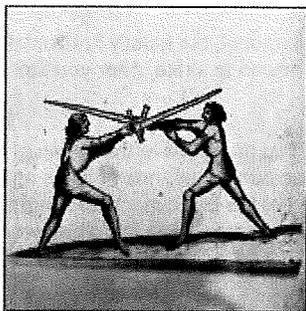
*He who goes after the strike can rejoice little in his art.*

Liechtenauer outlined five "secret" strikes to be used to set aside an opponent's sword, which later teachers referred to as "Master Strikes". These Master Strikes—the Strike of Wrath (*Zornhau*), the Cross Strike (*Zwerchhau*), the Parting Strike (*Scheitelhau*), the Crooked Strike (*Krumphau*) and the Squinting Strike (*Schielhau*)—are the foundation of the finer techniques of longsword.

As a note, the names used here are in English for the sake of clarity for the novice, but the English translations are not always accurate, or can be interpreted in different ways. Because of this, many, if not most, practitioners use the original terminology, and a serious student should at the very least be familiar with those terms.

### Defending the Torso: The Strike of Wrath

The most natural cut for the average person will be to strike diagonally across the body, generally towards the torso of an opponent. This type of strike is actually the first of the five master strikes, the *Zornhau*, or the Strike of Wrath, and the most direct way to counter such an attack is to do the same strike against it. Imagine your opponent strikes at your torso: Your most important maneuver here is to get out of the way to avoid the attack. If you simply pedal backwards, your opponent may follow after you. You should instead step off to the side and forward. If your opponent strikes your left side, step to the right with your right foot. If your opponent strikes your right side, step to the left side with your left foot. Your sword will strike diagonally downwards towards the Plow guard, intercepting the oncoming attack. Make sure to use the strong of your blade to set aside your opponent's, as the weak of your blade will easily be pushed away.



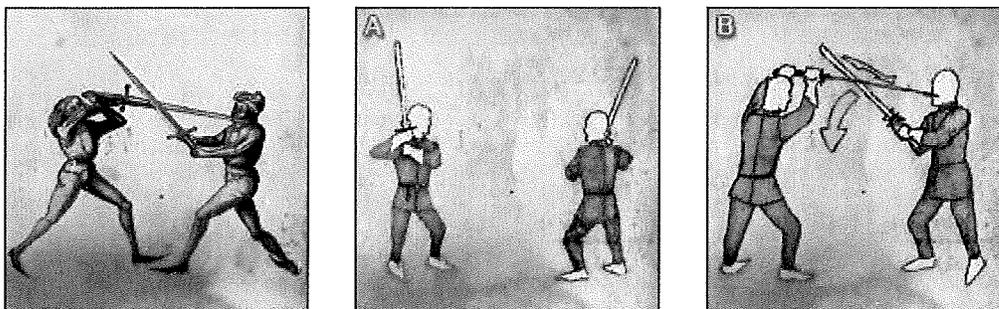
Strike of wrath (*Zornhau*)

Simply defending, however, is never good enough. If you deflect an attack and stand there relieved that you defended yourself, your opponent will not simply give up, dumbfounded that the attack failed. Rather, your opponent will immediately attack you again, and again and again, until you have finally been overwhelmed and unable to move in time. Because of this, your defense must simultaneously be an attack. This is not a block, but a strike at your opponent that happens to also stop your opponent's sword. So when performing this defense, aim for your opponent's upper body at the same time you are setting aside the sword. In an ideal world,

you would always hit at the same time you defend, but if you have found that your blade has not made contact, immediately thrust into the face.

### Defending the Head: The Cross Strike

The *Zwerchau*, or cross strike, can be used to defend against an over-cut because it finishes in the Ox guard. Liechtenauer writes, "the *Zwerchau* takes whatever comes from the roof," implying that strikes coming down from the roof guard are easily countered. To perform the cross strike, you will make a circular horizontal cut into the Ox guard with the hands above the head. Place your thumb against the bottom flat of the blade to control it. If you are right-handed, your strike from right to left will be done with the short edge, and the strike from left to right will be done with the long edge. The reverse is true for left-handers. If you are already in the Ox guard on one side and striking to the opposite side, you will draw a circle with the tip of the sword over your head as if making a large halo.

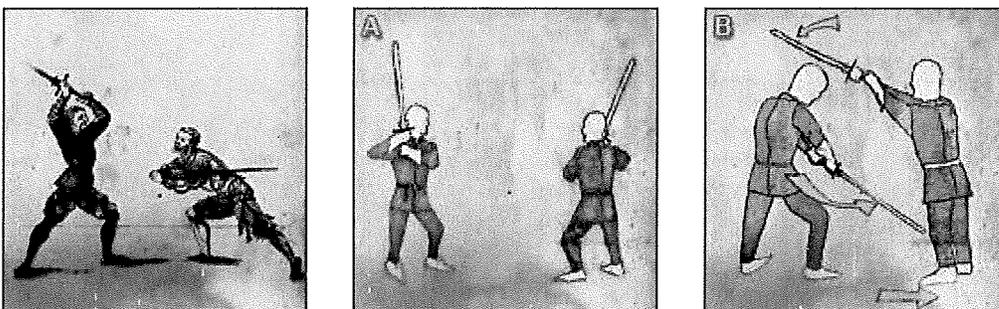


*Cross strike (Zwerchau)*

Imagine your opponent is striking straight down at your head. Remember that your primary concern is to survive, so you will quickly step forward and to the side, as in the preceding example against an attack to the torso. Also, like the preceding example, you must attack simultaneously. Make a cross strike so that the oncoming sword will land on the strong of your blade at the exact same time you strike the opponent's head. It is important to keep the hands up to completely cover the head, and keep the hands high enough to prevent your fingers from being hit. As before, if your strike lands short, immediately turn it into a thrust.

### Defending the Legs: The Parting Strike

So far we have used the Plow guard to defend against an attack to the torso, and we have used the Ox guard to defend against an attack to the head. It would seem logical, then, that to defend against a cut to the legs one would therefore use the Fool's guard, as it lies low. While this is not an impossible thing to do, it is not actually a very good defense, as follow-up attacks from this position will be too slow. The *Schietelhau*, or Parting Strike, offers a much more efficient way of defending the legs.

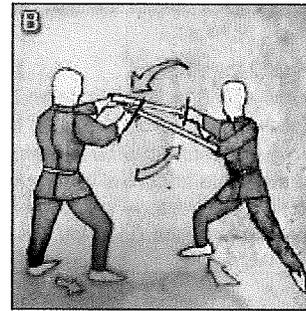
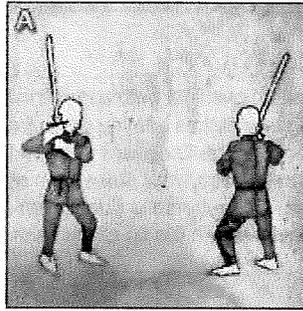
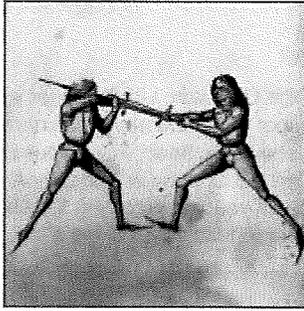


*Parting strike (Scheitelhau)*

One cannot make a cut for the legs without exposing the head. If your opponent attacks your lead foot you simply need to remove that target from reach while simultaneously striking the now-vulnerable head. In this case, blade contact is completely unnecessary, and this reaffirms the point that you should not be chasing your opponent's weapon, but always attack the opponent. The safest way to move the foot from harm is to move it backwards, though you do not want to step so far back that you cannot reach your opponent. Instead take a half step back as you cut. You will want to make sure that your arms stay high for this strike, as you do not want your opponent to make a sudden change upwards and catch your elbows. You will always be able to do this, regardless of how tall your opponent is by virtue of the fact that your shoulders are high and your legs are not. Keep in mind that this can also be done as a thrust should you have started in a guard such as the Plow.

### Voiding an Under-cut: The Crooked Strike

The next Master Strike is the odd but aptly-named *Krumphau*, or Crooked Strike. This strike is crooked because it does not cut straight in front, but rather to the side. The motion of the cut is identical to the Cross Strike, except that rather than cutting with a circular motion above the head, the circular blade motion is performed in front of you, with the edges of the blade facing up and down. To perform the Crooked Strike, turn your blade so that the flat is facing you. If you are right-handed, the long edge cuts to the left, and the short edge to the right. Your thumb will be on the flat of the blade that is facing you. Cut to either side in a windshield-wiper motion. When you step with this cut, step slightly forward and away from the direction you are cutting: i.e. step forward and to the right when the sword is moving to the left, and vice versa.



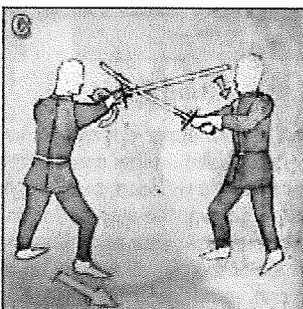
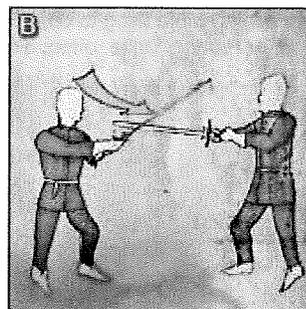
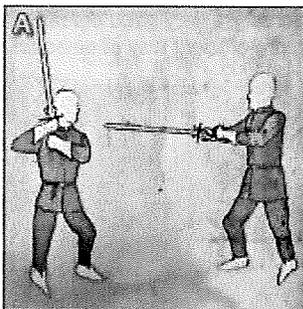
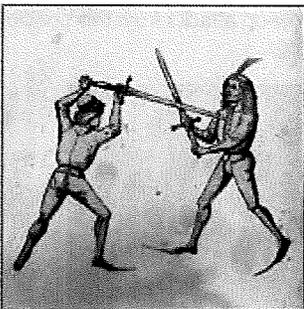
*Crooked Strike (Krumphau)*

This strike works very well to stop a cut from below going up into the Ox. As your opponent starts performing an under-cut, quickly spring out away from it and cut down at the hands, not only stopping the motion of the sword, but also incapacitating your opponent at the same time. Liechtenauer, when describing this technique, said to "*Krump* with nimbleness, throw the point to the hands."

**Dealing with the Extended Blade: The Squinting Strike**

Your opponent may extend the arms and point the tip forward at your face so as to keep you at bay, or to provoke a reaction from you. This position is known as the *langen ort*, or long point, and is a common way to see what your opponent is going to do while keeping a safe distance. You cannot charge forward lest you run into the thrust, and if you strike at the blade, your opponent may simply move the tip around your sword while hitting you. Here we will use the *Schielhau*, or Squinting strike, to defeat this.

The final strike is perhaps the strangest of the strikes, at least superficially. It is performed by striking downward with the short edge on the left side, finishing in either the Ox or the Plow guard, depending on the situation. It is not unlike the Cross strike and Crooked Strike in mechanics, making a circular motion with the tip downwards and at the side of the body. To strike, you will begin by making a move with your sword towards the weak of your opponent's blade, as if you are attempting to strike it. Quickly invert the blade so that the short edge is down and above the sword, and strike downwards against blade and your opponent. If your opponent were closer this would strike your opponent's shoulder, but since your opponent was standing with extended arms, your distance will not allow this. Instead, as the opponent's blade is cleared continue straight forward and thrust at the throat. Liechtenauer wrote it this way: "Squint to the point, and take the throat without fear."

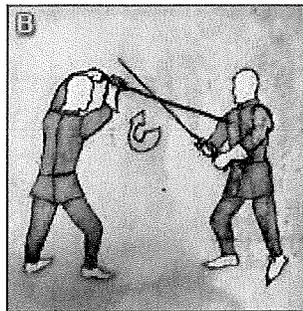
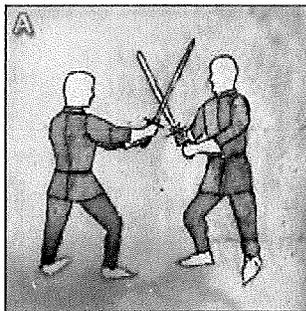
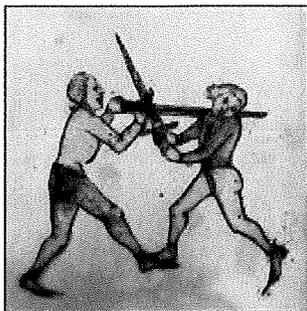


*Squinting strike (Schielhau)*

It is vitally important that this action is done fluidly without pauses. The illustrations shown break this action up to make it easier to understand, but any hesitation between movements will result in your opponent having time to respond to you, which could be fatal. The strike begins with the arms extended to feint a strike at the tip of the sword, but flow through as you invert your blade to clear your opponent's as you flow into the thrust.

**Regaining the Advantage from the Bind: Winding**

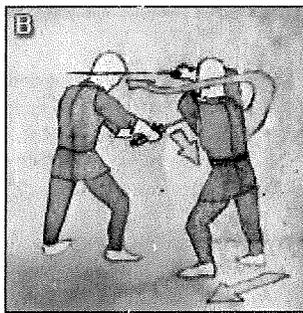
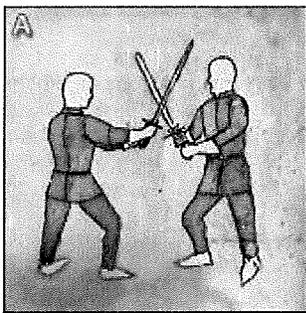
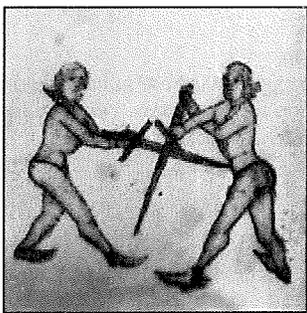
Things don't always go as planned once blades make contact (blade contact is known as being at the bind). Imagine that your blade meets your opponent's and neither blade can set aside the other or continue forward. When this happens, you should not attempt to struggle and push against the blade as demonstrated in many fantasy movies. Rather, you must regain the advantage of the strong of your blade. Curl your arms up into the Ox guard with your strong against his weak (an action known as *Winding* or *Winden*), then thrust, or cut with the short edge if you find yourself too close to thrust.



Winding (Winden)

**Reacting to Pressure at the Bind: Feeling through the Blade**

Chaos can easily ensue once blades meet, and it is important to be able to feel your opponent's intentions through blade contact. This concept is known as *fühlen* (literally "feeling"). Your opponent can do one of two things at the bind: he can use strength to push through your sword, known as being hard at the sword, or he can relax his pressure, very likely to move around the sword to strike, known as being soft at the sword. It is important to immediately be able to feel which of these two actions your opponent is taking, then take the opposite action before your opponent has managed to take the initiative from you. If you are unable to fully displace your opponent's sword and decide to attack to the other side (being soft at the sword), your opponent could feel this and continue through with his original attack (being hard at the sword) and strike as you pull back your sword. Likewise, if you are hard at the sword and pushing it aside, your opponent could then go soft in order to move around and strike you someplace else.



"Feeling" (Fühlen)

Consider this scenario: You strike at your opponent, and your opponent steps out and directly opposes your sword with his own. At the split second your blades make contact, you feel your opponent is knocking your sword aside, so you go with the flow: You let your opponent push your tip away, and quickly snap the tip around to strike on the other side in a Cross strike. Your opponent, because he was pushing against a sword that suddenly yielded to his pressure, lost control of his sword due to the forward momentum and therefore could not recover in time to defend.

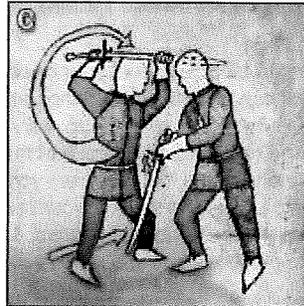
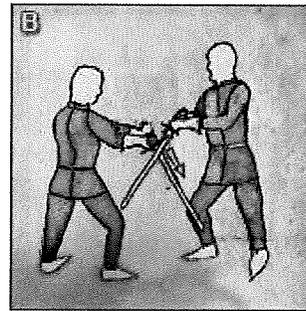
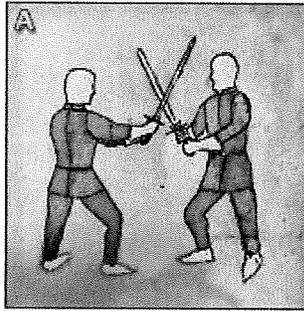
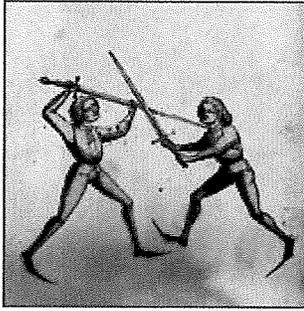
**Closing Distance: Going to Half-sword**

There are times when the length of a weapon can be more of a hindrance than a help. If your opponent gets in very close to you, it is too hard to effectively swing your blade. There are many ways of dealing with this problem, including striking with the pommel or moving to grapple, which relies on applying unarmed combat techniques to the sword.

Another way to deal with closed distance is to shorten your sword—in effect, converting it to a short spear—by grabbing the blade with the off hand. Doing so is known as going to the half-sword (*halbschwert*). Half-swording was primarily used in armoured combat in order to guide and support the tip of the blade when thrusting into openings at the joints of armour, but sometimes it is necessary in unarmoured combat.

Many would ask how one can grasp a blade without wounding the hand. First, make sure you grab the blade firmly so that the hand does not slide around. This will probably be the most important element in preventing a cut. The pressure of the hand should be on the flats, not the edges, which will also make a difference. In addition, when looking at the types of swords used in the masters of the Liechtenauer tradition, it would seem they are using tapered blades, such as the Oakeshott Type XVa or Type XVII. Such blades, while sharp, had edge geometries that found a compromise between cutting and thrusting, and therefore the edge geometry is not as acute as would be on something such as a modern kitchen knife. In addition to all of this, medieval hands were probably rougher and more callused than most modern hands, which do not see as much manual labor. Wearing leather gloves is not a bad idea when practicing half-swording. Although most fight books show bare hands in use, there are occasional references to gloves.

When grasping the blade, use the off-hand, holding the sword so that the thumb sides of the hands are facing each other, in the same way one would grasp a bar to lift weights. The dominant hand remains on the hilt where it can still maneuver the sword easily.

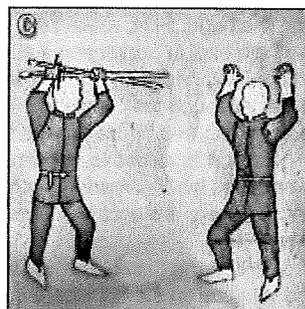
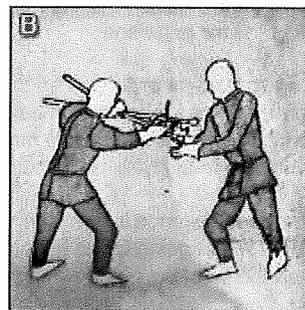
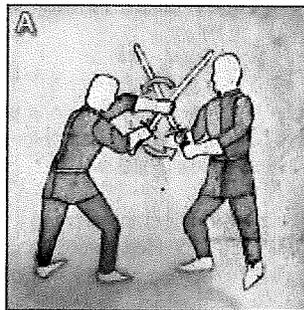


*Half-swording (Halbschwert)*

In this scenario you and your opponent have crossed blades but are fairly close together. Your opponent is hard at the sword, so you go soft, very much in the same way as in the previous situation. Because of the close distance, do not simply lower your tip to go soft, as your opponent may press through and strike you. Rather, you will use your cross guard to knock your opponent's blade to the side while going soft, which will guide the blade away from you. Immediately bring your tip around, as if going to perform a Cross strike, but instead grab onto the blade to shorten it and thrust.

**Disarming: Using the Half-sword**

Half-swording can also be used to disarm an opponent. In the previous scenario, you and your opponent are close as your blades meet, and if you pull back your opponent will hit you. Instead, you let go with your off hand to grasp the unmoving blades where they meet in the center. Make sure you grab the blades with your thumb on the bottom side. From here you will use leverage by pulling with the off hand and pushing with the dominant hand which is still at the hilt, as if turning a wheel. Hook your pommel underneath your opponent's arms as you turn this wheel, and as your opponent's arms become twisted and let go of the hilt, immediately pass back and threaten your opponent with the swords in the Ox guard.



*The disarm*

This disarm must be smooth and seamless. Any hesitation in this process will result in your opponent twisting the sharp blade in your hand and breaking free. Disarms may look flashy, but they are merely a choice to be made in an instant, in exactly the right circumstance, when you have few other options. Deciding in advance that you want to rush in and take someone's sword from their hands most likely will result in the loss of your fingers.

## Practice

As with all martial arts, merely going through the motions a few times is not enough. Learning must be augmented with regular practice and study. The ideal situation is to find an instructor, though this unfortunately is not always a ready solution. The next best solution is to attend a workshop or travel to a class a few times so an instructor can show you firsthand how these techniques work. If neither option is available, you'll need to crack the books and study hard. Finding a practice partner will help.

Finding a partner can simply mean getting a friend or three to get together and practice, or it could require some searching. The internet has made such searches easier. You can also check local recreation centers or even community colleges, as sometimes there are local clubs looking for members. You'll never know until you check them out.

Regardless of how you find your training partners, make certain that you are comfortable working with them, or at least comfortable with communicating with them if something bothers you. It is a sad fact that there are some individuals in this world who just want to hurt someone else, and under no circumstances should you feel obligated to work with such a person. Likewise, there are some people who are usually well-intentioned, but can sometimes let their ego get in the way of their judgment. If you feel that someone will not listen to you when you have safety concerns, then you need to find a new partner.

## Training and Safety Gear

There is no set-in-stone way to practice *Kunst des Fechtens*, and defining your goals will ultimately determine your method of training. If you join a group, its members probably will already have established methodologies and safety gear requirements that you should follow. Training gear is not standard, and if you are training alone, or starting up your own group, you will have many options from which to choose.

The first element most likely will be the sword, of course. The more accurate your training tool is, the greater your understanding of its use will be. However, you can learn the basics with a yardstick, and many beginners have gotten very creative in making cheap training swords (by modifying sports equipment such as lacrosse sticks, for example). Shinai, the bamboo swords used for Japanese fencing or *Kendo*, are a popular cheap alternative, as they are roughly the right size for a European longsword, and provide a degree of safety when speeding things up. Shinai, however, are lightweight, have no discernable edges and require modification to create a functional cross-guard.

It was common practice in the Middle Ages to practice with wooden swords known as wasters (perhaps named so because they could be used and abused, then easily replaced when broken). Wasters are cheaper than steel swords, allow a degree of realism in weight (though they are often lighter and not balanced as a real sword), have obvious edges and also allow the use of the guard. There are many sources for wooden wasters if you don't want to make your own, but you must be aware that many decorative wooden swords are not suited to the type of rigorous use your training sword will see. Investigate materials and construction methods to be certain your waster is solidly built.

Recently, many students of the sword have started using aluminum wasters. These swords allow the feel of metal on metal, and because aluminum is light, these wasters can have very thick cross-sections to allow for thick (and therefore safer) edges. Aluminum wasters tend to be lighter than typical steel longswords, and while the feel of metal on metal is more realistic than wood on wood, it should be noted that there is still a different feel. And although aluminum wasters may last longer than wooden wasters, they are slightly more expensive than commercially available wooden wasters, and cannot be used against non-aluminum training weapons.

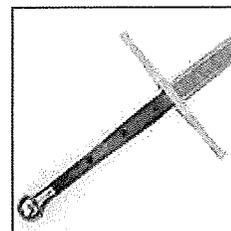
Blunted steel swords are probably what most practitioners will end up using in the long run, as these are the closest approximations to sharpened steel. As with other training tools, researching your options before you buy will save you trouble later. Some swords are very cheap for a good reason. Others provide a decent value for the price. It is quite possible that you will buy a sword only to find that later down the road you will want to invest in a nicer one. On the other hand, you may want to buy quality first and not have to worry about needing a replacement later.

If you are only practicing the techniques slowly (and at the beginning, you absolutely should), you will need very little safety gear outside of caution and common sense. Once you start putting more speed and intent behind your strikes, you will probably desire more protection. Many practitioners wear standard sport fencing masks. A fencing mask will not protect against a full powered strike from a waster, nor do they protect the back of the head. For controlled drills, though, they not only will protect your head (the eyes in particular), but will allow your partner to be less self-conscious about accidentally not holding back enough on a face thrust or the like.

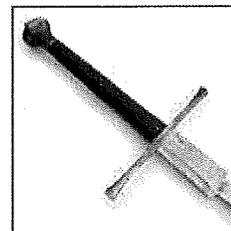
The hands are often struck in practice, whether accidentally or on purpose, and some form of hand protection is a smart idea. The best solution is a pair of fitted, fully articulated plate gauntlets, though this is generally not economically feasible for most beginners. Simple leather gloves, particularly long cuffed ones, provide good defense against incidental scratches, and will resist burrs from metal swords or splinters from wooden ones. Many styles of padded gloves are available, from sport fencing gloves to lacrosse gloves, and you will have to experiment with the balance you want to strike between safety and mobility. If you intend to try unchoreographed free-play or bouting with your partner, you will need add some form of padding for the body as well as upgraded protection for your head and hands.

## Advanced Longsword Fencing

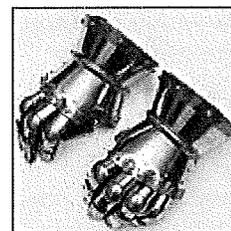
While going into the specifics of how to free fence is a broad topic, and largely dependent on the people you bout with, there are a few things to keep in mind, safety above all. Don't rush to free-fence. Learn the techniques first, so that you are not just flailing around,



Aluminum longsword waster



Steel training longsword



Hourglass gauntlets

playing "tag" with a sword. This will not only allow you to gain far more out of bouts, but also will ground you in safe sparring principles. Always remember that when you begin fencing, you are entering a bond of sacred trust. Don't betray your partner by being dangerous.

Fencing is not realistic swordplay. Many unrealistic elements come into play, such as the fact that the swords do not actually cut into a person, the uncertainty of whether a cut would truly stop the fight or not, the safety factors, and even the psychological effect of being in a friendly bout versus a deadly encounter. Likewise, there are many tools for free-fencing, and all of them are unrealistic simulators. The only thing that handles like sharp steel is sharp steel, which is hardly a safe option for regular bouts.

The best way to really study this art is to use multiple tools to gain a broad understanding of the different aspects of fighting. For instance, padded swords and shinai do not handle very realistically, but allow a greater speed of bouts that test reflexes and reaction under pressure. Wooden wasters have wide round edges, but are very stiff on the thrust, and all actions must be pulled. Steel swords must be pulled even more than wooden wasters, and while feeling the most realistic in binds and general actions, must still be used with great caution for the safety of your partner, an element that of course is nonexistent in the true form of the martial art.

Fencing is merely one method of learning, and must be tempered with other methods. In addition to a waster or blunt steel sword, for example, you will also at some point want a sharp sword for test cutting. Test cutting is not necessary for a beginner, but in the long run it is important to understand exactly how the sword acts when cutting through a target. It will also test your edge alignment and form.

Since different groups have different focuses, it is important when starting out that you define your own goals. Are you learning out of idle curiosity? Is this for fitness? Is this to compliment a related hobby such as stage combat or live action role-playing? Is this for reenactment? Do you desire to help rediscover a lost martial art? Defining your goals will help you decide exactly what route to pursue.

## Conclusion

The art of the sword has a tradition rooted deep in European history. For years, the western martial arts have been assumed to be brutish, at best, requiring little skill. A study of the period treatises, however, shows a diversity of styles and methodologies, and makes clear that the practitioners of these arts relied on strategy, technique and efficiency to overcome their opponents. To truly study the art, one must not only learn a few moves and counters, but must actually study the original treatises, because it is only through these treatises that one can really understand what the original masters of these arts intended. We modern practitioners will never see a real sword fight, and therefore it is vital to rely on the words of those who did see these fights, and whose lives depended on the skills laid down in the art forms. Studying their works is to revive their fighting spirit and martial intelligence, and gives the western martial arts new meaning for a modern world.

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## About the Author

Bill Grandy is an instructor of Historical European Swordsmanship and sport fencing at the Virginia Academy of Fencing. He has held a strong passion (obsession?) for swords and swordsmanship for as long as he can remember. He admits that this passion comes from a youth spent playing Dungeons and Dragons, but he'll only admit that if there are no girls around.

## Sources

Hanko Döbringer translation from David Lindholm of the Association for Renaissance Martial Arts

Sigmund Ringeck and Johannes Leichtenauer translations from Christian Tobler of the Order of the Selohaar. Translations and interpretations can be found in his books *Secrets of German Medieval Swordsmanship* (Chivalry Bookshelf, 2002) and *Fighting with the German Longsword* (Chivalry Bookshelf, 2004)

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## Additional Notes

Quotations from Johannes Liechtenauer taken from Christian Tobler's translation. Quotations from Hanko Döbringer taken from David Lindholm's translation.

## Acknowledgements

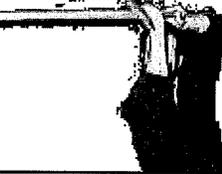
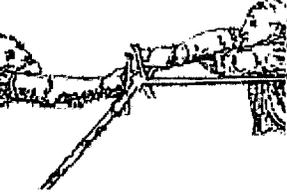
Historical illustrations are based on the originals from: Peter von Danzig's fechtbuch, 1452; Solthurner Fechtbuch; Codex Wallerstein; Hans Talhoffer; Paulus Hector Mair's *Opus Amplissimum de Arte Athletica*

Original illustrations created by Nathan Robinson and are based on Bill Grandy's sketches

Special thanks goes to David Rowe and Robert Busch who posed for the photographs that inspired Bill's sketches

## A Concise Dictionary of Terms Used in the German Longsword Tradition

<b>A</b>	
Abhauwen	Cutting Away
Ablauffen	Running Off
Abschneiden	Slicing Off
Absetzen	Catching
Abzug	Withdrawal
After	See States of Timing.
Alber	Fool
Approach	See Onset
Attack	Onset
Auffangen	Catching
Ausreissen	Wrenching
Austretten	Stepping Out
<b>B</b>	
Barring	<p><i>Controlling Handwork</i>: An action that blocks off the opponent's sword. Barring and crossing over refer to crossing one's hands so as to place one's blade perpendicularly across one's opponent's (the action typically happens from the right side). Shooting over refers to the action of sliding the blade over the opponent's, ending forte to forte, typically as a followup to crossing over.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>sperren</i>: Egenolph 7v; Meyer 22v. Cf. also its use in Meyer's rapier section.</li> <li>• <i>überschrenken</i>: Meyer 54v, 55v, 59r</li> </ul>
Before	See States of Timing.
Binding	<p><i>Defensive Handwork</i>: A state of engagement with the opponent's sword, usually brought about when one combatant has attacked and the other has parried. Once in the bind position, the combatant can remain with blades in contact, called remaining (<i>bleiben</i>) [Meyer 17v]; here he can take the opportunity to sense his opponent's intentions through the nature of the pressure on his blade, called feeling (<i>fühlen</i>) [Ringeck 21r, 38r-v; Meyer 17v].</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>anbinden</i>: Egenolph 9v; Mair (Vienna) 28r; Meyer 17v, 41r, 42r, 64r</li> <li>• <i>binden</i>: Starhemberg 36v, Meyer 59v</li> </ul>
Bindt	Haft (grip), part of the hilt; see Parts of the Weapon.
Bladework	The early sources suggest that cuts are to be dealt powerfully, with a style in which the cuts are delivered with the arms fully extended, striking well in at the opponent's body and head rather than at his sword.
Bleiben	Remaining; see Binding
Blindhauw	Blind Cut
Blind Cut	<p><i>Secondary Cut</i>: A winding-through maneuver designed to draw the opponent to one side, followed by a snapping attack to the opposite side.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Blindhauw, blendt-, blind-</i>: Meyer 14r, 61r; cf. 2:12v</li> </ul>
Blocking	<p><i>Slicing Handwork</i>: A "sticky-hands" use of the slice in Meyer, where one keeps one's forte on the opponent's arm or weapon until an opportune opening arises.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>verstüllen</i>: Meyer 22v</li> </ul>
Breaking Through	<p><i>Controlling Handwork</i>: ?From a bind, to force through the opponent's weapon.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>durchbrechen</i>: Meyer 36r.1, 38r.2, 41r.2</li> </ul>
Brechfenster	Break-Window; see Window
<b>C</b>	
Catching	<p><i>Defensive Handwork</i>: A simple form of parry in which the opponent's attack is caught by interposing one's own weapon rather than set off with a counterstroke.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>auffangen</i>: Meyer 16v, 37v, 42v</li> <li>• <i>absetzen</i>: Ringeck 51r; Starhemberg 30r; Egenolph 13r; Mair (Vienna) (= <i>avertere</i>) 13r, 35v, 52r; Cgm 3712 123 ff.; Meyer 18v, 51r, 51v</li> </ul>
Catching Over	<p><i>Close-Quarters Handwork</i>: To snag the pommel over the opponent's arm or sword.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>übergreifen</i>: Meyer 21r.2, 50r.3, 51r.2, 63r</li> </ul>

Change		<p><i>Secondary Guard:</i> A guard with the hilt near to the belly, the point hanging down to the side at more or less a right angle to the line of encounter, the short edge facing the opponent.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Wechsel:</i> Mair (Vienna) 18r?, 35r?, 63v?; Meyer 8r, 22v, 42r ff.; right-hand: 26r, 42r, 51r, 55r; left-hand: 64v</li> </ul>
Change Cut	<p><i>Secondary Cut:</i> A cut that moves from one quarter to another.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Wechselhauw; Wechsler:</i> Talhoffer 1467: 2; Mair (Vienna) 33r (= <i>mutatorius</i>); Meyer 14v; cf. 2:14r.</li> </ul>	
Changing	<p><i>Deceiving Handwork:</i> To change the line of attack from one target to another during an attack. This maneuver is called changing through or going through when executed under the opponent's weapon.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>wechseln, Wechsel:</i> Mair (Vienna) 62r; Meyer 17v, 21r, 62r</li> <li>• <i>durchwechseln</i> Döbringer 48r; Ringeck 41r; Starhemberg 30v; Mair (Vienna) 61r; Meyer 21r, 21v, 42r.1, 30v, 49v, 50v, 52v, 53r, 54v-55r</li> </ul>	
Changing Through	see Changing	
Chasing	<p><i>Miscellaneous Handwork:</i> An attack made once the opponent has already gathered for or delivered an attack, so that the combatant is in the state of the After.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>nachreisen:</i> von Danzig 27v ff.; Mair (Vienna) 5v ff., 26v (= <i>instantia</i>), 82v (= <i>ratio urgendi hostem insequendo progressu</i>); Cgm 3712 120r ff.; Meyer 17v, 21v (2x), 26v, 36r, 38v, 51r, 55v, 59r-59v</li> </ul>	
Chief Guards	The four principal guards in the German longsword tradition: High; Ox; Plow; and Fool.	
Circle	<p><i>Deceiving Handwork:</i> An attack in which the combatant rotates the sword more or less parallel to the line of encounter to rake the opponent's side vertically with the short edge.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Zirckel, Zürckel:</i> Meyer 18v, 20v, 35r.3, 36r, 40v, 47v, 49v, 51v, 53r, 53v; cf. also 26r.1, 33r.1</li> </ul>	
Clashing Cut		<p><i>Secondary Cut:</i> A short-edge cut in which the hands point upward and the sword crosses in front of the body at an angle to the line of encounter.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Glietzhauw, Glützhauw:</i> Meyer 13r, 16r, 35r, 51v</li> </ul>
Closing	See Running In	
Codex Wallerstein	A manuscript compiled some time in the 15 <sup>th</sup> century from a variety of sources, some of which could date as early as the late 14 <sup>th</sup> century. This text has several sections on unarmored longsword combat.	
Controlling Maneuvers	Handwork	
Counter-cutting	<i>Defensive Handwork:</i> The use of a counter-cut to parry the opponent's attack.	
Crooked Cut		<p><i>Master Cut:</i> A cut delivered from the right, bringing the sword counterclockwise around the hilt at right angles to the line of encounter.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Krumphauw, Krumm-; Krump:</i> Ringeck 24v ff.; Starhemberg 17r ff.; Mair (Vienna) 1v (= <i>ictus curvus</i>), 10r; Jörg Wilhalm 3711 10r-v (=3712 105r-v); Meyer 12v, 40r, 47r, 47v-51r, 52v, 54v, 55r; cf. 2:9v</li> </ul>
Cross Cut	<p><i>Miscellaneous Attacks:</i> A pair of Wrath Cuts delivered from each side.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Kreutzhauw:</i> Mair (Vienna) 5r, 7r, 18v, 24v (= <i>ictus cruciatus</i>)</li> </ul>	
Crossbar	Part of the hilt; see Parts of the Weapon.	
Crossed Guard		<p><i>Secondary Guard:</i> A guard in which the arms are forward, and the sword hangs at 90° to the line of encounter.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Schrankhut:</i> Döbringer 32r, 48v; Ringeck 25v, 51v; Starhemberg 17r-v; Mair (Vienna) 32v, 54r (= <i>custodia cancellata</i>); Meyer 8r, 40r</li> </ul>

Crossguard	Crossbar, part of the hilt; see Parts of the Weapon.
Crossing Over	see Barring
Crowding	see Chasing
Crown	<i>Defensive Handwork</i> : (1) In Mair, holding the sword in the half-sword position and catching the incoming attack with it. (2) In Meyer, a form of catching in which the incoming attack is caught on the combatant's quillons, which are held horizontal above the combatant's head. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Kron, Krone</i>: Ringeck 20r, 33r ff.; Starhemberg 25r; Mair (Vienna) 34r, 52r, 55r ff., 59r; Jörg Wilhalm 3711 41r ff. (=3712 135r ff.); Meyer 21v, 35v, 60v, 62r</li> </ul>
Crown Cut	<i>Secondary Cut</i> : In Meyer, this is a short-edge cut executed from the Crown parry. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Kronhauw</i>: Egenolph 5v; Meyer 14r</li> </ul>
Cut	<i>Attacks</i> : An attack delivered with the long or short edge of the blade, normally with the foible. <i>Miscellaneous Handwork</i> : A cut delivered to cover the combatant's retreat from engagement.
Cutting Away	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>sich weg hauwen</i>: Meyer 2r, 38v.1, 53r.3</li> <li>• <i>hauwen sich von</i>: Meyer 33v.1, 50r.4, 50v.1</li> </ul>
Cutting Through	<i>Miscellaneous Attacks</i> : An action in which the sword sweeps through before the opponent. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>durchstreichen</i> ("slashing through"): Ringeck 50v; Egenolph 13r; Meyer 14v, 23r, 26r.1, 34r, 42r.4, 51r.2, 53v.1, 60v.2, 62r.3</li> <li>• <i>auffstreichen</i> ("slashing up"): Ringeck 49r ff.; Egenolph 11r; Mair (Vienna) 35r (= <i>vibrare</i>), 50r (= <i>vibrare sursum</i>), 52v; Meyer 27v.1, 28v.1, 29r.1, 31v.1, 33v.1, 33r.1, 42v.1, 63v.1</li> </ul>
<b>D</b>	
von Danzig, Peter	Author of a text on armored combat dating from 1452. The same manuscript (known as the Starhemberg Fechtbuch) contains unattributed commentaries on Liechtenauer based in part on an earlier Ringeck text.
Day	see High
Deceiving	A general word for all kinds of deceptive maneuvers, but especially for one in which the combatant makes the opponent believe the attack will come in one area, but brings it home in another. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>verführen</i>: Meyer 18v, 38v, 40v, 47v, 50r, 54r</li> </ul>
Deep	A term used in the German manuals to indicate the angulation of one's blade well around that of the opponent.
Devices	Attack combinations designed to get past the opponent's defenses.
Division	see Targets
Döbringer, Hanko	Author of the earliest surviving commentaries on Liechtenauer's verses, dating from 1389.
Double step	<i>Footwork</i> : Meyer's double step actually consists of three steps, lunge-stepping with one foot away from the other, gathering the other toward it, and lunge-stepping with the first foot again. <i>Deceiving Handwork</i> : A parried long-edge attack followed with a secondary attack behind the opponent's blade
Doubling	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>duplieren, doplieren</i>: Ringeck 24r; Starhemberg 16r ff., 19v, 20r, 23r, 28r, 32r, 36v; Mair (Vienna) 6v, 20v, 33v; Meyer 19r, 60r</li> </ul>
Duplieren	Doubling
Durchbrechen	Breaking Through
Durchgehn	Going Through; see Changing
Durchhauwen	Cutting Through
Durchstreichen	Slashing Through; see Cutting Through
Durchwinden	Winding Through
Durwechselln	Changing Through; see Changing
<b>E</b>	
Egenolph	The publisher of a printed German text from 1529 containing a section on the longsword, with woodcuts and with passages from Liechtenauer.
Einlauffen	Running In
Einhorn	Unicorn
Eisenport	Iron Gate
Erwischen	Evading
Eussere Nym	Outside Taking

Evading	<i>Defensive Handwork</i> : Evading an attack by moving the body in such a way as to make it miss. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>erwischen?</i>: Meyer 47r</li> <li>• <i>entfallen</i>: Meyer 59v.1</li> </ul>
<b>F</b>	
Failing	<i>Deceiving Handwork</i> : A cut that deliberately misses its target. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>fehlen</i> ("miss"): Meyer 8r, 19v, 30v, 44r, 55v, 56v, 57r, 58r</li> <li>• <i>Fehler</i>: Ringeck 29v ff.; von Danzig 22r; Egenolph 5v; Mair (Vienna) 3v, 6v, 19r, 30v (= <i>ictus erraticus</i>); Meyer 49v, 56v, 57r, 58r.</li> </ul>
False edge	see Short edge
Feeling	see Binding
<i>Fehlen</i>	Failing
Flick	<i>Miscellaneous Attacks</i> : A flicking cut with the tip of the sword, most often delivered with the short edge or (in Meyer) the flat. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Schnall</i> ("flick"): Meyer 21r, 31v, 49v, 50r, 51r</li> <li>• <i>Schneller</i> ("flicker"): Meyer 14v, 37v</li> </ul>
<i>Fliegelhauw</i>	Wing-Cut
Flitting	<i>Deceiving Handwork</i> : A pulling that happens before blade contact. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>verfliegen, -fligen, -flügen</i>: Meyer 7v, 18v, 30v, 33v?, 34v, 36r, 38v, 45v, 47v, 50v, 51r, 57r, 59v</li> </ul>
Foible	The part of the blade past the midpoint, used for attacks at distance. See Parts of the Weapon.
Fool	 <i>Chief Guard</i> : A guard in which the sword is held in front of the body with the point directed toward the ground in the direction of the opponent, short edge upwards. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Alber</i>: Döbringer 32r; Ringeck 34v; Starhemberg 26r, 34r, 34v; Lew 29r; Mair (Vienna) 4v, 25v; Jörg Wilhelm 3711 12r-v (=3712 107r-v); Meyer 7v, 19r, 21v.2, 21v.1</li> </ul>
Footwork	The most systematic discussion of footwork is to be found in Meyer, who distinguishes forward, back, and side steps (all of which can be found throughout the tradition), as well as double steps, gathering steps, and volte steps. See also pass step.
Forte	The closer part of the blade, used for techniques requiring leverage. See Parts of the Weapon.
<i>Fühlen</i>	Feeling; see Binding
<b>G</b>	
Gathering step	<i>Footwork</i> : Bringing one foot toward the other, typically to prepare for a step on the other foot.
<i>Gefeß</i>	Quillons (crossbar), part of the hilt; see Parts of the Weapon.
<i>Gerade Häuw</i>	Straight Cuts
Gladiatoria	The earliest family of combat manuals to combine images with substantial texts, dating from the first half of the 15 <sup>th</sup> century.
<i>Glützhauw</i>	Clashing Cut
Going Through	see Changing
Grip	Haft, part of the hilt; see Parts of the Weapon.
Grip	 Throughout the tradition, the right hand is at the top of the grip, next to the crossbar; the left hand grasps the pommel, or the grip just inside the pommel.
Gripping Over	<i>Miscellaneous Handwork</i> : To let some of one's right-hand fingers go over the quillon. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>übergreifen</i>: Egenolph 6v; Meyer 22v, 43r (2x)</li> </ul>
Guards	Standardized positions from which to begin an encounter.
<b>H</b>	
Haft	Part of the hilt; see Parts of the Weapon.
<i>Halb Schwerdt</i>	Half-Sword
Half-Sword	 <i>Close-Quarters Handwork</i> : This technique involves releasing the left hand from the pommel and grasping the blade. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>halb Schwerdt</i>: Ringeck 36r-v, 53v-54r</li> <li>• <i>kurtz Schwerdt</i>: Talhoffer 1467: 39 ff; Egenolph 14v ff.</li> </ul>

<i>Handarbeit</i>	Handwork
Handwork	<i>Stages of Combat:</i> The Handwork consists of the actions that take place once the swords have engaged. It is also called the Middle or War. At this stage, attacks are usually shortened, using the short edge and emphasizing the middle and forte of the blade.
<i>Hangen</i>	Hanging
<i>Hangetort</i>	Hanging Point
Hanging	<p><i>Defensive handwork:</i> This term can refer to a number of actions executed with the blade at an incline (mostly downward to the point). One of its most frequent manifestations is a technique in which the blade slopes downward over an opponent's guard to attack him.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>hangen, hengen:</i> Ringeck 46v; Starhemberg 36r, 37r ff.; Mair (Vienna) 22r- v, 24v (= <i>inclinatio</i>), 48r; Jörg Wilhalm 3711 36v ff. (=3712 130v ff.); Meyer 22r, 61r, 63r-63v, 64r</li> </ul>
Hanging Point	 <p><i>Secondary Guard:</i> A guard that appears in 16<sup>th</sup> century sources, with the hilt extended forward, point down and forward.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Hangetort:</i> Meyer 9r, 39v, 61r</li> <li>• <i>Hangend ort:</i> Egenolph 7v; Mair (Vienna) (= <i>mucro pendens</i>) 1:1r, 6v, 10r ff., 18v, 19r, 37r</li> </ul>
Hard bind	An opponent who commits strongly to a parry is called being "hard" in the bind. The sources recommend using "softness" (such as pulling) against an opponent who is hard in the bind.
<i>Heft</i>	Haft, part of the hilt; see Parts of the Weapon.
<i>Hendtrucken</i>	Pressing the Hands
<i>Hengen</i>	Hanging
High	 <p><i>Chief Guard:</i> In the 15<sup>th</sup> century sources, there are two versions of this guard: one has the sword on the shoulder, the other has it stretched out above the head.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Tag:</i> Meyer 6v, 11v, 31r ff., 53v, 55r</li> <li>• <i>vom Tag(e):</i> Döbringer 27r-v, 32r; Ringeck 34r-v, 35r, 52v; Starhemberg 18v, 19r, 25v-26r, 26v, 27v; Lew 29r; Mair (Vienna) 4v (= <i>habitus qui a similitudine pastorum factus cum baculis recta innituntur, ictus qui a similitudine pastorum ...ter greges fustibus innitentium dictus est</i>), 20r, 25v; Jörg Wilhalm 3711 14v (= 3712 109v)</li> </ul>
High Cut	<p><i>Straight Cut and Master Cut:</i> A downwards cut from above; a powerful attack and one of the most common in the system.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Oberhauw:</i> Ringeck 24v, 29v, 30r; Starhemberg 17r; Talhoffer 1467: 1, 3, 17, 28; Mair (Vienna) 9v, 10v, 51r, 66r; Jörg Wilhalm 3711 2r ff. (=3712 97r ff.); Meyer 11r, 35r.3, 40r, 43r, 49v, 50v, 51v, 53r, 53v, 57r, 60v, 64r, 64v.</li> <li>• <i>Scheitelhauw, Schaitler-, Schaitler:</i> Ringeck 32v ff.; Starhemberg 24v ff.; Mair (Vienna) 3r, 10v, 19r (= <i>ictus quo capitis vertex appetitur</i>); Jörg Wilhalm 3711 12v, 22r (=3712 107v, 117r); Meyer 11r</li> </ul>
Hilt	The hilt consists of the pommel, crossbar, and haft. 16 <sup>th</sup> century sources also refer to the shield. The hilt is used for infighting techniques. See Parts of the Weapon.
Horizontal Cut	see Middle Cut
<i>Indes</i>	Instantly; see States of Timing.
Inside flat	The side of the blade corresponding to the palm of the right hand.
Instantly	See States of Timing.
Iron Gate	 <p><i>Secondary Guard:</i> In Meyer, a guard like the Plow, but with the hilt held out in front of the knee and the crossbar vertical.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Eisenport:</i> Egenolph 7v ff.; Talhoffer 1467: 16; Meyer 8r, 9v, 40r; cf. 2:54r</li> </ul>
J	

## K

Key



*Secondary Guard:* A guard found in Meyer, in which the sword is held horizontally in front of the upper chest, point forward, short edge resting on the forward arm.

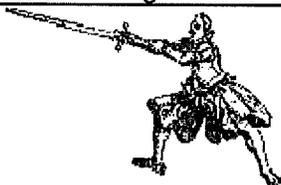
- *Schlüssel:* Meyer 9r, 33v.1, 38v, 40r

<i>Kniechelhauw</i>	Wrist Cut
<i>Knopf</i>	Pommel, part of the hilt; see Parts of the Weapon.
Knuckle Cut	See Wrist Cut
<i>Kreutz</i>	Crossbar, part of the hilt; see Parts of the Weapon.
<i>Kreutzhauw</i>	Cross Cut
<i>Krieg</i>	War; see Handwork
<i>Kron</i>	Crown
<i>Kronhauw</i>	Crown Cut
<i>Krump</i>	Crooked; see Crooked Cut
<i>Krumphauw</i>	Crooked Cut
<i>Kurtze Schneid</i>	Short Edge
<i>Kurtzhauw</i>	Short Cut

## L

<i>Lange Schneid</i>	Long Edge
<i>Langort</i>	Longpoint
<i>Langschwert</i>	Longsword
Lichtenauer, Johannes	14 <sup>th</sup> century martial arts master whose few hundred short lines of rather cryptic verses provide the earliest surviving description of the use of the longsword. These verses form the basis of a large number of commentaries and other derivative works in the late 14 <sup>th</sup> through 17 <sup>th</sup> centuries.
Line of encounter	An imaginary line drawn between the torsos of the two combatants.
Long edge	The front or knuckle side of the blade. The long edge is mostly used for initial and withdrawing attacks. See Parts of the Weapon.

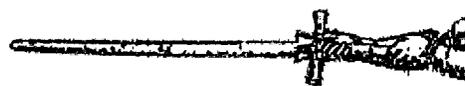
Longpoint



*Secondary Guard:* A guard in which the arms and sword are extended toward the opponent.

- *Langort:* Ringeck 47v; Starhemberg 27r, 31r, 36r; Jörg Wilhalm 3711 30r ff., 38r (=3712 124r ff., 132r); Meyer 7v, 36v, 37v (2x), 38r, 38v, 39v, 40r, 40v, 41r ff., 42r.1, 51r, 53r, 55r, 60v, 61r.

Longsword

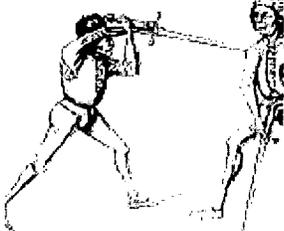


The longsword (*Langschwert*) was regarded as the basis of all martial arts. Surviving examples, mostly from the 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> centuries, typically have a blade some 40 in. long (100cm), and a grip of about 10 in. (25cm), and weigh around 3-5 lbs. (1.3-2.3 kg).

Looping	<i>Deceiving Handwork:</i> An action that brings the sword around in a circle overhead, apparently used to deceive or confuse the opponent. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Rinde, Runde:</i> Meyer 20v, 40v, 51r</li> </ul>
Low Cut	<i>Straight Cut:</i> A cut delivered diagonally upwards with the long edge. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Underhauw:</i> Ringeck 24v, 30r, 35v, 54v; Starhemberg 17r; Talhoffer 1467: 1; Mair (Vienna) 16v, 29v, 50v; Meyer 11v, 33v, 34v, 35r, 37v, 38r, 40r, 49v, 50r, 53r, 53v, 61v, 62r, 62v, 63v, 64v.</li> </ul>
Lunge step	<i>Footwork:</i> A step in which extends one foot away from the other.

## M

Mair, Paulus Hector	Author of a massive illustrated treatise on the longsword dating to about 1550. Mair's section on the longsword consists of a series of illustrated combat sequences, followed by a version of the Starhemberg commentaries.
Master Cuts	<i>Attacks:</i> The cuts traditionally identified in the German sources as the key to effective longsword combat, which include: High Cut; Wrath Cut; Thwart Cut; Crooked Cut; and Squinting Cut.

Meyer, Joachim	Author of the most important printed text on the longsword (and other weapons forms), first published in 1570. Meyer's text begins with a discussion of concepts and terms, followed by a series of combat sequences to execute from the various guards, and finally a Liechtenauer-inspired poem by the author, with extensive explanation and commentary.
Middle	see Handwork
Middle Cut	<p><i>Straight Cut</i>: A cut delivered horizontally with the long edge.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Mittelhauw</i>: Mair (Vienna) 30r; Meyer 11r, 26v, 33r, 35r, 39v, 50r, 60v. Cf. <i>Gladiatoria</i> 53v (with judicial combat shield)</li> <li>• <i>Überzwerchhauw</i>; <i>Überzwerch</i>: Meyer 11v</li> </ul>
Middle Guard	 <p><i>Secondary Guard</i>: A guard found in Meyer, similar to the Side Guard, but with the blade held horizontally just below shoulder height.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Mittelhut</i>: Meyer 40r, 40v; left: 40v</li> </ul>
<i>Mittel</i>	Middle; see Handwork
<i>Mittelhauw</i>	Middle Cut
<i>Mittelhut</i>	Middle Guard
<i>Mortstreich</i>	Murder-Stroke
Murder-Stroke	 <p><i>Miscellaneous Attacks</i>: A technique in which the sword is held in both hands by the blade, and a blow delivered with the crossbar or pommel.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Mortschlag</i>: Talhoffer 1467: 33-34, von Danzig 113v</li> <li>• <i>Mordstreich</i>: Talhoffer 1467: 47, 53, 56, 58</li> </ul>
<i>Mutieren</i>	Transmuting
N	
<i>Nach</i>	After; see States of Timing.
<i>Nachreisen</i>	Chasing
<i>Nebenhut</i>	Side Guard
O	
<i>Oberhauw</i>	High Cut
<i>Ochs</i>	Ox
Onset	<i>The Stages of Combat</i> : The Onset is the stage in which the combatant adopts a guard and launches an attack, typically a long-edge cut using the foible of the blade.
Outside Taking	<p><i>Miscellaneous Handwork</i>: A technique in which a counterattack is delivered while remaining in contact with the opponent's sword.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>eussere Nym</i>: Ringeck 37v</li> <li>• <i>aussere Mynn</i>: von Danzig 28r; Lew 33v</li> </ul>
Outside flat	The side of the blade corresponding to the back of the right hand.
Overreaching	see Overrunning
Overrunning	<p><i>Miscellaneous Attacks</i>: To deliver an attack from above; it can be used to counter an attack from below by "overreaching," i.e. taking advantage of the greater reach of the high attack.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>überlaufen</i>: Ringeck 39v; Starhemberg 30r; Mair (Vienna) 8v ff. (= <i>occursatio</i>), 15v, 29v (= <i>accursus</i>); 29v (<i>habitus quo contra hostem irruimus</i>), 84r (<i>superinjectio ensis</i>); Jörg Wilhalm 3711 27r ff. (=3712 121r ff.); Meyer 21v.3, 48v, 50r</li> </ul>
Ox	 <p><i>Chief Guard</i>: A guard in which the hilt of the sword is held by the side of the head, high enough to protect it, with the point extended slightly down toward the opponent's face.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Ochs</i>: Döbringer 32r; Ringeck 34r; Starhemberg 25v, 37v; Lew 28r Mair (Vienna) 3v, 19v (= <i>ictus qui dicitur Bos</i>), 48v; Jörg Wilhalm 3711 17r-v (=3712 112r-v); Meyer 6v, 11v, 36r ff., 56v; right hand: 46r.</li> </ul>

<b>P</b>	
	<i>Defensive Handwork</i> : the generic term for the use of the blade to defend against an incoming attack.
Parrying	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><i>versetzen</i>; <i>Versatzung</i>: Ringeck 35r ff.; Starhemberg 26r ff.; Mair (Vienna) 11r (= <i>defensionem</i>); 7v (= <i>defensio seu ensis adversarii exceptio</i>); 12r (= <i>avertere</i>); 51r (= <i>eludere</i>); 7r, 10v (= <i>excipere</i>); Jörg Wilhalm 3711 24v (=3712 119v); Meyer 12v, 15r, 22v, 31v, 47r, 50v, 51v, 52v, 53r, 53v, 54v, 55v, 56v, 58r, 59v</li> </ul>
Parts of the Weapon	
Pass step	<i>Footwork</i> : A step in which the feet change relative positions (i.e., the rear foot becomes the forefoot).
<i>Pflug</i>	Plow
Plow	<p><i>Chief Guard</i>: A guard executed with the hilt next to the hip, the point angled upward at the opponent's face.  <i>Pflug</i>: Ringeck 34r, 40r; Starhemberg 25v, 30v, 37v; Lew 28v; Egenolph 9v; Mair (Vienna) 4r, 11v, 30v, 37r (= <i>aratrus habitus seu castra</i>), 60r; Jörg Wilhalm 3711 17r-v (=3712 112r-v); Meyer 6v, 53r, 56v, 63v; see also 2:54v for the rapier version</p>
Plunge Cut	<p><i>Secondary Cut</i>: A High Cut followed by bringing the sword into the Ox guard. The maneuver may serve to displace the opponent's blade and then prepare for a thrust.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><i>Sturtzhauw</i>; <i>Sturtz</i>: Döbringer 48r; Talhoffer 1467: 2; Mair (Vienna) 30r, 39r; Meyer 14v, 36r, 53v.1, 57r; cf. 2:9r. Cf. <i>Gladiatoria</i> 54r (with judicial combat shield)</li> </ul>
Pommel	Part of the hilt; see Parts of the Weapon.
<i>Prellhauw</i>	Rebound Cut
Pressing the Hands	<p><i>Slicing Handwork</i>: A form of slice executed against the opponent's hands or arms.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><i>Hande drucken</i>, <i>Hende trucken</i>: Ringeck 46r, Starhemberg 35v?; Egenolph 12v; Jörg Wilhalm 3711 35v ff. (=3712 129v ff.); Meyer 21v, 55v</li> </ul>
Pulling	<p><i>Deceiving Handwork</i>: Withdrawing the blade before or after contact by pulling away with the hilt.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><i>zucken</i>: Ringeck 41v; von Danzig 31v; Mair (Vienna) 7r, 13r, 27r-v (= <i>retrahere</i>), 36v (= <i>arripere</i>); Meyer 19r, 28v-29v, 34v, 60r</li> <li><i>verzucken</i>: Mair (Vienna) 78v; Meyer 18v, 30r, 32r, 39v, 60v</li> </ul>
<b>Q</b>	
Quillons	Crossbar, part of the hilt; see Parts of the Weapon.
<b>R</b>	
Rebound Cut	<p><i>Secondary Cut</i>: A cut delivered doubly using the flat on the first hit to facilitate the rebound.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><i>Prellhauw</i>, <i>Brellhauw</i>: Meyer 13r, 36r.1 (with ill), 36v</li> </ul>
Remaining	see Binding
Reversing	<p><i>Controlling Handwork</i>: Any technique in which the hand or hands are inverted relative to their relaxed position; this will of course reverse the orientation of the sword. In Meyer, this is often done after the swords are engaged, to turn one's weapon over the opponent's blade, thereby forcing it down and away.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><i>verkehren</i>, <i>-keren</i>: Meyer 19v, 22r, 26v, 48v, 51r, 54r, 54v, 55v, 57r, 59r</li> <li><i>Verkehrter</i>: Ringeck 30r, 51v; Starhemberg 22r; Egenolph 14r</li> </ul>

Ringeck, Sigmund	Author of Liechtenauer commentaries dating from the second quarter of the 15 <sup>th</sup> century. Other longsword material in the manuscript seems to be by a different author.
Rose	<i>Deceiving Handwork</i> : A maneuver that changes from one quarter around to another, often as a disengage or evasion, sometimes by force. Each change of quarter describes one petal of a rose. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><i>Rosen</i>: Egenolph 5v, 6r, 9v; Mair (Vienna) 7v, 12r, 24r (= <i>rosa</i>); Meyer 40v, 41r.3, 42r</li> </ul>
<i>Rosen</i>	Rose
<i>Runde</i>	Looping
Running In	<i>Close-Quarters Handwork</i> : To close with an opponent in order to grapple or wrestle. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><i>einlaufen</i> ("running in"): Talhoffer 1467: 12; Mair (Vienna) 65v, 86r-v (= <i>incursio</i>); Meyer 22v, 61r, 62v, 63r; Von Gunterrodt 1579: E3r</li> <li><i>eingehn</i> ("going in"): Mair (Vienna) 14v</li> </ul>
Running Off	<i>Deceiving Handwork</i> : Withdrawing the blade, before or after contact, by rotating it around the hilt. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><i>ablaufen</i>: Egenolph 6r; Mair (Vienna) 62v (= <i>decurrere</i>); Meyer 18r, 18v, 19v, 27v, 29r (2x), 30v, 31v, 32r, 33r, 35r, 36r, 39v, 47v, 53r, 58r, 60r</li> </ul>
<b>S</b>	
Scalp Cut	see High Cut
<i>Schieler</i>	Squinter; see Squinting Cut
<i>Schielhauw</i>	Squinting Cut
<i>Scheitelhauw</i>	Scalp Cut; see High Cut
<i>Schilt</i>	Shield, part of the hilt; see Parts of the Weapon.
<i>Schlaudern</i>	Slinging
<i>Schlüssel</i>	Key
<i>Schnall</i>	Flick
<i>Schnappen</i>	Snapping; see Flick
<i>Schneiden</i>	Slicing
<i>Schneller</i>	Flick
<i>Schrankhut</i>	Crossed Guard
<i>Schweche</i>	Foible
Secondary Cuts	<i>Attacks</i> : A range of cuts mostly delivered with the short edge or flat, including Thwart, Squinter, Crooked, and Clashing Cut.
Secondary Guards	Guards other than the Chief Guards. The early sources emphasize the Crossed Guard and Longpoint / Window, while Meyer uses Wrath and Longpoint most frequently.
Setting Off	See Catching
Shape of Combat	see Stages of Combat
Shield	Part of the hilt; see Parts of the Weapon.
Shooting Over	see Barring
Short Cut	<i>Secondary Cut</i> : A counter-cut that slips under the opponent's sword to the opposite side, to block with the forte, and follow up with a thrust. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><i>Kurtzhauw</i>: Ringeck 26r; Starhemberg 18r; Meyer 12v (with ill), 16v</li> </ul>
Short edge	The "back" side of the blade, away from the knuckles. The short edge is mostly used for counterattacks and followup attacks once the blades have engaged. See Parts of the Weapon.
Side Guard	 <p><i>Secondary Guard</i>: A "tail guard" with the hilt near the belly, the sword extending back by the rear leg, point toward the ground, and the short edge facing the combatant.</p> <p><i>Nebenhut</i>: Ringeck 49r; Egenolph 11r, 14r; Meyer 8r, 10r, 40r (right hand); Cf. Meyer 3:16v (Staff); 3:39r (Halberd); 3:42v (Pike)</p>
Slashing	see Cutting Through
Slashing Through	see Cutting Through

Slicing	<p><i>Slicing Handwork:</i> An attack in which the blade is placed against some part of the opponent's body, and gains its effect not from momentum, but from pressure and by the potential slicing action of a draw-cut.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Schnitt; Schneid</i> (Meyer 38v): Ringeck 33v, 53r; Starhemberg 19v, 25r, 34v ff.; Talhoffer 1467: 21; Mair (Vienna) 5v ff., 16r, 17r ff., 22v, 44v, 49r, 50r (= <i>incisio</i>); Jörg Wilhalm 3711 32r ff. (=3712 126r ff.); Meyer 5r, 18r, 21r.1, 21v (2x), 22v, 26v, 34v, 36r, 48v, 55r, 56v, 58r, 59r-60v, 64v</li> <li>• <i>schneiden:</i> Mair (Vienna) 24v, 32v (= <i>perstringere</i>), 30r (= <i>stringere</i>), 45r- v, 46v (= <i>proscindere</i>); Meyer 18r, 34v, 36r, 46r, 50v, 51r, 55v, 59r, 59v</li> </ul>
Slicing Off	<p><i>Defensive Handwork:</i> A parry that deflects the incoming attack with a slicing motion of the blade.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>abschneiden:</i> Ringeck 44v ff.; Starhemberg 34r; Egenolph 6r, 10r; Meyer 21v, 60r, 60v</li> </ul>
Sliding	<p><i>Defensive Handwork:</i> A version of hanging executed from the Wrath Guard by sliding the sword under the opponent's incoming attack.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>verschieben:</i> Meyer 22r, 34v, 58r</li> </ul>
Slinging	<p><i>Miscellaneous Handwork:</i> A flinging cut delivered from a distance.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>schlaudern:</i> Egenolph 6r; Meyer 19r, 60r, 60v [MnG <i>schleudern</i>]</li> </ul>
Snapping	see Flick
Snapping Around	<p><i>Deceiving Handwork:</i> After a cut, to follow up with a flicking cut by rotating around the hilt.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>umschnappen:</i> Meyer 19v, 35r, 38r (2x), 42r, 42v, 44r, 48v, 50v, 51v, 53v, 54v, 55v, 57r</li> </ul>
<i>Sperren</i>	Barring
<i>Sprechfenster</i>	Speak-Window; see Window
Squinting Cut	<p><i>Master Cut:</i> A variant of the High Cut, executed with the short edge. The Squinter is often used as a counter-cut, particularly against an incoming High Cut.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Schielhauw, Schil-; Schieler:</i> Ringeck 31r; Starhemberg 23r ff.; Mair (Vienna) 2v; Jörg Wilhalm 3711 18v ff. (=3712 113v ff.); Meyer 11v, 44r, 47r, 52v-54r; 52v, 55r, 58r: left version; also 53r (2x)</li> </ul>
Stages of Combat	The fullest articulation of the stages of combat is given in Meyer, where each exchange is divided into three phases: the Onset; the Handwork; and the Withdrawal.
Stance	The most realistic representations may be those in Mair, where the stance is mostly moderate, about 1.5 - 2 shoulder widths, with a moderate bend in the knees, deeper in the forward than the rear one.
Starhemberg Fechtbuch	A fuller text of Liechtenauer commentary preserved in a manuscript dated 1452 (sometimes called the Von Danzig Manuscript).
States of Timing	The tradition distinguishes three states of timing: the Before, when one has the initiative; the After, where one's opponent has the initiative; and the Instantly, the use of swift countermoves designed to gain the initiative when the opponent has it.
Step	see Footwork
Stepping Out	<p><i>Defensive Handwork:</i> Stepping laterally away from an incoming cut.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>austretten, austritt:</i> Ringeck 51v; Meyer 16r, 31v, 64v</li> </ul>
<i>Sterk</i>	Forte
<i>Stich</i>	Thrust
Straight Cuts	<i>Attacks:</i> Cuts delivered with the long edge, including: High Cut; Wrath Cut; Middle Cut; and Low Cut. Throughout the tradition, they are mostly used in the Onset: they have greater power and reach than the short-edge cuts, but they also need to be delivered from a wound-up position.
<i>Streichen</i>	Slashing; see Cutting Through
Striking Around	<p><i>Deceiving Handwork:</i> To pull away after engagement for a cut in a different place, usually on the opposite side.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>umschlagen:</i> Meyer 18r, 26r, 43r, 46r, 49v (2x), 58r, 59v, 60v</li> </ul>
<i>Stücke</i>	Devices
<i>Sturtzhauw</i>	Plunge Cut
Sutor, Jakob	Author of a brief text of 1612, in which Meyer's work is excerpted. It may have been the last "new" text on the longsword to be produced in the German corpus.



T	
Tactics	The German longsword tradition consistently recommends being the first to attack, or, if attacked, to regain the initiative in the fight. One of the core techniques in the longsword system is to deliver an attack in one quarter, to draw the opponent to defend there, then, either before or after contact, to pull the blade away for an attack in another quarter, in the hopes that the opponent has overcommitted to the previous defense.
<i>Tag, vom Tag(e)</i>	High
Tag	see Flick
Tag-Hit	see Flick
Talhoffer, Hans	Author of a family of 15 <sup>th</sup> century manuscripts with many illustrations and minimal text, containing unarmored longsword and other material.
Targets	 <p>The German tradition divides the body into four main targets: upper left; upper right; lower left; and lower right. Meyer further subdivides the head into four: down the middle and across just below the eyes, to make an upper left and upper right, generally called the scalp, and lower left and lower right, also called the left and right ear.</p>
Thrust	<p><i>Attacks:</i> An attack delivered with the point. In the early sources, the thrust is most often found as a follow-up attack after the initial attack has been delivered.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>stich, ort:</i> Mair (Vienna) (= <i>mucro</i>) 1r, 10r, 11v, 12r, 13r, 48r</li> <li>• <i>einschiessen:</i> Mair (Vienna) (= <i>gladii impulsio</i>) 26r; (= <i>impulsus ensis</i>) 39v, 51r; (= <i>impulsus</i>) 63v</li> </ul>
Thwart Cut	 <p><i>Master Cut:</i> A cut delivered with the hands pointing upward, the right thumb under the blade, with the short edge and hands uncrossed when done from the right.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Zwerchhauw; Zwirchschlag</i> (Meyer 55v); <i>Zwerch, Zwirch</i> (Meyer 47v), <i>Zürch, Zürck</i> (Meyer 33r, 35v); Döbringer 27r-v; Ringeck 27r ff., 52v ff.; Starhemberg 18v ff.; Egenolph 14v; Mair (Vienna) 2r, 13r, 62r, 66v (= <i>transversarius</i>); Jörg Wilhalm 3711 13r ff. (=3712 108r ff.); Meyer 12v, 16r, 16v, 21r, 26r, 33r, 33v, 35r, 35v (2x), 36v, 38r, 42v (2x), 43r, 47v, 50v, 53r, 55r ff., 57r, 58r, 59v, 60v, 61r, 63r, 64r</li> </ul>
Transmuting	<p><i>Deceiving Handwork:</i> To follow up a high attack with a low one by turning from the bind into a hanging thrust over the opponent's blade.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>mutieren:</i> Ringeck 24v; Starhemberg 16v, 20v; Mair (Vienna) 6v, 20v; Meyer 60r</li> </ul>
True edge	see Long edge
U	
<i>Überlaufen</i>	Overrunning
<i>Überlangen</i>	Overreaching; see Overrunning
<i>Übergreifen</i>	Catching Over
<i>Übergreifen</i>	Gripping Over
<i>Überschießen</i>	Crossing Over; see Barring
<i>Überschrenken</i>	Crossing Over; see Barring
<i>Überzwerch</i>	Horizontal; see Middle Cut
<i>Überzwerchhauw</i>	Horizontal Cut; see Middle Cut
<i>Umschlagen</i>	Striking Around
<i>Umschnappen</i>	Snapping Around
<i>Underhauw</i>	Low Cut

Unicorn



*Secondary Guard:* A guard so similar to Ox that the distinction is open to doubt; Unicorn appears to have the hands a bit higher and the point horizontal or slightly upward.

- *Einhorn, Einkiren:* Mair (Vienna) 24r, 33v, 35r-v (= *Monoceros*); Jörg Wilhalm 3711 40v (=3712 134v); Meyer 9r, 37v ff., 54r

## V

*Verfliegen*

Flitting

*Verführen*

Deceiving

*Verkehren*

Reversing

*Verschieben*

Sliding

*Versetzen*

Parrying

*Verstüllen*

Blocking

*Verzuchen*

Pulling

*Volte step**Footwork:* A steps in which the rear foot steps behind the forefoot so that the body rotates.*Vor*

Before; see States of Timing.

## W

*War*

see Handwork

*Wards*

see Guards

*Weak bind*

An opponent who commits weakly to a parry is called being "soft" or "weak" in the bind. The sources recommend using trength (such as winding) against an opponent who is weak in the bind.

*Wechsel*

Change

*Wechselhauw*

Change Cut

*Wechseln*

Changing

*Winden*

Winding

*Windhauw*

Winding Cut

*Winding*

*Miscellaneous Handwork:* An action in which one remains in the bind while winding one's blade about the opponent's weapon for a followup attack, typically with the point, foible and/or short edge .

- *winden, wenden* (44r): Starhemberg 14v ff., 30v, 37v ff.; Mair (Vienna) 10v, 12r, 23v ff. (= *intorsio*), 24v (= *torqueare*), 25r (= *inflexio*), 39v (= *convertere*); Meyer 20v, 22r, 30r, 36r, 36v, 38v, 39v, 40r, 43r-44r, 46r, 48v, 49v, 50r, 50v, 51r, 51v, 54v, 55r, 58r, 59r, 59v, 62r, 63r-63v, 64r; of pommel: 51r, 59r, 64r, 64v

*Winding Cut*

*Secondary Cut:* A cut found in 16<sup>th</sup> century sources, executed by manipulating the blade while remaining in the bind, winding in between the opponent's blade and head, then cutting as one comes back out.

- *Windhauw:* Mair (Vienna) 17r (= *ictus qui a vento nomen sortitur*); Meyer 14r, 64v; cf. 2:13v

*Winding Through*

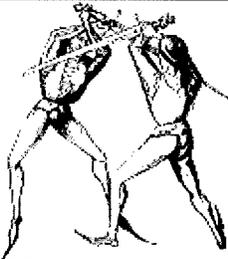
*Miscellaneous Handwork:* A wind executed with the hilt underneath the opponent's weapon, usually to catch the opponent's arm or weapon.

- *durchwinden:* Meyer 14r, 21r, 40r, 50r, 51r, 51v, 61r, 61v, 64r

*Window*

*Secondary Guard:* (1) In Döbringer, Ringeck, and Starhemberg, a version of Longpoint in which the sword is engaged with the opponent's. (2) In Mair, a position in which the hands are forward and the point of the sword up in the air, angling a bit to the right.

- *Brechfenster* ("Break-Window"): Mair (Vienna) 4r, 12r, 23r (= *fenestra patula*); Meyer 2r, 41r, 42v ff.
- *Sprechfenster* ("Speaking-Window," as in a monastery for communicating with people outside): Döbringer 37v; Ringeck 47r; Starhemberg 36r; Egenolph 10v; Mair (Vienna) 88r; Jörg Wilhalm 3711 37v (=3712 131v)

Wing Cut		<p><i>Secondary Cut:</i> A rising cut with the hands high.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Fliegelhaw:</i> Mair (Vienna) 18r, 20r; Rösener 1589: 51</li> <li>• <i>Flügel, Fligel:</i> Egenolph 5r; Mair (Vienna) 27v (= <i>ictus alaris?</i>); Rösener 1589: 57</li> </ul>
Withdrawal	<p><i>Stages of Combat:</i> The Withdrawal is the stage in which the combatant seeks to disengage without being hit, often by delivering a cut to cover the retreat.</p>	
Wrath Cut	<p><i>Straight Cut and Master Cut:</i> A cut delivered diagonally downwards from above.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Zornhauw:</i> Döbringer 23r; Ringeck 19r ff.; Starhemberg 13r ff.; Egenolph 13v; Mair (Vienna) 1:1r, 48r, 51v; Jörg Wilhalm 3711 3r ff. (=3712 98r ff.); Meyer 11r, 11v, 36r</li> </ul>	
Wrath Guard		<p><i>Secondary Guard:</i> A guard in Meyer in which the sword hangs over the rear shoulder.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Zornhut; Zorn:</i> Meyer 7v, 11v, 12v, 16r, 34v ff., 35v; right version: 35r, 50v; left version: 35v</li> </ul>
Wrenching	<p><i>Controlling Handwork:</i> Refers to any motion of forcing one's opponent's weapon or arms in some direction.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>ausreißen:</i> Egenolph 9v; Meyer 22v, 38r, 39v, 43r, 48v, 61v</li> <li>• <i>reißen:</i> Mair (Vienna) 7v (= <i>insistere</i>), 9v, 38v (= <i>attrahere</i>), 16v (= <i>inflectere</i>), 32v (= <i>rumpere</i>), 34v, 36v, 38r, 38v (= <i>vellere</i>); Meyer 50r, 51v, 61v, 62r, 62v</li> </ul>	
Wrist Cut	<p><i>Secondary Cut:</i> A quick Thwart Cut delivered at the opponent's exposed hand or arm.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Knichelhauw, Kniechel-:</i> Meyer 14v</li> </ul>	
X		
Y		
Z		
<i>Zeck</i>	Tag; see Flick	
<i>Zeckrur</i>	Tag-Hit; see Flick	
<i>Zirckel</i>	Circle	
<i>Zornhauw</i>	Wrath Cut	
<i>Zornhut</i>	Wrath Guard	
<i>Zuchen</i>	Pulling	
<i>Zufechten</i>	Attack; see Onset	
<i>Zugang</i>	Onset	
<i>Zwerch</i>	Thwart; see Thwart Cut	
<i>Zwerchhauw</i>	Thwart Cut	

# The MID-ATLANTIC SOCIETY For HISTORIC SWORDSMANSHIP

## A Curriculum for the Italian Rapier September, 2006

### **PREFACE:**

This curriculum is based on the 1606 treatise of Master Salvator Fabris, *De La Schermo overdo. Scienza d'Arme*, specifically as translated and interpreted by Tom Leoni in his monumental book *Art of Dueling* (Chivlary Bookshelf, 2005).

The curriculum is designed to be progressive and cumulative, so that each lesson builds upon the previous one. Novice level includes Lessons 1 through 11, Intermediate level includes Lessons 12 through 15 and Advanced level includes Lessons 16 through 18.

### **LESSON 1. THEORETICAL BASIS**

*Goal/Milestone: Understanding the basic theory of the Rapier alone as presented by Fabris.*

- Holding the rapier, and the four hand positions of prima, seconda, terza, and quarta.
- Understanding the weapon, the four parts of the rapier.
- Understanding the geometry of fencing.
- Understanding the mechanics of fencing.
- The advantage of the sword, taking your opponents sword, keeping your sword free
- The concept of misura (measure).
- The concept of tempo (timing).
- The union of forces.

### **LESSON 2. THE STANCE AND THE FOUR GUARDS**

*Goal/Milestone: Developing the proper stance and understanding counter-posture. Practicing the four rapier guards until they become second nature, and understanding their tactical applications.*

- Prima; Fabris plates 1 and 2.
- Seconda; Fabris plates 3 through 8.
- Terza; Fabris plates 9 through 12.
- Quarta.; Fabris plates 13 through 20

### **LESSON 3. MOVEMENT AND FOOTWORK**

*Goal/Milestone: Learning the basic rapier footwork and developing the ability to move with quickness and stability.*

- Pie Firma
- Learning the lunge.
- Learning the advance and retreat.
- Learning the pass.

### **LESSON 4. ATTACKING WITH THE THRUST**

*Goal/Milestone: Learning the two measure, learning how to take your opponent's rapier, learning to attack into each of the four openings with the thrust, and developing good point control.*

- The two measures of misura larga and misura stretta.
- Being in presence.
- Thrusting to the inside with quarta.
- Thrusting to the outside with prima, seconda and terza

### **LESSON 5. THE PARRY AND RIPOSTE**

*Goal/Milestones: Learning this fundamental defense and counterattack.*

- Parry and riposte attacks to the inside.
- Parry and riposte attacks to the outside.

### **LESSON 6. CUTTING WITH THE RAPIER**

*Goal/Milestones: Learning how to cut with the rapier and how to defend against cutting attacks.*

- Target areas.
- Classification of cuts (defined by the direction of the cut).
- Parrying cuts, and voiding cutting attacks.

### **LESSON 7. ENGAGEMENTS AND THE CAVAZIONE**

*Goal/Milestones: Learning how to free your sword with the cavazione.*

- Cavazione of tempo.
- Cavazione of obedience.
- Contracavazione.
- Ricavazione.
- Mezza cavazione (Half-cavazione)

### **LESSON 8. THE FEINT AND THE INVITATION**

*Goal/Milestones: Learning how to properly execute feints and invitations, and proper attacks therefrom.*

- Defining feints and invitations.
- Performing feints and invitations, and learning to attack after executing the same.

### **LESSON 9. THE VOIDS**

*Goal/Milestones: Learning how to defend and counterattack in the same action.*

- Voids against attacks to the inside, the Girata of the right and the left foot.
- Voids against attacks to the outside using the passing step, and the lunge.
- Studying Fabris plates 18, 19, and 20.

### **LESSON 10. THE BEAT, YIELDING**

*Goal/Milestone: Learning how perform beats against your opponent's blade and learning how to thwart them when performed against you.*

- Executing the beat.
- Deceiving the beat with the cavazione.

### **LESSON 11. THE HAND PARRIES**

*Goal/Milestone: Learning the four hand parries.*

- Hand parries against attacks to the inside.
- Hand parries against attacks to the outside.

### **LESSON 12. TECHNIQUES FOR WOUNDING YOUR OPPONENT**

*Goal/Milestone: Exploring the tactical aspects of the rapier alone,*

- Studying Fabris' plates 21 through 48.

### **LESSON 13. THE DAGGER**

*Goal/Milestone: Learning the general manner in which the rapier is used with the dagger.*

- The postures and counter-postures.
- Finding the sword.
- Left leg forward versus right leg forward.
- The rapier and dagger guards; exploring Fabris' plates 49 through 70.
- The dagger parries.

#### **LESSON 14. THE DAGGER PLAYS**

*Goal/Milestone: Learning to fight with the rapier and dagger.*

- Exploring Fabris' plates 71 through 95.

#### **LESSON 15. THE RAPIER AND CAPE**

*Goal/Milestone: Learning to fight with the rapier and cape.*

- General theory of the use of rapier and cape.
- Exploring Fabris' plates 97 through 108.

#### **LESSON 16. PROCEEDING WITH RESOLUTION**

*Goal/Milestone: Learning how to attack without stopping.*

- Rule One.
- Rule Two.
- Rule Three.
- Rule Four.
- Rule Five
- Rule Six.

#### **LESSON 17. RESOLUTION WITH RAPIER AND DAGGER**

*Goal/Milestone: Learning how to attack with rapier and dagger without stopping.*

- Rule One.
- Rule Two.
- Rule Three.
- Rule Four.

#### **LESSON 18. SPECIAL TECHNIQUES**

*Goal/Milestone: Learning what remains in the Fabris system.*

- Grips and Disarms.
- Cape Throws.
- Defending against a dagger empty handed.
- Defending with a sword against a polearm.

**The MID-ATLANTIC SOCIETY**  
**For HISTORIC SWORDSMANSHIP**

**Drills for Use in the Training of the  
Italian Rapier and its Companion Weapons**  
September, 2006

**PREFACE:** The following drills are to be considered foundational. Over time, other variations of these drills, as well as new drills, will be added. These drills come from a variety of sources. Many were developed by MASHS instructors. Many others are from Steve Reich's Drill of the Week series as presented on the website of The Order of the Seven Hearts, (reformatted) and are noted as such. Drills from other sources are also credited. Unless noted otherwise, all drills are with weapons.

**NOTE:** For two-person drills the Agent is the one who initiates the action (the attacker), and the Patient is the one who responds to the action (the defender). During training sessions, the solo drills will be performed in a group. Away from training, the solo drills can be done individually. Cooperative drills are those where the actions of both participants are prescribed. Antagonistic drills are those where the action of the Agent is not prescribed in the drill. But unlike free play, the actions fall within rigid parameters described in the drill itself. Antagonistic drills are designed to enhance the Patient's ability to respond to a variety of attacks, choosing from a variety of techniques.

**LESSON 2. THE STANCE AND THE FOUR GUARDS**

**DRILL 1. WORKING THROUGH THE FOUR GUARDS, SOLO**

1. Participants are asked to line up in front of a wall.
2. Participants takes the stance in Terza guardia, making sure that the tips of the blade are not touching the wall.
3. At the instructors count the participants will change to Prima, Seconda, Terza, and Quarta guards, making sure that they take the proper form of the guard. Also, when moving from one guard to another, the participant should strive to keep the tip from wandering.
4. Repeat at the instructor's discretion.

### **LESSON 3. MOVEMENT AND FOOTWORK**

#### **DRILL 1: SOLO, BASIC FOOTWORK (from Steve Reich)**

1. The fencer starts in guard and begins by making one advancing step and then stopping for the "beat" of one step in a *step-rest-step-rest* pattern, continuing until he reaches almost the end of his space (i.e. he cannot advance any further), where he ends with a lunge and recovery.
2. Then, he returns to the place from which he started with retreats, i.e. *retreat-rest-retreat-rest*, again ending with a lunge-recovery. When he is confident with this, he should string two advances together: *advance-advance-rest-advance-advance-rest* and retreat the same way. This can be increased in complexity as the fencer increases his skill and stamina, for example: *advance-advance-advance-retreat-retreat-lunge-recover-rest*. As always, careful attention must be paid to form, mechanics, and weight-distribution.
3. There are endless variations on this drill which should be obvious. Increase the number of variations and the length of time spent on each of them as the fencer's technique and stamina increase.

#### **DRILL 2. SOLO, BASIC FOOTWORK, THE PASS**

1. The fencers are in a line facing the instructor, in the proper stance in Terza guardia.
2. At the instructor's first count, the fencers will perform a passing step with the left foot, followed by an immediate lunge in Quarta.
3. At the instructor's second count, the fencers recover in Terza guard.
4. At the instructor's third count, the fencer passes again, and immediately lunges in Seconda.
5. At the instructor's fourth count, the fencer recovers again in Terza guardia.
6. Repeat at the instructor's discretion.

#### **DRILL 3. SOLO, BASIC FOOTWORK, SILENT DRILL**

1. The fencers are in a line facing the instructor, in the proper stance in Terza guardia.
2. The fencer is to follow the instructor's movements. If the instructor retreats, the fencers advance, trying to maintain the same distance. If the instructor advances, the fencers retreat.
3. If the instructor stops and takes his tip off line, the fencers should immediately lunge. The fencers should recover from the lunge only after the instructor brings his tip back on line.
4. Repeat at the instructor's discretion.
5. Variation 1. Fencers perform a pass-lunge when the instructor moves his tip off line.
6. Variation 2: The group can be divided into pairs, making this a two person drill. The instructor determines who will be the Agent. After a number of repeats the roles can switch.

## **LESSON 4. ATTACKING WITH THE THRUST**

### **DRILL 1. SOLO, LEARNING TO THRUST**

1. Fencers are asked to line up in front the instructor, in proper Terza guardia.
2. At the instructor's command the fencers advance one step, lunge, and thrust in Prima. At the instructor's command, fencers recover back to Terza guardia, and retreats one step.
3. At the instructor's next command, the fencers thrust in Seconda after the advance. Fencers recover as directed by the instructor. This is followed by a thrust in Terza, at the instructor's next command, and recovery. Then finally, at the instructor's final command, fencers thrust at the wall in Quarta.
4. The fencers should strive to make sure that they take the proper form of the guard.
5. Repeat at the instructor's discretion.

### **DRILL 2. SOLO, LEARNING TO THRUST**

1. Fencers are asked to line up in front of a wall in a lunge position with the tip of the blade just short of touching the wall. Make sure the wall is solid or padded to resist penetration by the blade. This is Misura Stretta
2. Fencers recover from the lunge and takes the stance in Terza guardia. Participants are then asked to retreat one step. This is Misura Larga
3. At the instructor's command the fencers advance one step, lunge, and thrust in Prima, hitting the wall with minimum force. At the instructor's command, participant's recover back to Terza guardia, and to Misura Larga.
4. At the instructor's next command, participants thrust at the wall in Seconda. Participant's recover as directed by the instructor. This is followed by a thrust in Terza, at the instructor's next command, and recovery. Then finally, at the instructor's final command, participants thrust at the wall in Quarta.
5. The participants should strive to make sure that they take the proper form of the guard, also to maintain the proper misura. Also, when moving from one guard to another, the participant should strive to keep the tip from wandering.
6. Repeat at the instructor's discretion.

**DRILL 3, SOLO, STEPS AND ATTACKS (from Steve Reich)**

*NOTE TO INSTRUCTORS: This is a drill that can be used with other lessons as more techniques are introduced and learned. The commands can vary accordingly. Steve originally suggested a Girata where shown in brackets, but at this point in the curriculum, the Girata has not been taught, so another technique can be substituted.*

<u>Command</u>	<u>What Fencers Do</u>
In Guardia	Comes on guard into Fabris' Terza
Advance	Advance forward one step
Lunge	Lunge in Quarta and maintain lunge until next command
Recover	Recover back into guard of Terza
Advance Two	Advance forward two steps
Pass Quarta	Perform a pass in Quarta, ending position should be that illustrated by Fabris' Plate 20
Recover Forward	Bring right foot forward to return to the guard of Terza
Retreat Two [Girata]	Retreat two steps backward [Perform the Girata of the Left Foot so the ending position looks like that illustrated by Fabris' Plate 19.]
Recover Forward	Bring the right foot forward to return to the guard of Terza.
Etc.	

**DRILL 4. COOPERATIVE, LEARNING TO TAKE THE OPPONENT'S BLADE AND THRUST**

1. Fencers are asked to line up in two lines facing each other, at Misura Stretta, in Terza guardia, to the inside. The instructor will designate who is the Agent and who is the Patient.
2. At the instructor's first count the Agent will thrust straight in Quarta, with opposition, lightly striking the Patient in the upper flank, followed immediately by a recovery back to Terza guardia. At the instructor's second count the Agent will lightly strike the Patient with a high Quarta in the mask, and recover. At the instructor's third count the Agent will strike lightly at the Patient's low flank, then recover.
3. Repeat with the Agent and the Patient switching roles.
4. The instructor should make sure that the fencer has attacked with the proper hand position and that the Agent has properly taken the Patient's rapier before attacking.
5. Fencers repeat the drill at the instructor's discretion, making sure the fencers have equal time as both Agent and Patient.
6. The fencers are the set at Misura Stretta in Terza guardia to the outside. The instructor will designate the Agent and the Patient.
7. At the instructor's first count the Agent will thrust in Prima, lightly striking the Patient in the upper flank, followed immediately by a recovery back to Terza guardia. At the instructor's second count the Agent will lightly strike the Patient with Terza in the high flank, and recover. At the instructor's third count the Agent will lightly strike with Seconda at the Patient's low flank, then recover.
8. Repeat with the Agent and the Patient switching roles.
9. The instructor should make sure that the fencer has attacked with the proper hand position and that the Agent has properly taken the Patient's rapier before attacking.

10. Fencers repeat the drill at the instructor's discretion, making sure the fencers have equal time as both Agent and Patient.
11. Variation 1. Repeat the drill with the fencers start at Misura larga
12. Variation 2. This makes a very good solo drill, with the fencer striking against a padded or solid wall, or against a pell.

## **LESSON 5. THE PARRY AND RIPOSTE**

### **DRILL 1. COOPERATIVE, PARRY AND RIPOSTE**

1. Fencers are asked to line up in two lines facing each other, at Misura Stretta, in Terza guardia, to the inside. The instructor will designate who is the Agent and who is the Patient.
2. At the instructor's first count, the Patient will make an opening by moving his/her tip off line.
3. At the instructor's second count, the Agent will attack with a straight thrust to the inside. The Patient will performs a simple parry in Quarta and then performs a riposte maintaining contact on the Agent's blade and with full extension. As soon as the Agent, upon seeing his/her rapier parried, should attempt to recover back into guard.
4. Repeat with the Agent and the Patient switching roles.
5. Fencers repeat the drill at the instructor's discretion, making sure the fencers have equal time as both Agent and Patient.
6. The fencers are then set at Misura Stretta in Terza guardia to the outside. The instructor will designate the Agent and the Patient.
7. At the instructor's first count, the Patient will make an opening by moving his/her tip off line.
8. At the instructor's second count, the Agent will attack with a straight thrust to the outside. The Patient will performs a simple parry in Seconda and then performs a riposte maintaining contact on the Agent's blade and with full extension. As soon as the Agent, upon seeing his/her rapier parried, should attempt to recover back into guard.
9. Repeat with the Agent and the Patient switching roles.
10. Fencers repeat the drill at the instructor's discretion, making sure the fencers have equal time as both Agent and Patient.
11. Variation: Repeat drill from Misura Larga.

### **DRILL 2. COOPERATIVE, PARRY AND RIPOSTE ON THE BLADE (from Steve Reich**

1. Fencers are on guard and in measure.
2. The Defender makes an invitation by presenting an opening, and the Attacker makes a simple attack to this opening.
3. The Defender parries the attack with a simple parry and then performs a riposte on the blade. That is, without losing contact with the Attacker's blade, the Defender first extends his arm and then lunges so that his blade slides along the Attacker's steel and maintains dominance over it, thus securing himself from a double hit during his riposte.

**DRILL 3. ANTAGONISTIC, THE PARRY DRILL (from Steve Reich)**

1. Fencers are on guard and in measure, but with parity of swords.
2. The Attacker can attack any line of the defender with a thrust.
3. The defender should perform an appropriate parry-counter (in stesso tempo). For example, from the Fabris guard, if the Attacker thrusts to the high-outside, a possible counter by the Defender is illustrated by Plate 43.
4. Since the attack is out of tempo and from parity, and the Attacker is making a direct attack, the Defender should be able to correctly parry-counter almost every time.
5. Repeat with the Agent and the Patient switching roles.
6. Fencers repeat the drill at the instructor's discretion, making sure the fencers have equal time as both Agent and Patient.

**LESSON 6. CUTTING WITH THE RAPIER**

**DRILL 1. SOLO, LEARNING TO CUT**

1. Fencers are asked to line up in front the instructor, in proper Terza guardia.
2. At the instructor's command, the fencers lunge and perform the cut. At the instructor's command, participant's recover back to Terza guardia. The instructor will repeat until all the cuts are performed by the fencers.
3. The fencers should strive to make sure that they make the proper form of the cut.
4. Repeat at the instructor's discretion.
5. Variation 1: Repeat with the fencers in Misura Larga.
6. Variation 2: This drill can be performed using a pell.

**DRILL 2. COOPERATIVE, PARRYING THE CUT AND RIPOSTING**

Use Lesson 5, Drill 1, but substitute cuts for the thrusts. Instructors should make sure all the cuts are performed with their respective parries.

**DRILL 3. ANTAGONISTIC, PARRYING THE CUT AND RIPOSTING**

Same as Drill 2 above, but the Agent can cut from any direction.

**LESSON 7. ENGAGEMENTS AND THE CAVAZIONE**

**DRILL 1. COOPERATIVE, KEEPING THE SWORD FREE (from Steve Reich)**

1. Fencers begin barely out of measure, standing naturally with their swords in parity, either inside or outside.
2. At the instructor's command the Patient attempts to engage or parry the Agent's sword.
3. The Agent takes a step forward and prevents the Patient from touching his sword with a cavazione, while at the same time advancing one step..
4. In response, the Patient again attempts to engage the Agent's sword on the new line, while simultaneously stepping back to maintain the same distance between the two fences.
5. Continue for as many steps as desired, then switch.
6. You can an interesting twixt by switching back and forth every few steps (four steps each way works well).
7. All the steps are passing steps at a moderate pace.
8. Variation 1: This drill can be made into an antagonistic drill by allowing the Patient a selection of blade actions; such as a contracavazione and parry instead of just a straight parry, or he could perform his parry as a beat.

**DRILL 2. COOPERATIVE, FINDING THE SWORD AND THE CAVAZIONE OF OBEDIANCE (from Steve Reich)**

1. Fencers begin in measure (larga) with their swords in parity.
2. At the instructor's command the Agent finds the Patient's sword.
3. The Patient performs a cavazione and finds the Agent's sword on the other side.
4. Swords are returned to original on guard position and is repeated at the instructor's discretion.
5. Variation 1: This drill can be varied by allowing the Patient to perform the cavazione and find the Agent's sword in the tempo that the Agent moves to find his sword.
6. Variation 2: This drill can be performed with the patient moving from Misura Larga to Misura Stretta.

**DRILL 3. COOPERATIVE, CAVAZIONE di TEMPO (from Steve Reich)**

1. Fencers begin in measure (stretta) and in guard.
2. At the instructor's command the Agent finds the sword of the Patient. However, before the Agent finishes the motion, the patient attacks by performing a cavazione with a lunge in the tempo of the Agent's attempt to find the sword (i.e., Patient performs a Cavazione di Tempo).
3. Once the Patient is comfortable with this, the Agent begins from one step out of measure (larga). As the Agent steps into measure, he also attempts to find the sword of the Patient. If the Patient takes the tempo correctly, his attack should hit before or as the Agent finishes his advance
4. Variation 1: The Agent counters the Cavazione di Tempo with a Contracavazione, followed by the Patient countering that action with a Ricavazione.

**DRILL 4. COOPERATIVE, ATTACKING THROUGH THE CAVAZIONE (from Steve Reich)**

1. Fencers begin in measure (larga) with their swords in parity.
2. At the instructor's command the Agent finds the Patient's sword.
3. Once the Patient's sword is found, he performs a cavazione of obedience to find the Agent's sword on the other side. However in the tempo of the cavazione, the Agent executes a lunge as a straight attack at the Patient, completing his attack before the Patient can complete the cavazione and find his sword on the other side.
4. Variation 1: Instead of a straight attack, the Agent could perform the attack with a contracavazione.
5. Variation 2: The Patient could counter the straight attack with a *commettere di spada*, i.e., stopping the cavazione and returning the blade back to the side form which he started the cavazione of obedience while also attacking.

## **LESSON 8. THE FEINT AND THE INVITATION**

### **DRILL 1. SOLO, FEINT WITH ADVANCE (from Steve Reich)**

Fencers begin by practicing the feint without an advance. This is performed in three steps, but in one continuous motion with no pauses..

1. Extend the weapon arm to threaten the target.
2. Make an appel (a stomp of the forward foot).
3. Perform a cavazione and lunge. Recover.

When everything can be performed in correct order and the correct motions every time, change step 2 into an advance (again, without pausing between steps).

1. Extend the weapon arm to threaten the target.
2. Make an advance
3. Perform a cavazione and lunge. Recover.

### **DRILL 2. ANTAGONISTIC, THE FEINT WITH ADVANCE (from Steve Reich)**

1. Fencers begin one step out of measure.
2. The Agent begins by either making an invitation or gaining the sword.
3. The Patient makes a feint. Either directly (in the case of an invitation) or with a cavazione in the case that his sword is being found. The feint is made with an advance into measure.
4. When the agent attempts to parry the feint, the Patient avoids the parry with a cavazione and attacks to the new opening.
5. Once the attack is made, the Patient immediately recovers and retreats back out of measure while covering the Agent's blade with his own to protect against a straight line thrust.

### **DRILL 3. ANTAGONISTIC, FEINT OR ATTACK (from Steve Reich)**

1. Fencers begin one step out of measure.
2. The Agent begins by either making an invitation or gaining the sword.
3. In the Tempo of the invitation or attempted gaining of the sword, the Patient makes a feint with advance to the appropriate target.
4. The agent does one of two things:
5. The Agent attempts to parry the feint, at which point the Patient avoids the parry with a cavazione and attacks the new opening.
6. Agent does not react to the feint, at which case the Patient finishes his feint as an attack on the same line as the feint.
7. Once the attack is executed, the Patient immediately recovers and retreats back out of measure while covering the Agent's blade with his own to protect against a straight line thrust.

**LESSON 9. THE VOIDS**

**DRILL 1. COOPERATIVE, THE VOIDS TO THE INSIDE**

1. Fencers begin in measure (stretta) and in guard with swords to the inside.
2. At the instructor's command the Agent finds the sword of the Patient and performs a straight thrust.
3. The Patient performs a girata of the right foot as shown in Farbris' plate 18 and counters with a straight thrust.
4. Both fencers recover. At the instructor's command the Agent again attacks the Patient. This time the Patient responds with a girata of the left foot as shown in Farbris' plate 19.
5. The drill is repeated at the instructor's discretion, after which the fencers switch roles.

**DRILL 2. COOPERATIVE, THE VOIDS TO THE INSIDE**

1. Fencers begin in measure (stretta) and in guard with swords to the outside.
2. At the instructor's command the Agent finds the sword of the Patient and performs a straight thrust.
3. The Patient performs a passing step off line with the left leg and counters with a straight thrust as shown in Farbris' plate 20.
4. Both fencers recover. At the instructor's command the Agent again attacks the Patient. This time the Patient responds with a lunge.
5. The drill is repeated at the instructor's discretion, after which the fencers switch roles.

**DRILL 3. COOPERATIVE, THE VOID (from Steve Reich)**

1. Fencers are on guard and in measure.
2. At the instructor's command, the Defender will either gain the Attacker's sword to the inside or outside, or make an invitation to the inside or outside.
3. The Attacker makes a feint by cavazione if the Defender has found his sword, or a straight line feint if the Defender has made an invitation.
4. The Defender feints an attempt to parry the feint, at which point the Attacker performs a cavazione and attacks the open line.
5. To counter this attack, the Defender performs the correct void to strike the Attacker in contratempo.
6. Fencers repeat the drill at the instructor's discretion, after which the fencers switch roles.

**DRILL 4. COOPERATIVE, ATTACKING IN CONTRATEMPO WITH THE VOID AGAINST A FEINT WITH ADVANCE (from Steve Reich)**

<u>Attacker's Action</u>	<u>Defender's Action</u>
In Guard	InGuard, Defender presents opening to the outside line.
Feints to the outside line with advance.	Attempts to parry feint to the outside.
Avoids parry with a Cavazione and lunges to the inside.	In the tempo of the opponent's attack Defender turns his hand into Quarta and performs an Inquartata (girata of the left foot), evading the opponent's attack while striking the opponent.

**LESSON 10. THE BEAT, YIELDING**

**DRILL 1. BEAT AND COUNTERATTACK**

1. Fencers are asked to line up in two lines facing each other, at Misura Stretta, in Terza guardia, to the inside. The instructor will designate who is the Agent and who is the Patient.
2. At the instructor's first count, the Agent will beat the Patient's sword to the Patient's outside line, then advances and strikes the Patient with a straight thrust. Both recover.
3. At the instructor's second count, the Agent will perform a cavazione to the outside line and in the same motion beat the Patient's sword to the Patient's inside line, then advances and strikes the Patient with a straight thrust. Both recover.
4. Repeat at the instructor's discretion, after which the Agent and Patient switch roles and perform the drill.
5. The fencers begin again, this time in Terza guardia to the outside.
6. At the instructor's first count the Agent beats the Patient's sword to the Patient's inside line, then advances and strikes the Patient with a straight thrust. Both recover.
7. At the instructor's second count, the Agent will perform a cavazione to the inside line and in the same motion beat the Patient's sword to the Patient's outside line, then advances and strikes the Patient with a straight thrust. Both recover
8. Repeat at the instructor's discretion, after which the Agent and Patient switch roles and perform the drill.

**DRILL 2. DEFENDING AGAINST THE BEAT**

1. Fencers are asked to line up in two lines facing each other, at Misura Stretta, in Terza guardia, to the inside. The instructor will designate who is the Agent and who is the Patient.
2. At the instructor's first count, the Agent will attempt to beat the Patient's sword to the Patient's outside line. The Patient, will not resist the beat, but instead, upon contact on his/her blade, will cavazione to the opposite line and strike the Agent with a straight thrust. Both recover.
3. At the instructor's second count, the Agent will perform a cavazione to the outside line and in attempt to beat the Patient's sword to the Patient's inside line. The Patient, will not resist the beat, but instead, upon contact on his/her blade, will

- perform a contracavazione to the opposite line and strike the Agent with a straight thrust. Both recover.
4. Repeat at the instructor's discretion, after which the Agent and Patient switch roles and perform the drill.
  5. The fencers begin again, this time in Terza guardia to the outside.
  6. At the instructor's first count the Agent will attempt to beat the Patient's sword to the Patient's inside line. The Patient, will not resist the beat, but instead, upon contact on his/her blade, will cavazione to the opposite line and strike the Agent with a straight thrust. Both recover.
  7. At the instructor's second count, the Agent will perform a cavazione to the outside line and in attempt to beat the Patient's sword to the Patient's inside line. The Patient, will not resist the beat, but instead, on contact upon his/her blade, will perform a contracavazione to the opposite line and strike the Agent with a straight thrust. Both recover.
  8. Repeat at the instructor's discretion, after which the Agent and Patient switch roles and perform the drill.

## **LESSON 11. THE HAND PARRIES**

### **DRILL 1. COOPERATIVE, HAND PARRY AND RIPOSTE**

1. Fencers are asked to line up in two lines facing each other, at Misura Stretta, in Terza guardia, to the inside. The instructor will designate who is the Agent and who is the Patient.
2. At the instructor's first count, the Agent will attack with a straight thrust to the high inside line. The Patient will performs the appropriate hand parry and then performs a riposte in Quarta.
3. At the instructor's second count, the Agent attacks with a straight thrust to the low inside line. The Patient performs the appropriate hand parry and then performs a riposte in Quarta.
4. At the instructor's third count, the Agent attacks with a straight thrust to the high outside line. The Patient performs the appropriate hand parry and then performs a riposte in Prima.
5. At the instructor's fourth count, the Agent attacks with a straight thrust to the low outside line. The Patient performs the appropriate hand parry and then performs a riposte in Terza..
6. Fencers repeat the drill at the instructor's discretion, after which the fencer's switch roles.

### **DRILL 2. COOPERATIVE, THE SWORD AND HAND PARRY (from Steve Reich)**

1. The fencers start in guard, one step out of measure.
2. The Defender will either gain the Attacker's sword to the inside or outside, or make an invitation to the inside of outside.
3. The Attacker makes a *Finta Scorsa*, that is, a feint with an advance. If the Defender has gained his sword, the feint will be by cavazione, otherwise, it will be a straight line feint.
4. The Defender parries the feint with his sword at which point the Attacker should avoid the parry with a cavazione and launch the attack.

5. The Defender, in the tempo of the Attacker's final thrust (i.e., the real attack), parries with his off hand with the appropriate hand parry while simultaneously striking the Attacker with a thrust.

### **LESSON 12. TECHNIQUES FOR WOUNDING YOUR OPPONENT**

*NOTE TO INSTRUCTORS: Have the participants practice and perform the techniques shown in the Fabris plates 21 through 48.*

### **LESSON 13. THE DAGGER**

#### **DRILL 1. COOPERATIVE, DAGGER PARRY AND RIPOSTE**

1. Fencers are asked to line up in two lines facing each other, at Misura Stretta, in Terza guardia, to the inside. The instructor will designate who is the Agent and who is the Patient.
2. At the instructor's first count, the Agent will attack with a straight thrust to the high inside line. The Patient will perform the appropriate dagger parry and then performs a riposte in Quarta.
3. At the instructor's second count, the Agent attacks with a straight thrust to the low inside line. The Patient performs the appropriate dagger parry and then performs a riposte in Quarta.
4. At the instructor's third count, the Agent attacks with a straight thrust to the high outside line. The Patient performs the appropriate dagger parry and then performs a riposte in Prima.
5. At the instructor's fourth count, the Agent attacks with a straight thrust to the low outside line. The Patient performs the appropriate dagger parry and then performs a riposte in Terza.
6. Fencers repeat the drill at the instructor's discretion, after which the fencer's switch roles.

#### **DRILL 2. ANTAGONISTIC, ATTACKING IN CONTRATEMPO WITH RAPIER AND DAGGER (from Steve Reich)**

1. The fencers are in guard in measure.
2. At the instructor's first count, the Attacker feints an attack to which the Defender responds by obediently going to the parry with the dagger or the sword, as appropriate.
3. The Attacker avoids this parry with a cavazione, attacking to the opening made by the Defence's parry.
4. However, the Defender parries the Attacker's real attack (again with the sword or dagger as appropriate) while simultaneously attacking to whichever opening is most convenient.

### **LESSON 14. THE DAGGER PLAYS**

*NOTE TO INSTRUCTORS: Have the participants practice and perform the techniques shown in the Fabris plates 71 through 95.*

**LESSON 15. THE RAPIER AND CAPE**

*NOTE TO INSTRUCTORS: Have the participants practice and perform the techniques shown in the Fabris plates 97 through 108. Exploring Fabris' plates 97 through 108.*

**LESSON 16. PROCEEDING WITH RESOLUTION**

*NOTE TO INSTRUCTORS: Have the participants practice and perform the techniques shown in Book Two, the First Part.*

1. Rule One: Plates 109 through 116.
2. Rule Two: Plates 117 through 123.
3. Rule Three: Plates 124 through 129.
4. Rule Four: Plates 130 through 141.
5. Rule Five: Plates 142 through 150.
6. Rule Six: Plates 151 through 156.

**LESSON 17. RESOLUTION WITH RAPIER AND DAGGER**

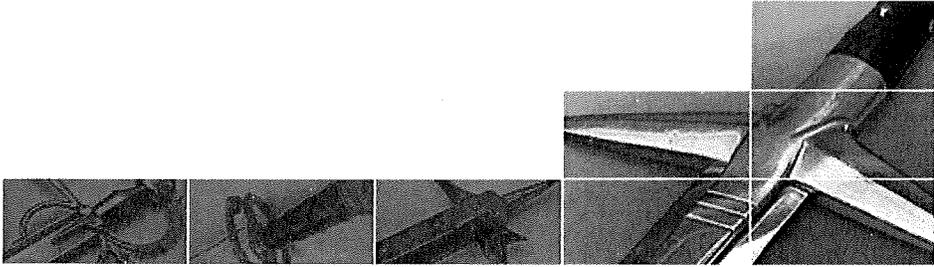
*NOTE TO INSTRUCTORS: Have the participants practice and perform the techniques shown in Book Two, the Second Part.*

1. Rule One: Plates 157 through 159.
2. Rule Two: Plates 160 through 163.
3. Rule Three: Plates 164 through 171.
4. Rule Four: Plates 172 through 178.

**LESSON 18. SPECIAL TECHNIQUES**

*NOTE TO INSTRUCTORS: Have the participants practice and perform the techniques shown in Book Two, the Third Part.*

1. Grips and Disarms: Plates 179 through 182.
2. Cape Throws: Plates 183 and 184.
3. Defending against a dagger empty handed: Plates 185 through 189.
4. Defending with a sword against a polearm: Plate 190.



## Call to Arms: The Italian Rapier

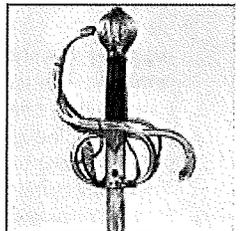
An article by Bill Grandy



Most of us in the modern world would recognize the word "rapier". Terms like "rapier wit" or "rapier tongue" imply quick and sharp responses, alluding to this Renaissance weapon of the dueling gentleman. There are many who have been enraptured by the romantic tales of *The Three Musketeers* or seen the sometimes humorous, sometimes tragic swordplay in Shakespeare, and many such people seek out sport fencing clubs or stage combat classes to learn its use. However, while both are noteworthy recreations, neither are truly rapier combat as it was meant to be used in the Renaissance duel. This article is aimed at the complete novice, and will provide a basic groundwork on techniques of the Italian style of rapier, as well as to give advice on how to find partners and what equipment is needed. It is not by any stretch a comprehensive study, but rather as a means to demystify how this sword was used for those who have never seen proper rapier play, and to give a basic idea of how this sword is used.

### What the heck do you mean by "rapier"?

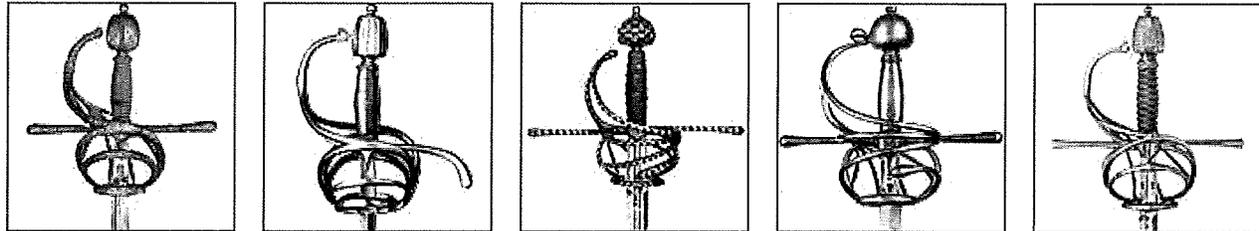
The word "rapier" is a difficult one to truly define in modern terms. For the sake of this particular article, we will assume a rapier is a long, slender blade intended primarily for the thrust, and generally with some degree of hand protection, and seen primarily in the 16th and 17th centuries. But that is by no means a definite answer. For example, two Italian masters, Giacomo DiGrassi and Vincentio Saviolo, both used the term "rapier" in their English fencing treatises from the last decade of the 16th century. The original Italian text for DiGrassi, however, used the term "spada", literally meaning "sword". The weapons used in those manuals appear to be shorter, broader bladed swords designed for the cut as well as thrust. In fact, the word "rapier" was never used by Italian masters at all, it would seem, despite the fact that it is a style that appears to have been borne out of Italy. Regardless of the exact terminology, this article will focus on the long thrusting weapons seen illustrated by fencing treatises such as Ridolpho Capo Ferro's *Gran Simulacro*, Salvator Fabris's *Scienza d'Arme*, or Francesco Alfieri's *L'Arte Di Ben Manegiarre La Spada*.



Rapier, circa 1600 Solingen, Germany

### The Italian rapier

The rapier was in use all over Europe as a weapon for settling duels. It appears to have originated in Italy, and the Italian masters were probably the most famous for their skill with the weapon. Other nations developed sophisticated and effective systems of fencing with the rapier as well, but for the sake of simplicity, this article will only focus on a generalization of the Italian style.

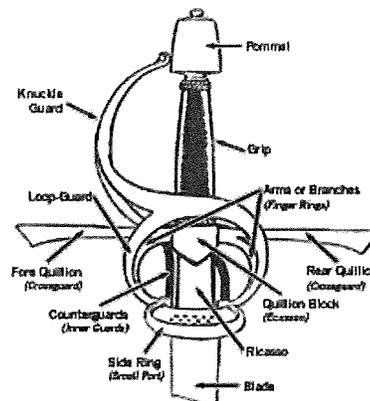
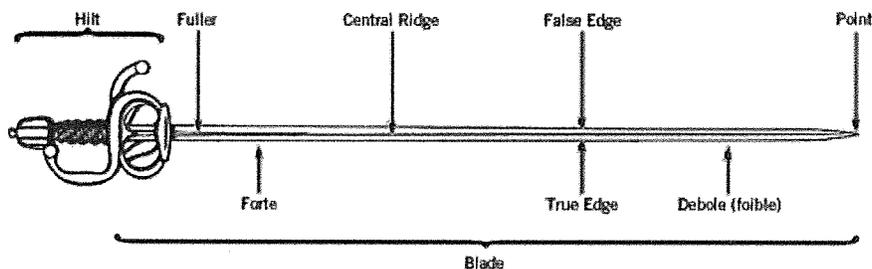


A selection of Italian rapiers from left to right: Milan, c. 1620; Naples, 1610-20; Londra, c. 1580; Rome, 1580-90; Milan, c. 1620

Many masters existed, more than we can know of certainly. But several masters left behind valuable fencing treatises, some which outline the basic concepts, and others that are well thought out and complete systems of combat, and it is through these treatises that we are able to interpret how this weapon was used. A study of these manuals shows that rapier was not about the "flashy-slashy" motions of Hollywood, or the "grab and jab" play of many well intentioned but misinformed practitioners, but was a very advanced and sophisticated form of combat.

### Parts of the Sword

While there are terms to describe essentially all of the minor details of the rapier, there are really only a few parts that are necessary to know. The most important two parts are the blade and the hilt. The hilt is comprised of the grip, the hand guard (often times an elaborate cage-like piece, or sometimes completely covering the hand with a plate, and commonly decorated), and the pommel to counterweight the blade and balance out the entire sword.



The blade itself is divided up, and different masters divided it in different ways. The most important thing to know, however, is that there are two major parts: The strong portion (*forte*), which is from the hilt to the center of the blade, and the weak portion (*debole*), which is from the center to the tip. The strong portion has the most leverage, and is used to parry an incoming attack, but is slower to move. The weak portion can be pushed aside much more easily due to it being so far from the hand, but it only takes a small motion of the wrist to move around. Understanding the proper use of these two parts of the blade is essential to understanding proper rapier play.

In addition to the strong and weak of the blade, the sword has two edges. If you gripped the sword and held it point upwards so that your knuckles faced away from you, the edge on the side of the knuckles is the true edge, and the edge facing you is the false edge.

### Basic Footwork

Different masters will say different things about footwork, but there are certain things that are common. For the beginner, though, the following general stance will do: The feet should be roughly shoulder width apart. The foot on the same side as the sword hand should be in front, pointed forward, and the other foot should be at a right angle, with the heel in a straight line as the front foot. About three quarters of your weight should rest on the back foot, removing your torso from being easily struck. Some masters, such as Alfieri, depict a posture that leans back most of the time, others, such as Salvat Fabris, show one that tends to lean a bit more forward. For now, do what is the most comfortable. You will also keep the back shoulder turned away from harm, though do not over profile, or movement will be rigid and uncomfortable. The hand not holding the sword should be relaxed and held up by your eyebrow, out of the way, but able to be used defensively if necessary.

There are certain things you need to be able to do regarding footwork. The most important being stepping forward or backward, something that in modern fencing is referred to as the "advance" and the "retreat". We won't worry about side stepping for the moment, and Italian rapier tends to be mostly linear anyway.

To move forward, simply lift the front toe, followed by the heel, make a small step, and bring your back foot back into your stance. To move backwards requires moving the back foot first. You should be able to move steadily forward and backwards without bobbing up and down. An easy exercise is to balance something, such as your fencing glove, on top of your head as you practice this to maintain balance and smoothness of motion.

The next important piece of footwork is what Capo Ferro calls the *passo straordinario*, or more commonly known modernly as the lunge. The lunge is a fast, powerful attack to reach your opponent from a distance. The lunge always begins with an extension of the arm: If you lead with your body, your opponent has no reason not to attack you. If, on the other hand, your sword is extended before you launch yourself forward, your opponent cannot attack without first having to deal with the oncoming threat. Once your arm is extended, lift your front foot slightly off of the ground and kick it forward into the air, using your back foot to propel you forward. The back foot should remain firm and planted in place. When the front foot lands the front knee should be bent with the back leg extended and completely straight.

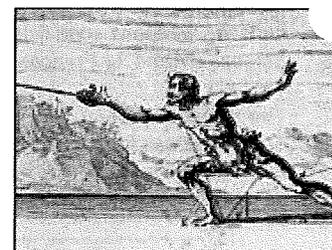
The final type of footwork, for now, will be the *passata*, or passing step. A passing step is simply bringing your back foot forward, very much in the same way as walking. To practice this, start from your guard. Pass the back foot forward so that it remains in a ninety-degree angle to the other foot, just as it normally is. Then take the other foot and bring it forward so that you are once again in your normal stance. Passing steps are used for multiple reasons, particularly if your weight has shifted onto the front foot. For instance, if you have performed a feint (a false attack) to one side of your opponent's body, and have shifted your weight forward, you would be unable to lift the front foot to lunge. Thus, your back foot would have to move instead.

### Holding the Sword

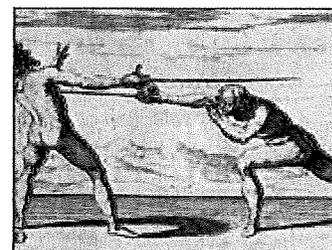
There are multiple correct ways to grip a rapier, but to keep things simple, one of the most common is to hold onto the grip and pass the index finger over the quillion around the ricasso (the base of the blade where it meets the guard) so that it wraps around and touches the thumb on the other side. By wrapping the finger around in this manner you will have greater tip control.

There are four basic hand positions shown in the majority of fencing treatises. The Italians referred to these as *prima* (first), *seconda* (second), *terza* (third) and *quarta* (fourth). While there are other positions, for simplicity, these will be the only ones we use.

Your primary position will be the third guard position. Capo Ferro states, "You know that in my book of the art, there is one good guard that is a low guard called third, with the sword in a plane in the straight line." In third,

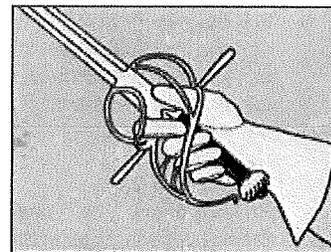


The lunge as depicted by Capo Ferro

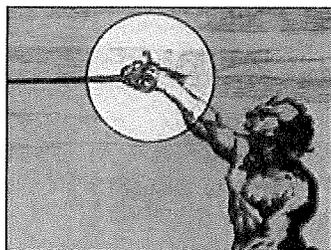


A passing step by Capo Ferro

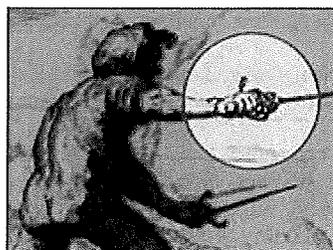
the sword is held as if shaking hands with someone, palm towards the off hand side with the thumb up. This is the most natural guard, and will be the most generally used position when not making an action.



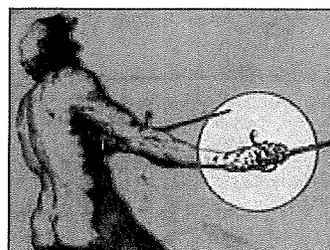
Holding the Rapier



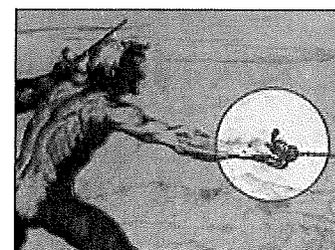
The first guard (prima) by Capo Ferro. The palm is outward, the thumb pointed down.



The second guard (seconda) according to Capo Ferro. The palm is downwards.



The third guard (terza) by Capo Ferro. The palm is inward, as if shaking hands with someone.



The fourth guard (quarta) according to Capo Ferro. The palm is up.

Fourth and second positions will be used slightly more than first in general actions. Fourth holds the hand palm up, and second is with the palm down. These are often used for simple parries. The first position is held with the thumb pointed down with the palm facing the side of the back. First will not really be explored in this basic primer.

### Simple Handwork

We have already discussed the lunge, which is going to be your primary method of attack. There are a number of types of specific thrusts and cuts in the Italian system, but for now we will only use thrusts, and assume that all of the thrusts are straight for the chest, the largest target area.

There are four important terms to understand when dealing with attacking and defending: inside, outside, high and low. Each of these is a division of where the sword can hit, and is designated by the placement of the sword hand. The high line is everywhere above the hand, the low line everywhere below it. The inside line is everywhere from the hand towards the off-hand side, and the outside is everywhere from the hand towards the back. The four targets, therefore, are high inside, high outside, low inside and low outside.

### Parrying

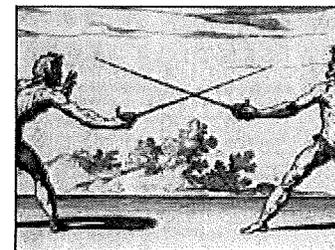
To defend against an oncoming sword, we will first talk about basic parries to the inside and outside. From the third guard, if your opponent attacks to the high inside line, you will rotate your forearm so that you are now in the fourth guard, and your true edge will be facing the opposing blade. The tip of your sword should be slightly raised in order to cross against the opponent's blade. Moving the forearm from the elbow only, you will gently press the incoming blade out of the way by using the strong part of your sword against the weak part of theirs. When you parry, you should have your blade just barely angling so that the tip points over the opponent's blade, but not so much that it is no longer pointing within the silhouette of your opponent. The reason for this is so that your opponent's blade will slide towards the strong part of your blade, giving you more leverage and control.

It is important to understand that you do not need to swing the rapier to parry, but to just barely push the oncoming blade aside. Be certain that you are pushing only to the side, and not down, else they will strike you on the low line. Your arm should be mostly extended most of the time you are in guard and if your arm is too close to your body when parrying, you will have to move it more to deflect the attack.

Should your opponent attack you to the high outside, you will need to move your blade into the second position instead of fourth, but otherwise follow the same guidelines.

Merely parrying an attack is not enough, though, as any decent fencer will not simply just give up because they missed. They will most likely attack again from the other side, and the best way to prevent that is to attack. Once you parry the sword, immediately extend your arm to strike, an act known as a *riposta*. The *riposta* prevents your opponent from continuing to attack, but it also is an excellent time to hit your opponent before they are ready.

It should be noted that Italian rapier relies much more on single time parries, meaning that one would attack at the same time of the parry. Because of its length and weight, the rapier is best suited for this type of defense, and done correctly, this is more efficient of the two-time action involved in the previously described "parry first, attack second" defense. In order to do this, one must gain the advantage of the opponent's blade, known as finding the sword (Capo Ferro uses the term *guadagnare* to define this concept, though the literal term used here, "finding the sword", or *trovar di spada*, comes from Fabris). Finding the sword involves placing your blade in a position so that, without touching your opponent's blade, your hilt is closer to your opponent's blade than your opponent's hilt is to yours. In order to maintain the advantage, your sword blade must angle over your opponent's blade in such a way that if your opponent pressed his blade against yours, it would slide further along the forte towards your hilt, giving you even more control. (Capo Ferro says that if your sword is on the inside to point your sword over the blade towards the opponent's right shoulder, and vice versa if your blade is



Guadagnare according to Capo Ferro: The man on the right has subtly brought the strong of his blade closer to the weak of the man on the left, and slightly angled his blade over the other's. Although

on the outside. This is, of course, assuming your opponent is right handed.) In general terms: Finding the sword is having your sword set up in such a way that you have the advantage of leverage and angle over your opponent's blade. Once this occurs, your opponent's thrust will easily be intercepted with your parry at the same time that you thrust, not giving your opponent a chance to even realize what has happened. Before you can practice adequately finding the sword, you must already have a solid grasp on the parries, so the finer details of this concept are outside of the scope of this article.

*no blade contact has been made, he has "found the sword", and is in a position to easily parry with a counterattack if his opponent lunges.*

### Defeating a parry

Fencing of any type is never about randomly attacking until you manage to land a lucky shot. It should be about precise actions, chosen because they give you a logical advantage, and used in proper distance and time. When you are fencing, it is vital that you go ahead. Think about what you are doing, and how your opponent will react to you. One of the obvious examples is how your opponent will react to your thrust. Most likely they will parry you.

Think about that. You know that your opponent will parry you if you attack. It seems so obvious, and yet it is an important element: You have predicted the future. You know what your opponent will do before anything has happened. Use that knowledge to your advantage.

A well-known technique in boxing is the feint. A feint is a false attack, designed to provoke a reaction. Feints are not random jabs, which would leave you open to attack, but calculated actions to get your opponent to do exactly what you are telling them to do.

If you want to feint at your partner, you will first extend your arm to the area of the body in which you want their sword to move to. A mistake that many inexperienced fencers do after this is to retract the arm, then attack on the other side, and this can completely ruin your plans. The act of retracting the arm creates a moment of time (a moment of time is referred to as a *tempo*). In that moment of time, your opponent has seen what you have done, and will react, quite possibly by attacking while your arm moves back.

In order to prevent this, you cannot retract your arm. Rather, you must keep it extended and move the tip of your sword underneath the opponent's blade and continue forward with the real attack. The act of changing to the other side of the blade is called a *cavazione*, or often referred to by modern practitioners as a disengage. To perform this, draw the letter "V" with the tip of your sword so that you go underneath the incoming parry. Use only your wrist to do this, as you want this motion to be small. You can practice this technique by going back and forth onto either side of a partner's sword.

### Using the off hand to parry

The off hand was often times employed to parry a sword. Sometimes it was empty, and usually gloved, and sometimes an off hand weapon, such as a dagger, was employed. Beginners should learn the basics of the sword alone, without the use of another weapon, first. Once you have trained and know how to use the single sword, then adding an off hand weapon is not difficult.

The empty off hand is generally not used, and with good reason. There are many modern practitioners who will claim that rapier fencing is about using the off hand to parry, and the sword to attack, but as Salvator Fabris said, "those who parry with the hand are easier to kill than those who defend with the sword." This is because the off hand is very easy to avoid with a simple disengage, such as described above. So if the hand is so easy to parry, then why use it?

One reason that can't be ignored is desperation: You have completely botched up, there's a sword coming at your face, and it would take too long to otherwise move your own sword to parry. So your hand is there. To lower the chance of receiving a serious hand injury, a glove would have been worn for this. According to Saviolo, "this weapon must be used with a glove, and if a man should be without a glove, it were better to hazard a little hurt of the hand, thereby to become master of his enemies Swoorde, then to breake with the sword, and so give his enemy the advantage."

But the off hand could be used quite effectively to your advantage if you understand the correct time to use it. A simple example would be to aid in the feint that we discussed above. Take the following example:

Fencer A performs a feint to the high outside of Fencer B. Fencer B attempts to parry in response in the second guard. Fencer A, planning ahead, disengages underneath the sword to attack to the high inside. But what Fencer A did not count on was that Fencer B charged straight in and attacked, with no regard for his own life, and thus both fencers are wounded.

Fencer A could have prevented this with the use of the off hand. To use the off hand, you do not want to swat or swish the arm around. You want to firmly press the oncoming blade away, and you want to do this at the same time you are closing in for your attack. If you use the hand first, your opponent can simply move around and attack someplace else. Let's look at the scenario again:

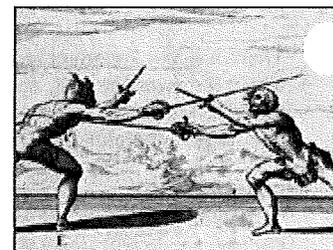
Fencer A feints to the high outside. Fencer B parries in the second guard. Fencer A disengages underneath the sword to attack the high inside, but at the same time takes the off hand and presses against the middle of Fencer B's blade, making it impossible for Fencer B to attack simultaneously. By the time Fencer B has removed the sword from the Fencer A's hand, it is too late.

### Practice

To effectively learn any martial art, having a partner is essential. One can only go so far with solo drills alone. An ideal situation is to find a teacher, and if you have the option of taking lessons, do not bother trying to practice without instruction.

Finding a partner, however, may be necessary for you to do on your own, and can be as simple as recruiting an interested friend, though sometimes this is easier said than done. You should search your area to find if there are any practice groups or classes, which will make your job much easier. Check local recreation centers, search on the Internet, and ask in sword-related online forums.

### Training and Safety Gear



*From Capo Ferro: An example of a feint and cavazione (disengage), coupled with an off hand parry (in this case with a dagger, though the same applies to the empty hand)*

Once you have someone to train with, the next step will be appropriate training gear. If you are with an already established group or have a teacher, they will tell you what you need. Every group has a different focus, and training gear is not standard. If you are starting on your own, then you will first and foremost need a sword.

Today's practitioner can find a huge array of choices on what sword to choose. You will have to ask yourself a few things: What is your price range? What will your partner be using? How will the swords be used? You can technically learn the basics of rapier with a long stick, but the more accurate you want your techniques to be, the more accurate a sword you will need to train with.

If price is an issue, you can find a standard sport fencing epee cheaply. It should be noted that this is *not* an accurate tool for replicating rapier techniques, as it is both too short and too light. However, it is a very cheap option for getting started, with a flexible and sturdy blade that makes it suitable for safe training with a partner.

Going up from there are various makers of rapier simulators and replicas. Different blades are made to different specifications. To accurately practice rapier, you should have a blade that accurately reflects a real rapier's handling characteristics. It ideally should not be too whippy, but keep in mind that if you are doing drills or fencing with a partner, they will probably not appreciate being struck hard by a rigid steel pole. *Del Tin Armi Antiche* of Italy makes two versions of rapier blades that can be used for fencing, and cutlers such as Scott Wilson at Darkwood Armory can mount a variety of hilt styles to the blade. You will need to do your research to decide what type of sword best fits you and your partner.

Once you have a sword, you will need safety gear. It has often been stated that the most important piece of safety gear is self-control, and that is no exception here. Different groups have different safety regulations, because different groups have different focuses and goals. Most, however, will agree that the second most important piece of safety gear will be your head protection. A standard, 3-weapon fencing mask will be more than adequate to protect you. Many people prefer certain types over others, and like your sword, you will have to research what serves you best.

Most groups also have requirements on what to use to cover your body. Generally a standard fencing jacket and a pair of gloves will be good enough. If desired, padded fencing jackets can be acquired, and there are also other options that are acceptable in many groups. Examples include a padded tunic-styled fencing jacket sold by Triplette Competition Arms and a fencing doublet sold by CAS Iberia / Hanwei. In addition, most fencing suppliers sell hard plastic chest protectors to wear underneath the jacket, and some groups require this for women. For men, it is strongly suggested that an athletic cup should be worn, as a hard hit to the groin could potentially cause testicular torsion, something that could result in amputation in a worst case scenario. Some groups require the use of a gorget (a rigid piece of armor worn around the collar to protect the neck), and some require the use of elbow and knee pads. You will also want clothing and footwear that allows you to move freely and easily.

As stated earlier, different rapier groups have different focuses and goals and not everyone trains the same way. While some may find the lack of standardization frustrating, it is overall a good thing, because this is how the art can truly grow. With all of the different approaches out there, it also means that there are many options for people who are pursuing different things. Therefore, in your studies, you will need to ask yourself what you are training for. Is it a recreational hobby, just for a little bit of fun on the weekends? Is it the pursuit of lost historical art? Is it for fitness? Is it to augment a related hobby (such as live action role playing or stage combat)? Is it a combination of the above? Is it none of the above? Knowing the answer to this will help you define what exact equipment and gear is necessary.

## Conclusion

As a martial art, it is safe to say that the study of the rapier has little application on the modern streets. It is highly unlikely that you will ever be faced with the situation where your rapier is the only thing standing between you and death.

But that does not stop thousands of practitioners from pursuing it anyway. Perhaps it is the romanticism that draws us in. Perhaps it is the realization that, in its context, the rapier was a formidable weapon of defense. Perhaps it is the feeling of a connection to a past that is long gone, but preserved the historical fencing treatises. Regardless of your inspiration, it is a weapon of elegance and deadly beauty, and one that requires dedication and grace to effectively master. It will be a long road, but one that ultimately will train the body to work in harmony with the mind. So with that, good luck in your studies.

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## About the Author

Bill Grandy is an instructor of Historical European Swordsmanship and sport fencing at the Virginia Academy of Fencing. He has held a strong passion (obsession) for swords and swordsmanship for as long as he can remember. He admits that this passion comes from a youth spent playing Dungeons and Dragons, but he'll admit that if there are no girls around.

## Author's Thanks

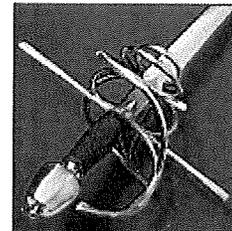
Special thanks to Tom Leoni, whose intense scholarship and friendship have helped me lift my understanding of rapier into a new light.

## Sources and Bibliography

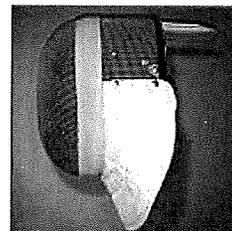
Capo Ferro translation from William Wilson, president of the Tattershall School of Defense

Fabris translation from Tom Leoni, Head Instructor of The Order of the Seven Hearts

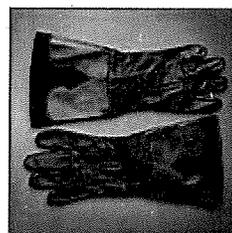
Saviolo taken from *Three Elizabethan Fencing Manuals*, Scholars' Facsimiles & Reprints, Ann Arbor, Michigan, 2001



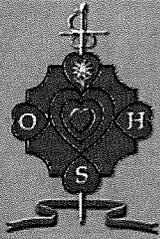
*A Rapier made by Arms & Armor of Minnesota*



*A Modern Fencing Mask*



*A Pair of Leather Gauntlets*



# Order of the Seven Hearts



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Articles

Reviews

Seminars

Instructors

Links

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2  
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## Rapier

### Italian Rapier – The Weapon

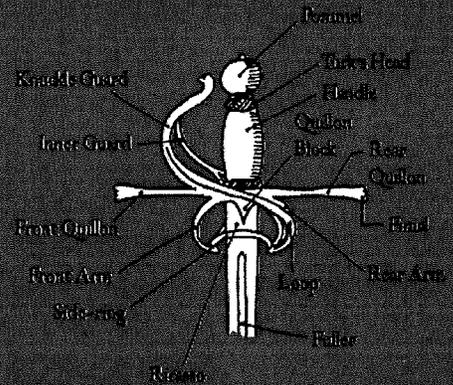
The Italian rapier is a straight-bladed single-handed sword that saw its apogee in between the 16th and the 17th Centuries. The **Italian rapier** was perhaps the first single-handed sword in history designed to be safely used without a companion weapon between unarmored opponents. As such, it became the fencing weapon par excellence. The Italian rapier used by Fabris and his contemporaries featured two cutting edges and a point, although some more specialized, thrusting-only rapiers existed throughout the 17th Century. In its earlier form, the rapier hilt featured various patterns of loops and rings; around the mid-1600's, the predominant rapier hilt was the cup, which is generally associated with Spain and the Spanish dominions.

Although used on the battlefield, the Italian rapier's main place was at the side of the civilian gentleman and nobleman. Throughout its history, the rapier became the quintessential dueling weapon, only to be replaced by the smallsword and the dueling pistol after a long supremacy of over one hundred years. Throughout the 16th and 17th Centuries, Italian rapier masters were among the most highly-prized martial arts teachers in Europe.

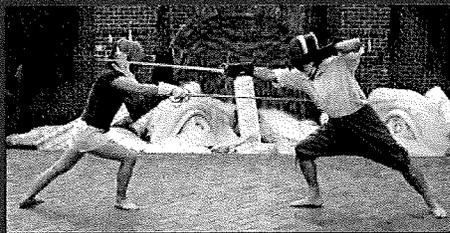
It was fairly typical for an Italian rapier of the time of Fabris to weigh around 2.5lbs, and to feature a blade of 42 inches in length.

Suggestions for further reading and discussion:

- Tom's article [Understanding the "A" in WMA](#).
- Tom's article [The rapier revisited](#).
- Tom's article [Tactical Advice for the Rapier](#).
- AVB Norman, *The Rapier and the Small Sword*, London, 1980. [Read a Review](#).
- Steve's article [Starting in Italian Rapier](#).
- Tom's article [Parrying a longsword cut with a rapier](#).
- Tom's article [What is a rapier](#).
- Tom's book *The Art of Dueling*, 2005.
- Tom's SPADA article "Finding the sword or stringere."
- [Order of the Seven Hearts Forum](#)



### Our Italian Rapier Work



Fabris' preference is for actions in tempo. This means that he seldom advocates parrying and riposting as two consecutive movements – rather, he executes them both in one motion, i.e. in a single tempo. The resulting style is typically Italian and, once mastered, is extremely hard for an opponent to defeat.

Thanks in great part to our labor of love, Fabris is gaining numerous followers in the Historical Martial Arts community, and the increasing number of students who are infected by his dynamic style find it extremely effective against any opponent.

Besides Fabris, we also study the other relevant Italian rapier treatises of the time, such as Capoferro, Alfieri, Giganti, Marcelli and others, but we take great care to ensure that our style remains pure.

### Research & Resources

**Paternoster** Translated from the French by Tom Leoni.

The following mini-treatise by Paternoster was included in the 1617 French edition of Geronimo Cavalcabo's rapier text *Traite' ou instruction pour tirer des armes*.

Our main Italian rapier work centers on the writings of Salvator Fabris, in honor of whose knightly Order we named our school. While appearing outwardly dynamic and athletic, Fabris' style enshrines all the art, theory and finesse of Italian rapier fencing.

The teachings of Fabris hinge upon a precise understanding of guards, measure, tempo, strengths and weaknesses of blade-sections and blade-angles, openings and closed lines. Although other masters throughout history explain some of these elements, Fabris describes all of them, and does so with uncommon clarity and unique thoroughness.



## The rapier: facts, factoids and unanswered questions

by Tom Leoni

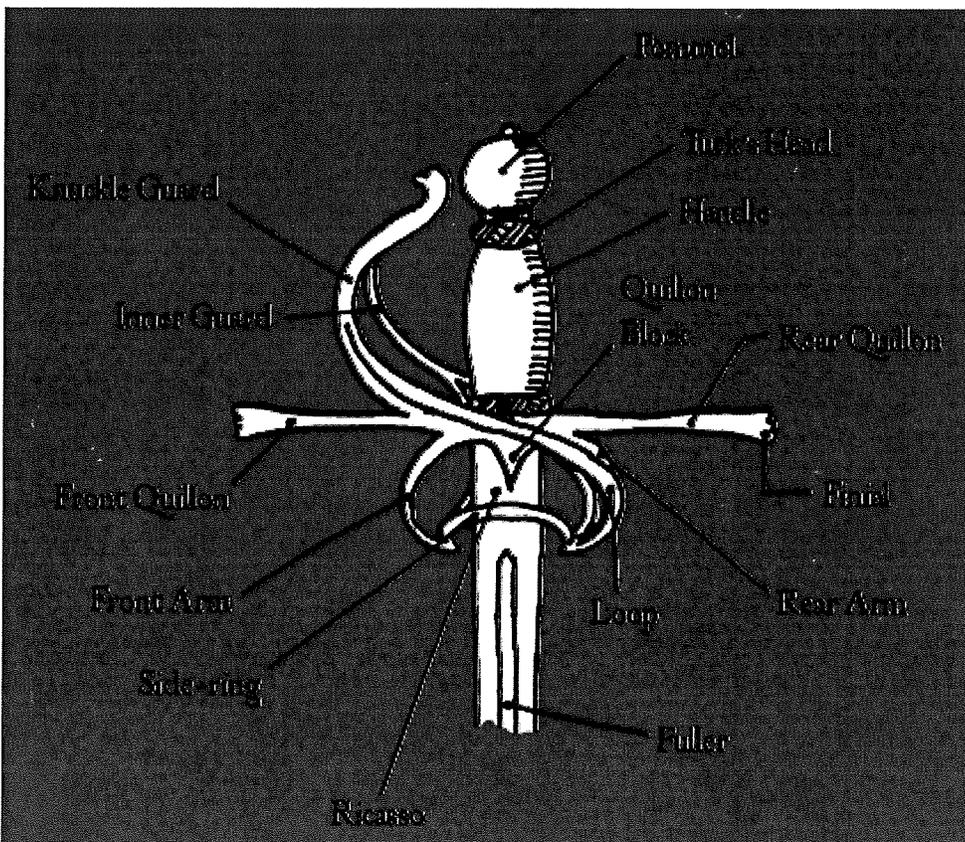
### What is a rapier?

In order to stay within the scope of a short and general article such as this, I will start by presenting my own general definition of a rapier. **A rapier is a long, straight-bladed cut-and-thrust single-handed sword optimized for the thrust and featuring a guard that affords good protection to the hand; the rapier sees its apogee between the last third of the Sixteenth Century and the end of the Seventeenth.**

Or, since a picture is worth a thousand words, a rapier is a sword that looks like [this](#) as opposed to [this](#).

I am all too aware that such definition is incomplete and imperfect. But in reality, there still exists a good deal of debate in the community about the exact essence of this weapon, and about the precise placement of the boundaries of when a "sword" actually becomes a "rapier." This is further complicated by the fact that in Italy, the rapier was simply known as "spada" (=sword), while in other countries like England, a sword may have been called a "rapier" just by virtue of being used by a foreigner, especially an Italian.

There are also a number of unanswered questions about the rapier's development. How early does the rapier appear? In what country does it originate? Out of what earlier sword-type does it evolve? All these questions and many others will be hopefully answered as the Hopological (=study of weapons) investigation of our European heritage progresses. But the stark truth is that, as of today, the answers we have are vague and often contradictory.



### Anatomy of the rapier and nomenclature of its parts

One of the most characteristic parts of the rapier is the hilt. Rapier hilts varied greatly in shape and complexity, ranging from a simple set of rings in protection of the hand to the typically Spanish "cup hilt." During the time of Fabris, a rapier's hilt would typically feature a cross-guard with both quillons, a knuckle-bow, two arms and an outer and inner guard composed of rings and loops.

Sometimes, it is possible to associate a particular hilt-style with a region or country. For instance, flattened, oval-shaped finials

were fairly typical of England, while the shape commonly referred to as Pappenheimer is associated with the Germanic countries. But given the strongly international nature of late-Renaissance trade, it is often impossible to pinpoint a rapier's geographical origin with certainty, unless the piece is clearly, truthfully and recognizably marked.

To a certain extent, the same is true of age. Several hilt types went in and out of fashion several times over practically a century and a half. Others, though, are easier to place within a certain time-frame: the cup-hilt, for instance, did not make its appearance until the second quarter of the 17th Century.

Rapier blades varied in length, width, shape and thickness. A typical rapier blade of the age of Fabris was around 40 to 42 inches long and tapered from 1 or 1½ inches to a fine point. However, this is very much a generalization and it should be borne in mind that rapiers could vary as much in their blade as in their hilt.

For more on the typical length and handling characteristics of a rapier, look at [Steve Reich's excellent article](#).

### **Dispelling a few myths about the rapier**

In recent years, the enthusiasm of some researchers has gotten slightly ahead of their investigation of historical sources; consequently, many myths that had plagued the rapier's image between the Victorian era and the years of the Silver Screen have been replaced by new ones. Interestingly, some of these new myths seem to be borne of a conscious determination to go 180 degrees against the old ones. And as a result of this determination, the new myths are often more wrong than the ones they are meant to replace! Here is a few of them.

**Myth: the rapier is a slow and cumbersome weapon.** On the contrary, tipping the scale at somewhere between 2 and 3 lbs, a typical rapier is a very nimble sword capable of the most subtle nuances. Furthermore, a well-made rapier that balances around 4 to 5 inches from the cross-guard enables a skilled swordsman to execute quick, elaborate maneuvers that are all but impossible with other swords. However, the rapier (like most good forms of swordsmanship) does not strictly rely on speed alone, being instead primarily dependent on good tempo, correct measure and proper technique.

**Myth: a rapier is only "a rapier" if it does not have a cutting edge.** Those who believe this imagine the rapier as some sort of overgrown foil, but (for some reason) with a virtually inflexible blade. Even a cursory look at a museum collection and an open mind is enough to update one's understanding of this weapon. While it is true that some rapiers (especially in the mid-to-late 17th Century) featured a blade-geometry not conducive to taking an edge, these are more the exception than the rule in the age of Fabris. Another rather macroscopic piece of evidence in this regard are the hundreds of references to cutting techniques contained in rapier manuals, from Fabris to Capoferro to Alfieri and many others. No real master would have included a plethora of techniques that would have been impossible to perform with the most fashionable sword of the time.

**Myth: the rapier could not cut.** While definitely not optimized for the cut, most rapiers from the age of Fabris sported a fine edge that could produce very formidable cuts. The cut is actually utilized in most period rapier texts, although the thrust is preferred as more lethal and tactically superior. In some treatises such as Alfieri (1640) the cut is shown as an alternate offense to almost all techniques. Furthermore, most rapier cuts were aimed at the head and the limbs, making them potentially debilitating or at least very painful. Lastly, for any cut to be effective, the swordsman needs to employ proper technique: no sword, European or Asian, is magical in that regard.

**Myth: when the rapier was used for the cut, it was only tip cuts or harassment cuts.** There is virtually no evidence of such technique as a "harassment cut" ever being employed or even mentioned by period masters. Quite to the contrary, those like Fabris who speak of the exact delivery of the cut specify that the whole half of the blade containing the tip should be employed while "slicing" through the target. With a normal rapier featuring a blade-length of about 42 inches, that would make 20 inches of sharp blade slicing through one's scalp or limbs at a very high speed, combined with a strong percussive element. Only a man of incredible fiber would receive such cut as merely "harassment."

**Myth: the rapier was mostly used with an "anything goes" style, primarily in street brawls.** We should not forget that the rapier was the chief sidearm of the nobility and the upper middle class. Let's also keep in mind that good swordsmanship was seen as one of the most important indicators of a person's upbringing and education. Hence the level of incredible refinement and economy of motion displayed in treatises such as the Fabris, as well as the degree of ritualistic codification of the duel during the apogee of the rapier. Rapiers were used just as much in deadly duels as they were in safe and friendly matches where one could display his fencing skills before an admiring audience; rapiers were also present on the battlefields of Europe (with mixed success) and, no doubt, they also would have found their way to the hands of street bravi and tavern brawlers.

**Myth: the nuances of rapier fencing described in the period texts become unavailable in bouting.** A few months of dedication to the weapon are enough to disprove this theory. Most of the subtle techniques that constitute the basis of rapier fencing, such as the lunge, the girata, the cavazione, the feint and the single-tempo parry-counter become second nature in a matter of weeks. As with most Renaissance arts, that of the rapier is based on a thorough awareness of body-mechanics, and is actually designed to play on the natural strengths of the human machine.

**Myth: a rapier blade is too flimsy to execute strong parries.** As Fabris says in Chapter 3, there is no blow, no matter how stoutly delivered, that cannot be parried with the first half of the rapier's forte. Analysis of several antique rapiers from Fabris' time also shows how the section of the blade near the hilt is very thick, and would be more than suited to withstand a parry against a strong cut from virtually any sword. This is further confirmed by practice with good quality modern replicas. Naturally, though, this assumes that the correct parrying technique is employed, such as that shown by Fabris in plate 38; if the rapier is not used correctly, it can break as can any other sword.

## **Conclusion**

All in all, the rapier was a splendid weapon that became extremely popular throughout Europe for its suitability for dueling, fencing and self-defense as well as for its unique beauty. It is also one of the best-balanced swords of all times, and its length is very well proportioned to the "natural-defense" range of humans. And we are extremely lucky that a handful of talented masters and teachers of that time gifted posterity with their rapier treatises. It is therefore our privilege and our duty to keep this tradition alive by researching these treatises and practicing their contents as faithfully as possible.

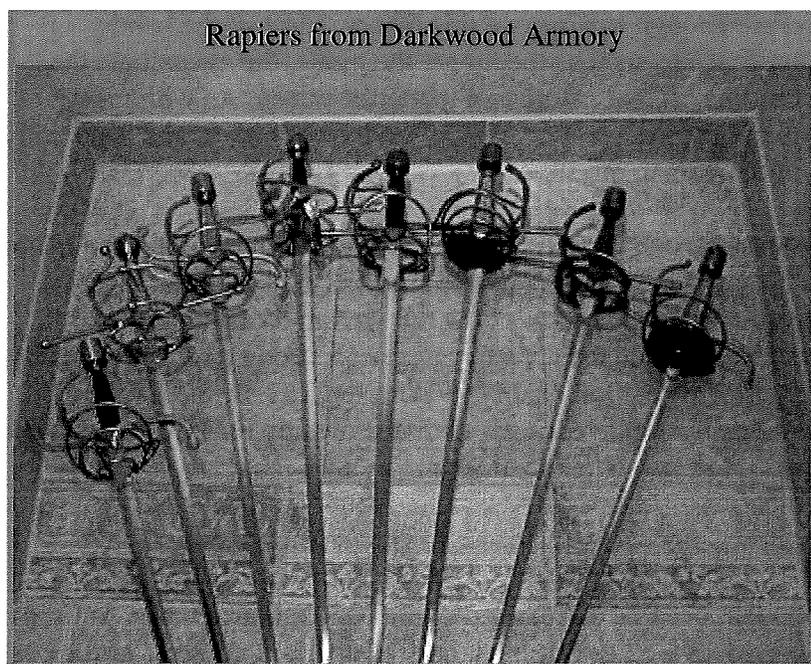
## Equipment for a Beginning Student of Italian Rapier

by Steven Reich

Many times an aspiring student is unsure of what equipment is necessary for the study of the Italian rapier. In fact, a student might not even be sure exactly what qualities determine whether or not a sword is a rapier. This is not a simple question and it is still debated within the Western Martial Arts Community. This article is concerned only with the weapons and equipment necessary to study the weapon as depicted in the plates and techniques of Salvator Fabris and his Italian contemporaries (such as Ridolfo Capoferro and Francesco Alfieri).

### The Rapier

When selecting a weapon to use for drilling and bouting, it is important to consider the design of the hilt, the characteristics of the blade, and the weapon as a whole. While there is debate over what constitutes a rapier as opposed to a sidesword or a transitional rapier (especially since the term *rapier* is not used by Fabris or any of his Italian contemporaries), this article specifically covers the sword as depicted by illustrations in the treatise of Fabris. As such, the characteristics of the hilt and the blade can be determined to a reasonable degree.



Historically, rapier hilts came in many styles, so the prospective student is left with a wide choice of accurate designs. Swept hilts, ring hilts, and pappenheimer-style hilts were all popular in the early 17th century, as were several other styles. Included in the choice of hilt style is the question of straight or curved quillons. Either will work well, and the choice is left to the personal preference of the student. However, it is important that both the true-edge and the false-edge quillon are present on the hilt. Using a rapier without both quillons will add an unnecessary challenge to the student practicing techniques. Certainly such hilts existed, but I believe it is worth

nothing that all of the swords depicted in the manual of Fabris have both quillons.

The rapier manuals of Alfieri and Capoferro discuss the length of the blade in proportion to the wielder: two arms' lengths, or the distance between the feet when lunging; or enough that it can stand comfortably under the swordsman's underarm. While it is not practical for most fencers to order a blade of an exact custom length, a blade with a length between forty and forty-two inches will be very close to the ideal measurement for an individual of normal stature (note that the length is measured from the quillon-block to the tip of the blade). Since the cut is occasionally utilized as a technique in Italian rapier, the blade should have two distinct edges. Historically, longer and shorter rapier blades, and blades without cutting capability existed, but I am referring to the rapier as depicted in the manuals of Fabris and his Italian contemporaries.

The new rapier student looking for a practice weapon is fortunate in that in the last few years, a wide variety of options have become available. Serviceable rapiers are available for as low as one-hundred fifty dollars, with very good models available for around three-hundred dollars. While these reproductions will not have quite the feel of an historic original, they will allow the student to accurately reproduce all of the historic techniques described in the manuals. We have found one maker **Darkwood Armory** offers weapons that are an excellent combination of accuracy, aesthetics and price. A typical "off-the-shelf" rapier from them will cost around three-hundred dollars, with a hand-made hilt, grip and pommel, and a *Del Tin Practice Rapier Blade*. We use these rapiers almost exclusively for our training and find them to be excellent weapons.

A quick search of sword manufacturers and retailers will produce a selection of acceptable reproductions that conform to the above guidelines, but it is important to follow a few rules when selecting one. First, the blade of the weapon must be designed for drilling and sparring. Some reproductions come with sharp blades, and even if the tip and edge are ground off, the blade might not be flexible or durable enough to withstand repeated contact. Blades used for training and bouting will endure as much punishment as a foil or epee blade and need to be manufactured for this purpose. I also recommend against using Schläger blades, as they are tip heavy and tend to feel "wobbly." The quality of reproduction blades has reached a point where settling for a Schläger blade is unnecessary (they are safe, but not ideal). For those students who want a stiffer blade, I recommend a rapier equipped with the *Del Tin Bated Rapier Blade*, it will have a feel similar to lighter historic rapier blade. Finally, the tip should be foiled with a blunt (we use archery bird blunts) as even the more flexible rapier blades will impart a significant amount of force when used in a thrust.

When all of the choices are made, the result should be a substantial weapon with a compound hilt and a long blade (between forty and forty-two inches) that will withstand the rigors of heavy use. The blade will be flexible and durable enough to be safely utilized in drilling and full-speed, full-contact bouting, and the weapon will handle in a manner similar to an historic rapier.

### **The Dagger**

A serious student of the rapier will certainly want to learn how to use the combination of sword and dagger as this was a common combination covered in most of the historic treatises. I recommend that a new student start by learning the sword alone first, but it is often worth purchasing a dagger at the same time as the rapier is purchased.

There are members of the Western Martial Arts Community who complain about the lack of stiffness of practice blades, implying that any flexibility in a blade hinders proper technique. While I agree that a practice blade needs to be stiff enough that its vibrations from its flexibility do not interfere with a student's techniques, I have never experienced that problem with any of the *Del Tin Practice Rapier Blades*. In fact, I have never seen the flexibility of a practice blade interfere with the execution of a single historical technique of the Italian Rapier. Even a Schläger blade (certainly a less than ideal choice for a blade) will allow for the correct execution of the techniques of the Italian Rapier. A blade with the characteristics of a rigid steel rod does not make it more effective; it is not necessary to fence with a weapon that is painful or potentially dangerous to one's opponent.

Like a rapier, a dagger should have both quillons, but also a ring or a shell mounted perpendicular to the quillons to protect the back of the hand when parrying the opponent's blade. The blade should probably not be longer than fourteen inches and possibly shorter for someone of smaller stature, although probably not shorter than eleven or twelve inches (like the rapier, the length of the blade on a dagger is measured from the hilt to the tip of the blade).

In the manuals of Fabris and Alfieri, the dagger is never used as the principal attack weapon in techniques of sword and dagger (and even the manual of Capoferro only devotes two plates to attacking with the dagger). Because of this, I do not feel that it is important for the blade be flexible (although it should never be even remotely sharp), as a student will generally not make it a part of his usual offensive repertoire (Note, however, that the rules of many rapier tournaments forbid a competitor from using a dagger that is not mounted with a *flexi-blade*). Using a non-flexible blade for the dagger does impart a responsibility on the part of its user to ensure that he does not use it in a way that could result in an injury to his opponent, and those students who utilize it as a primary offensive weapon are advised to use a *flexi-blade* and strictest control.

**Darkwood Armory** offers a good selection of daggers (most notably the *Ring Dagger* and the *Pierced Plate Dagger*). **Del Tin** also has very serviceable selection of daggers (the *Early 17th Century Main Gauche* and the *Late 16th Century Main Gauche*). Darkwood offers flex-blades, but Del Tin does not (and it is important to ensure that any dagger purchased is not sharpened). A dagger from Darkwood Armory will cost from one-hundred twenty-five dollars and higher, a Del Tin dagger will cost around two-hundred dollars.

A cheap alternative to a reproduction rapier is available to the student in the form of a wooden rapier waster. These are available in correct lengths, but the weight is significantly lighter than a historic rapier. Unless budgetary constraints make the purchase of a reproduction impossible, I would strongly advise a student to avoid these and spend the extra money on a reproduction. The handling characteristics of a wooden waster are different from that of a steel reproduction. Furthermore, full-speed bouts with a rigid wooden waster could be somewhat dangerous, as a properly executed lunge will transfer a significant amount of force along the inflexible wooden blade.

## Safety Equipment & Clothing

Finally, a new student will need to obtain a few pieces of protective equipment and clothing for safety and comfort:

**Mask:** The student should buy a fencing mask that fits and is comfortable, and I recommend a mask with the highest puncture resistance available. A well-built fencing mask will cost one-hundred to one-hundred forty dollars, but will last for years of use if properly maintained.

**Chest Protector/Breast Cups:** Women should wear either a fencer's female chest guard or a set of chest plates. Chest protectors are also available for men although the decision on whether or not to wear one is one of pain tolerance rather than preventing injury.

**Groin Protection:** Men involved in bouts should wear an athletic cup or other groin protection. For women, this is an optional piece of equipment that might be worth considering.

**Gloves:** Students should obtain a set of leather gloves. Sabre-style fencing gloves are adequate, as are "renaissance-type" leather gloves. Two gloves are needed as the hand not wielding the rapier might be used to parry or wield a dagger.

**Tunic:** The student should have a protective tunic designed for fencing or historic swordplay. I use the double-layer SCA Fighting Tunic available from Triplette Competition Arms, however, a 3-weapon sport fencing tunic is also acceptable.

**Gorget:** I advise new students to acquire a leather gorget. While I use do not wear one when bouting with other practitioners who I trust to have control, I will wear it when sparring with unfamiliar opponents or opponents who I know to be especially aggressive or wild.

**Pants:** A comfortable pair of pants that will withstand the rigors of bouting are necessary. Anything worn for fencing will work, as will sweatpants or sturdy, knee-length shorts, or even a pair of sturdy pants from a Karate or Tae Kwon Do uniform.

**Shoes:** While shoes are not strictly necessary (except under the rules of some rapier tournaments), if shoes are worn, they should either have the characteristics of fencing shoes or renaissance footwear.

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## Resources

For an exhaustive resource detailing nearly every historic style of rapier hilt, see [The Rapier and Smallsword, 1460-1820](#) by A.V.B. Norman.

The standard selection of hilt designs available from Darkwood Armory can be viewed at [Darkwood Armory](#)