



Competitive Fencing



British Fencing



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● Introduction

Fencing is a great way to keep fit, and many fencers treat it as a fun workout – a way of relieving the stresses of the week. However, it is essentially a combat sport, and at some time in their careers, most fencers want to try their skills against other fencers under competition conditions.

Fencing within a club can be competitive (sometimes fiercely so!). Apart from club bouts there is a wide variety of organised competitions. From as young as 8 yrs old, up to veterans old enough to be their great-grandparents, there are events almost every weekend of the year, at club, county, regional or national level.

Picking the right competitions for your age, ability, chosen weapon and location can be tricky. The first person to ask is your club coach, or other fencers at your club who already have competition experience.

This guide is divided into sections aimed at different types of fencers. Some sections (like the “competition kit checklist”) apply to everyone. Boxes like the one at the bottom right of this page provide useful information.

Fencing Age Groups.

Youth fencing is usually divided up by age bands. The age of a fencer is normally taken as at Jan 1st in the current year, so if a fencer has not reached their 14th birthday on Jan 1st they are considered Under 14 for the whole of that year.

Some schools’ competitions use a similar system, but based on September 1st, in keeping with the school calendar.

Fencers under 17 are referred to as **Cadets** and those under 20 are called **Juniors**. Lots of competitions also use other age-groups, like under 11 or under 13, but these don’t have specific names.

Fencers over 40 may qualify for **veterans** competitions. Children under the age of 8 are not normally allowed to compete. There is no upper age limit.

● Competition Format (Individuals)

Check In: All competitions start by fencers visiting the check in desk to confirm that they are present. Don't miss this bit out – your entry will be scratched.

When checking in, fencers are required to show their British Fencing card. See the box (right) for details. This carries insurance. Without it, you may not fence.

Fencing usually starts about 30 – 60 minutes after check in closes.

Pools: After check in, competitors are divided into “pools” – groups of 5 – 7 fencers who all fence each other up to 5 hits. (4 hits for some under 9 competitions). Time is limited to 2 or 3 minutes. Sometimes there may be two rounds of pools, particularly in age group competitions.

Direct Elimination: The results of the pools are used to seed the knockout phase of the competition. In some competitions, up to 30% of the fencers who did worst are eliminated, but in most cases all fencers go through to the direct elimination (DE) stage.

The DE rewards fencers who do well in the pool stages, and keeps the strong fencers apart until near the end of the competition. In a competition with 64 entrants, the first round of DEs would see 1st place fence 64th, 2nd place fence 63rd and so on. If the number of

Membership of National Fencing Associations

To enter competitions, you must be a member of a national fencing federation. In Britain, these are England Fencing, Scottish Fencing, Welsh Fencing and the Northern Ireland Fencing Union. Membership of any of these federations also includes membership of British Fencing, who operate the membership and insurance scheme on behalf of the home countries.

The fee payable varies depending on age and which home country you join, but all memberships (except social membership) include insurance which is obligatory for entering competitions.”

At some competitions you may be able to join on the day. Check with the organisers in advance.

entrants is not a power of 2, (ie 8, 16, 32, 64 etc) then those fencers who did best in the pools will get a “bye” through the first DE round. After several DE rounds, there will only be two fencers left – the finalists.

Direct elimination fights are up to 15 hits (adults) 10 hits (under 13s) or 8 hits (under 9s). DE fights are normally 3 x 3 minutes (sometimes less for younger fencers) with a 60 second break between periods.

● Competition Format (Team)

Team competition formats vary depending on the number of teams entered. Teams are normally of 3 fencers. Team bouts can be all-fight-all (3 fencers each fight all of the other 3 fencers up to

5 hits) the result being decided as the best of the 9 fights. Another common system is a relay up to 45 hits, with the fencers at each end changing when one team has scored 5 hits, 10 hits, 15 hits etc.

● County, regional and national competitions for young fencers

County competitions are usually the easiest competitions to get to, and generally include quite a number of novice fencers of various ages. Most counties run web-sites giving details of dates, venues and age-groups. (See centre pages for details.)

Regional youth competitions are usually held in October or November. The top 4 in each age group (or more if the entry is large) qualify for the British Youth Championships in the following Jan or Feb. For this reason, regional youth events use the age based on the **NEXT** Jan 1st. Although the standard can be higher than county competitions, these events are very “beginner friendly”. Details can be obtained from your regional website. (See centre pages for details)

The British Youth Championships are held annually. Entry to the age groups U12, U14, U16 and U18 is limited by regional qualification (see above), but fencers under 10 can enter directly. In order to accommodate the large number of fencers, the BYC foil is held on one weekend, and the Epee and Sabre on another. The under 10 event is held on a separate day. Details from www.britishfencing.com

Home Country Championships. The home countries (see panel opposite) run separate national events, with entry limited to competitors affiliated to that country. See centre pages for details of Home Country websites.”

The British Cadet Championships (U17) are held annually. There is no qualification required for this but the competition is mandatory for any fencer wishing to be selected for the national team. As a result, the standard tends to be very high, often stronger than the British Youth Championships.

Counties, Regions & Countries

At the highest level, **British Fencing** handles membership, insurance, and deals with elite fencing, like selecting and training the Olympic team, or organising national competitions.

The Home Countries (like **England Fencing**) deal with grass roots issues, like coach education, club governance and child protection. They have limited international activity between themselves, and within the Commonwealth Fencing Federation.

England Fencing and Scottish Fencing are divided into a number of regions (sometimes called “sections”). Each region helps to manage the sport at a regional level, and run regional competitions. Wales and Northern Ireland are not sub-divided.

County Fencing Unions are sub-divisions of the regions, and run county competitions.

Older children are also entitled to enter adult competitions. They must have reached their 13th birthday before the January 1st of the current season (Sept – July) so if your 13th birthday is on Dec 31st 2007, you are entitled to fight in adult events during the Sept 07 – July 08 season. Many teenage fencers achieve very creditable results in adult competitions, and it is not unknown for 14yr olds to win adult events.

● Leon Paul Junior Series

The Leon Paul Junior Series (LPJS) is a nation-wide series of youth fencing competitions, organised locally but sponsored and co-ordinated by fencing equipment supplier, Leon Paul. There are about 12 Foil and Epee events and slightly fewer sabre competitions, in locations from Falkirk in Scotland to Bude in Cornwall. There are also a small number of team competitions.

In some weapons certain larger LPJS events may also be nominated for inclusion in the national cadet ranking scheme. The chosen events can change each year. LPJS age groups work on odd-numbered years, and almost always have a U11, U13 and U15 age-group. Many also have an U9 section and some include U17.

LPJS individual events are normally two rounds of pools followed by direct elimination. Some U9 events are decided on a single pool, without any elimination rounds.

The standard of fencing at LPJS competitions varies from beginners to national championship standard. However, they are a very beginner-friendly and offer a great entry point to competitive fencing. It is worth letting the organisers know if it is your first event – they will normally be pleased to offer help and advice.

The Leon Paul team competitions are extremely popular, and offer a way for young fencers to participate in competition in the supportive atmosphere of a team. They don't count in the ranking schemes, but this doesn't prevent them from being a friendly battleground for inter-club rivalry!

Full details about the Leon Paul Junior Series can be found at www.leonpaul.com/lpjs/lpjs.htm or by writing to Ben Paul at Leon Paul, Unit 14, Garrick Road Industrial Estate, Hendon, London. NW9 6AQ.

Leon Paul Ranking System

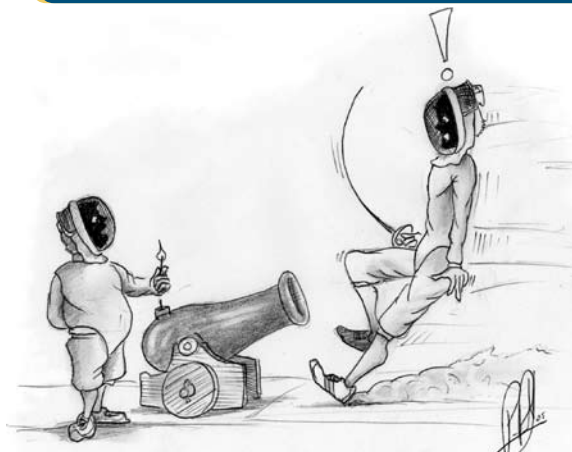
Leon Paul maintain national ranking lists for each weapon and age group, based on the results obtained at LPJS competitions. Each fencer's best 4 results count in these rankings, and Leon Paul offer prizes for the highest ranked fencers at the end of the year.

At the younger age groups, LPJS rankings are a fairly reliable indicator of overall strength, and are the nearest thing that the sport has to a national ranking scheme until U17, where the national cadet schemes take over.

Fencers who finish higher than 24th in any LPJS individual event earn ranking points, and will appear on the ranking lists.

See: <http://www.leonpaul.com/lpjs/results.htm> for more details.

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● Premier Foil Series

The Premier Foil Series is based in the south, and consists of 6 or 7 events centred on Surrey, Essex and Bristol, and is sponsored by another equipment supplier, Allstar-Uhlmann.

Age groups for the PFS are U9, U11 and U14. Competitions are based on a single round of pools followed by direct elimination.

The standard of competition ranges from beginner through to very strong.

More details and entry forms are available from www.fencing.org.uk or by writing to Mark Nelson-Griffiths at Sussex House, 68 Cadogan Square, London SW1X 0EA.

Premier Series Ranking System

The Premier Series also runs a ranking system for young foilists, based on the results at PFS competitions.

Results are weighted in favour of the first and last competitions of the season (Grand Prix events). Because the series is southern based, it tends not to get many entries from Scottish or northern based fencers, and the ranking lists reflect this. Nevertheless, the standard of competition is high, and to finish near the top of the PFS ranking is quite an achievement.

More details at www.fencing.org.uk

● Other competitions

There is a variety of other stand-alone youth competitions throughout the country. The full calendar of national events is published on the British Fencing website at: www.englandfencing.org.uk. Yorkshire Region also runs a youth series, see the Yorkshire website for details.

Local events are usually published on county or regional websites – see centre pages for details. It is also common for event organisers to leave entry forms for their competition on the check-in desk of an earlier competition – watch out for these.

Competition organisers should insist that competitors are members of a home country federation, or have a valid membership of a foreign federation. This ensures that all competitors are insured. With the exception of school competitions covered by the schools insurance, entering competitions which allow non-members to fence is not recommended.

● Training opportunities for competition fencers

There are plenty of camps and courses available for young fencers to supplement their club training. See www.britishfencing.com or your local county or regional website for details. For seriously competitive young fencers, the home countries run training sessions which may be open to all, or by invitation only. See the home country websites, or for England members, see www.tomorrowsachievers.org.uk

● Student Fencing

Many universities have strong fencing clubs, but they can decline and increase in strength and numbers very rapidly as student year groups arrive and leave.

Some students prefer to enter mainstream adult fencing events, but there is a thriving series of student fencing competitions run by the British Universities Sports Association.

There are also some Junior (U20) events in various weapons, particularly the British Junior Championships held every autumn.

BUSA Competitions

The British Universities Sports Association includes fencing in its participating sports.

Every year there is a BUSA team and individual competition in each weapon, run with regional leagues and a premier league.

For more info, visit www.busa.org.uk and follow the links to fencing.

● Veteran's Fencing

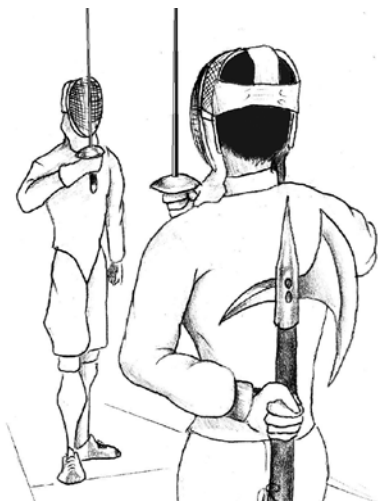
The National Veterans Association oversees a thriving competitive scene for older fencers. Some Vets still compete in the main open circuit, but others have retired from the bigger events but still keep their hand in. Some veterans have come to the sport later in life, but still attain excellent results.

There are veteran competitions at county, regional and national level, as well as a European and World Vets championship. Visit www.veterans-fencing.co.uk for more details, or write to: John Mason, 18 Sandringham Road, Trowbridge, BA14 0JU.

Veteran Age Categories

Veteran fencing is divided into 4 age categories. Category 1 is for fencers aged 40-49, Category 2 is 50-59, Category 3 is 60-69 and Category 4 is for fencers over the age of 70.

Many open competitions offer a prize for the best Veteran – this is usually limited to NVA members.



Courtesy of Peter Russell

● International and National Federations

Federation Internationale d’Escrime (FIE) International governing body. www.fie.ch

European Fencing Confederation.(EFC) www.eurofencing.info

Nahouw. International directory of fencing competitions. www.nahouw.net

British Fencing Association. 1, Baron’s Gate, 33-35 Rothschild Road, London W4 5HT.
0208 742 3032. www.britishfencing.com

England Fencing. St Margarets Green, Ipswich, Suffolk. IP4 2BN.
0147 321 4554. www.englandfencing.org.uk

Northern Ireland Fencing Union. www.nifu.co.uk

Scottish Fencing. 589 Lanark Road, Edinburgh. EH14 5DA.
0131 453 9074. www.scottish-fencing.com

Welsh Fencing. 37, Landsdowne Ave. East, Cardiff, CF11 8BU.
02920 224242. www.welshfencing.org

● Other National Bodies

National Veterans Fencing Association. www.veterans-fencing.co.uk

British Disabled Fencing Association. 92, Challinor, Church Langley, Essex. CM17 9XD

British Universities Sports Association. www.busa.org.uk and follow links to fencing.

Army Fencing. <http://www.army.mod.uk/sportandadventure/clubs/fencing/index.htm>

Navy Fencing. www.royal-navy.mod.uk/server/show/nav.3709

RAF Fencing. www.raffencing.co.uk

Fencing Forum. www.fencingforum.com/forum

Mending broken equipment. www.leonpaul.com/armoury/armoury.htm

● Regional Contacts

English Regions

Eastern Region:

www.bfaeastern.org.uk

East Mids Region:

www.emfencing.com

North East Region:

www.fencingnortheast.org

North West Region:

www.nw-fencing.org.uk

Southern Region:

www.southernfencing.org.uk

South East Region:

no regional website, but try

www.scfu.homestead.com

South West Region:

www.southwestfencing.net

West Mids Region:

www.westmidlandsfencing.org.uk

Yorkshire Region:

www.yorkshirefencing.org.uk

England Youth

www.tomorrowsachievers.org.uk

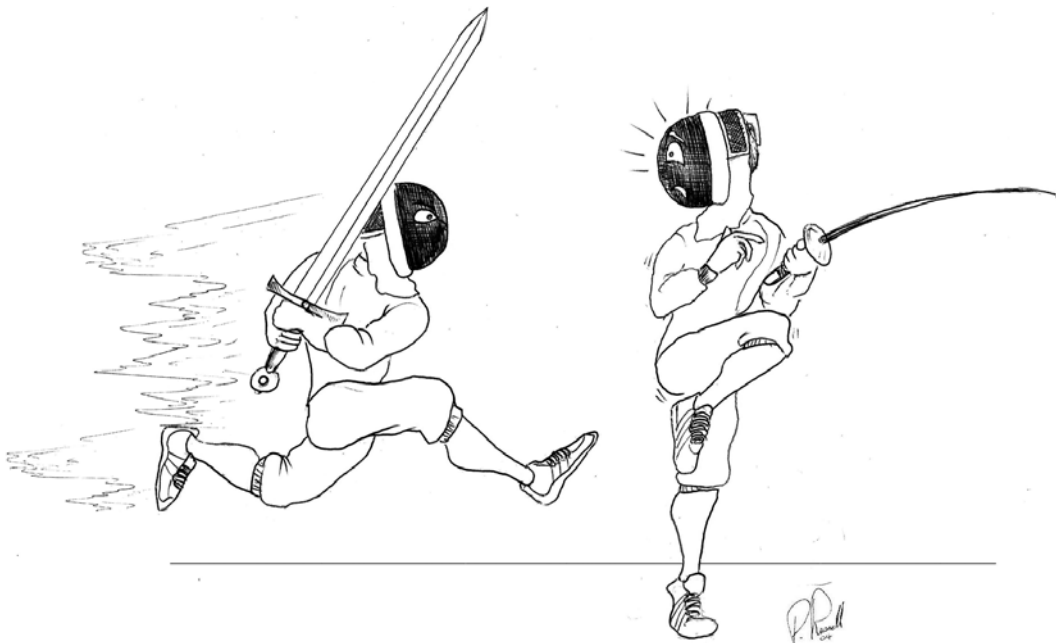
For Scottish Regional info,

see the main Scottish Fencing website at www.scottish-fencing.com

Child Protection

The British Fencing Child Protection policy can be seen at the British Fencing website.

Anyone with any concerns about a Child Protection matter should contact the BF child protection officer, in confidence, on 07833 661742.



● Adult Fencing Competitions

Most counties and regions run annual competitions in each weapon. The difficulty level often depends on the weapon, and whether the local competition clashes with a bigger “open” competition somewhere, which might draw the stronger fencers.

Check your county or regional website (see centre pages) for details.

Open Competitions, as the name implies, are open to everyone. (Although competitors must have reached their 13th birthday by the Jan 1st in the middle of the current season).

Some Opens attract much stronger levels of competition than others. There are so many of them that it is possible to fence competitively almost every weekend of the year (except during August) although you would spend a lot of time travelling!

The size of Opens also varies sharply - At a large Open, Men’s Epee can have 200 or more competitors, but a smaller Open might only

Jargon-Buster

Different weapon categories may be described with two letter acronyms, such as “MF” for Men’s Foil, or “WE” for Women’s Epee.

Competitions offering all 6 combinations of gender and weapon are described as “6W”, meaning “six weapon”.

Novice and Intermediate Events

There is no fixed definition of “novice” or “intermediate” in fencing but there are several competitions held each year aimed at less experienced competitors.

Some of these are listed on the main British Fencing calendar (see centre pages for web address) but many are just advertised on local club or county websites.

Inter-club friendly matches are also a good way to get started.

have a dozen Womens Sabre entrants. One useful guide to the standard of the competition is to look on the British Fencing website results page for last year, and see how many people entered. Then look at the rankings pages, and see how many of the entrants were in the top 50 or 100.

It may not be great for your ego to enter a very large Open for your first competition, but on the other hand, you might have the chance to fence a national champion or even an Olympic fencer in your first fight!

Remember to make sure that you have the right kit before you enter a competition – see checklist at the back of this booklet.

● Competition Checklist

Before the competition

- Complete entry form and send off **with cheque**
- Confirm entry has been received (some competitions list entries received on their website, if in doubt send an SAE with entry to get confirmation)
- Check to make sure you have your **BFA card** and it doesn't expire before the competition

The night before the competition

- Confirm check in time
- Check that all your kit works
- Check route to venue

On the day

- Don't forget to check in
- Make sure you understand the format of the competition. Is it one round of pools or two?
- Warm up properly. The vast majority of injuries at fencing competitions are caused by inadequate warm-up
- Keep listening out for announcements.
- Watch for lists going up on the wall. Make sure that your name is on the list of fencers present.
- After each fight, make sure that you have heard your score correctly.
- At the end of the pools, check the pool sheet to make certain your fights have been recorded correctly.
- There is sometimes a long wait between pools and direct elimination. Keep listening for announcements.
- Don't forget to have fun!

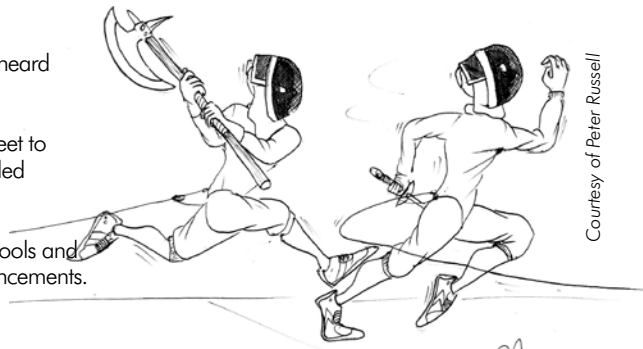
Food, Drink and Shoes!

Some competitions serve great food at reasonable prices, often provided by local club volunteers who rely on the income from food sales to subsidise the competition. Other events may rely on the indifferent and over-priced café attached to the venue, or have no eating facilities at all. It's worth trying to find out what is available in advance.

Make sure that you take plenty to drink – several litres may be necessary, particularly in the summer. Sports drinks are good for replacing minerals, with water or weak squash for replacing bulk fluids.

Some fencers find that they can't eat when competing, others need to stuff themselves between every fight. Food intake is a matter of personal choice, but fluid intake must be kept up. By the time you feel thirsty, you are already dehydrated.

Some venues won't allow any drink except water in the sports halls, and most won't allow out-door shoes. Parents and partners of fencers should avoid high heels or shoes with soles that may mark the floor.



Courtesy of Peter Russell

Equipment requirements

British Fencing lays down certain standards for protective clothing that must be worn while fencing. Some clubs may permit fencing with equipment below that standard, but competition organisers insist that the British Fencing standards are met.

The minimum standard for U14 fencers is lower than that for older competitors, but some organisers require some elements of the higher

standard regardless of age – particularly in regard to breeches. There is a higher standard for FIE (International) competitions. The table below shows the minimum requirements for each section. Note that the lower U14 standard only applies for a competition where all competitors are U14 and using size 3 weapons or smaller.

U14 fencers competing in a higher age group must have equipment of the higher standard.

	Jacket	Plastron	Breeches	Mask
U14	350N Jacket	350N Plastron	Trousers with pockets	Mask with 350N bib
	or integrated 350N Jacket/plastron		sewn shut -no shorts	
FIE	800N Jacket	800N Plastron	800N Breeches	Mask with 1600N bib
Others	350N Jacket	800N Plastron	350N Breeches	Mask with 350N bib

Standard rules for competitions require all competitors to have a minimum of two working weapons and two bodywires at the side of the piste at the beginning of each fight. This is because malfunctioning equipment delays the competition.

The penalty for not meeting this is a yellow card (warning) for the first offence and a red card (one hit to opponent) for each subsequent offence.

Most clubs will lend spare weapons and wires to members attending their first few competitions, but regular competitors are advised to acquire their own spare equipment.

Jargon-Buster

The “N” in 350N or 800N stands for Newtons. This is the size of the force than can be applied to the material by a standard weapon, without penetration occurring.

Checklist

- Fencing shoes/trainers
- Socks long enough to meet breeches
- Breeches
- Plastron
- Jacket
- Chest Protector (girls/ladies)
- Lamé (Foil & Sabre Only)
- Glove
- Mask
- 2 working weapons
- 2 working bodywires
- BFA Card
- Drinks

● Refereeing and Etiquette

At children's competitions, referees are usually provided by the organisers, although large groups of fencers (like a school or club group) are encouraged to provide a referee if possible – about 1 ref for every four or five fencers is a good guide.

At adult competitions, particularly in the pool stage, it is common for fencers in the same pool to referee each other. If you are not confident doing this, just explain to the other fencers in the pool, but watch the more experienced refs in order to learn.

The main function of the referee is to maintain safety, to decide issues of right of way (in foil and sabre), keep time and score, and to enforce the

rules of fencing. Referees may award penalty cards for infractions of the rules.

At every competition there is a small committee called the *Directoire Technique* (DT) whose judgement on all matters regarding the competition is final. Fencers may appeal to the DT if they feel that the referee has made an error in applying the rules. No appeal can be made against the decision of the ref in a matter of fact. For example, if the ref decides that a particular passage of fencing ended with a parry-riposte from the fencer on the right, and awards a point, then this decision cannot be appealed. However, if the ref awards a red card when the rules call for a yellow card, this can be appealed because it is an incorrect application of the rules.

● Etiquette

Normal fencing etiquette requires the fencers to salute each other and the referee at the start of the bout, and to shake hands at the end. Some fencers also salute if the score is level at match point.

Although bouts can become very tense and disappointment at defeat is unavoidable, it is not acceptable to swear, throw kit or to abuse the opponent or referee.

Coaching advice may only be given during the 1 min breaks in a DE fight, and not during a bout.

Penalty Cards

Referees may issue coloured cards, similar to football refs for various infractions of the rules. There is a full list of penalties in the RULES section of the BFA website.

Yellow card: A warning issued for a relatively minor infraction.

Red card: One hit to the opponent, resulting from a more serious offence, or a repeat of a yellow card offence.

Black card: Expulsion from the competition and venue. Reserved for the most serious or persistent offenders.

Spectators, coaches and other non-fencers can be awarded yellow or black cards, but only a fencer can be awarded a red card.

Keeping score - understanding the Pool Sheet

In a pool (all-fight-all) round, the score is usually kept on a sheet similar to the one shown below.

You see your own score by reading across the page. In the example below, Sean Connery, fencer 1, won his fight against no 2 (Lazenby) scored 3 points against no 3 (Moore) won with 4 points on time against no 4 (Brosnan) and won against no 5 (Dalton). Scores against you can be found by reading down the column headed with

your number. Reading down the 1 column, you can see that Lazenby scored 2 hits against Connery, Moore beat him, Brosnan scored 3 and Dalton 1.

The pink section is a summary of the results, like a football league table. Victories, hits scored and hits received are totalled here. The column headed I is like goal difference: hits scored - hits received. The final column is the placement in the pool.

Chipping Sodbury Open

Boys U14 Foil Pool Round 1

Title and section of competition

Fencer 1 beat fencer 4 on time, 4-3 shown with a V4 in row 1, column 4 and a 3 in row 4, column 1

	No.	1	2	3	4	5	V	HS	HR	I	Pos
Connery S	1		V	3	V4	V	3	17	11	6	2
Lazenby G	2	2		V	1	3	1	11	19	-8	5
Moore R	3	V	4		2	V	2	16	17	-1	3
Brosnan P	4	3	V	V		V	3	18	8	10	1
Dalton T	5	1	V	4	1		1	11	18	-7	4

Final position within pool

In the fight between 1 and 5 Fencer 1 won 5-1. A V (victory 5) is entered in row 1, column 5, and a 1 is entered in row 5, column 1.

Number of bout victories won

1 v 2 1 v 3
 3 v 4 2 v 5
 5 v 1 4 v 1
 2 v 3 3 v 5
 5 v 4 4 v 2

HS is hits scored, HR is hits received. HS-HR is the column I for indicator, which is like goal difference in football. You can find HS by adding across the row and HR by adding down the column

The sequence of fights in the pool. If the fights are in this order, the fencers should get equal breaks.

ALWAYS CHECK THE POOL SHEET AT THE END OF THE ROUND.

If you think that your score has been recorded incorrectly, query it straight away. Once the next round has started, organisers will not be able to correct an error, even if it is proved.

Keeping score - understanding Engarde Printouts

Most competitions are managed using a computer programme called "Engarde". This programme prints out a variety of documents which can vary slightly depending on how Engarde is configured, but some of the basic types are shown below.

Fencers Present ← Check to make sure that your name is on this list!

Chipping Sodbury Open Womens Epee

Surname	First Name	Club	Rank
Adams	Andrea	Abingdon	4
Bennett	Beth	Brentwood	19
Campbell	Catherine	Chilwell	2
Davis	Denise	Donegal	999

The list of fencers present is normally posted by weapon/gender.

If the competition uses ranking lists to seed the first round, the ranking used may be shown. 999 indicates an

Ranking After 1st Round of Pools

Chipping Sodbury Open Womens Epee

Pos	Surname	First Name	V/M	HS	HR	I
1	Jones	Jane	1	25	4	21
2	Adams	Andrea	1	25	7	18
3	Merriweather	Mary	1	24	10	14
4	Smith	Sandy	0.8	23	5	18
41	Davis	Denise	0.2	12	23	-11
42	Edwards	Edwina	0	11	25	-14
43	Bennett	Beth	0	7	25	-18
44	Low	Lucy	0	5	25	-20

V/M stands for victories divided by matches, and is the 1st ranking factor

Sandy Smith must have scored 4 wins out of 5 fights to have a V/M of 0.8 Her indicator (18) is better than Mary's but Mary is ranked higher because she won all her fights

At the bottom of the list, the indicators are negative because hits scored are less than hits

Direct Elimination Tableau of 8

1	Jones Jane	_____
8	Morris Megan	_____
4	Smith Sandy	_____
5	Timms Tina	_____
6	Wilson Wendy	_____
3	Merriweather M	_____
7	Kipling Katie	_____
2	Adams Andrea	_____

In a DE tableau, the highest ranked fencer draws the lowest, so 1 fights 8, 7 fights 2 etc. If there had only been 7 fencers, no 1 would have a "bye" (automatic victory)

The ranking of fencers paired together always adds up to 1 more than the size of the tableau so in the L32, its 1 v 32, 2 v 31, 3 v 30, 16 v 17

● General Hints and Tips



Preparing your equipment.

Check the standards on page 12 and the entry form, and make sure that you have the correct standard of equipment. Some youth competitions will not allow fencing without breeches, even if BF guidelines permit it.

Foil: Make sure that the last 6 inches of the blade, including barrel (but not tip) are properly taped. If an untaped portion of the blade makes contact with your opponents lame, your hit will not register!

Epee: Make sure that both grub screws are present in the slots on the side of the barrel. If your tip flies out in the middle of a bout, no hits will register thereafter!

Sabre: Make sure that your blade is clean and free from rust or dirt. Apart from marking your opponents kit, rust and dirt act as insulators, and prevent hits from registering!

Read the Rules!

Quite often fencers come to a competition with an understanding of the rules that is incorrect or out of date. The rules are published on the BF website. They are quite long, but you can skip the paragraphs that start "O" or "M" and concentrate on the sections marked "T" with specific reference to your weapon.

Weights and Gauges

At some larger competitions, referees may check weapons at the start of the fight. They are checking for:

Foil: The spring in the tip must support a mass of 500gms.

Epee: The spring must support a mass of 750gms, both grub-screws must be present and the tip travel must be correct.

Ask at your club for help checking to ensure your weapons comply before attending the competition.