

US Fencing Coaches Association



Assistant Moniteur's Study Guide



Instructions To Supervising Professional

The Assistant Moniteur training program is designed to help you rapidly develop assistants who have the skills needed to assist in teaching group classes in your salle or club. This program requires you to fill three important roles during the candidate's certification process.

- First – you select individuals who have the knowledge, skills and abilities to serve as assistants (Please review this How To guide for criteria that may be helpful in making such choices)
- Second – you supervise their training, including study of the material found in the *Study Guide for Assistant Moniteurs* (available on the USFCA's website in the members area at www.usfca.org), lessons to bring their technical skills to a level with which you feel comfortable, and guidance in the activities included in the *Study Guide for Assistant Moniteurs* to help them learn the skills and knowledge needed to be effective in taking routine tasks off your back
- Third – you, or another professional member of the USFCA evaluate the candidate's performance. If you have a second professional coach who can perform the evaluation, that approach offers a cross-check on your perceptions and may be helpful, but it is not required.

This training process will take some time and effort on your part. The outcome is another set of trained eyes and hands that can undertake some routine tasks for you, an opportunity to more deeply involve fencers who are looking for a way to make a contribution to the future of the sport, and a way to involve teenage fencers as peer coaches, a proven motivational approach. The fencers you involve in this program will be as well prepared to help you as you make them.

Email or send the completed forms to: USFCA CAB Secretary
CAB_SBehrends@usfca.org

Steve Behrends, Maitre d'Armes
3004 Maple St.
West Des Moines
IA 50265

What Is An Assistant Moniteur?

Assistant Moniteurs are the initial level of instructor, qualified to assist all levels of certified professional coaches (Moniteur, Prévôt, and Master) in teaching group lessons and beginner level classes at the club or salle. Assistant Moniteurs, in programs managed by a certified current member of the USFCA, operate under the direct supervision of the professional to carry out the instructional program. In addition, Assistant Moniteurs may serve as beginning level instructors for school, college, or recreation program beginner courses.

Assistant Moniteurs earn their certification by studying a set number of hours and passing a written exam under a Moniteur, Prévôt, or Master that is a current USFCA member.



Selection Criteria

Fencers should be selected for Assistant Moniteur training based on knowledge, skills and abilities that indicate a high probability the individual will be an effective assistant to the professional coach. Seniority, competitive success, or amount of time as a fencer are not automatic indicators of a successful instructor. The following factors should be considered objectively:

- Ability to follow directions
- Physical fitness and quality of technical execution of fencing skills
- Ability to communicate verbally and by movement
- Knowledge about fencing, in general, and the skills to be taught in particular
- Organizational skills
- Reliability
- Maturity
- Genuine enthusiasm for fencing and for the role as an instructor
- Discretion and the ability to respect confidences
- Trustworthiness

How the Program Works

The Assistant Moniteur training and certification program is designed to be implemented in the individual club or salle, under the direct supervision of a Moniteur, Prévôt, or Master who is a current member and certified by the US Fencing Coaches Association. The candidate training to become an Assistant Moniteur works in an apprenticeship relationship with the professional coach to complete the program requirements.

Individuals may certify in any of the three weapons, based on the needs of their school, club, or salle. However, the intent is to issue one certificate to an individual at this level. If the Assistant Moniteur wishes to develop further as an instructor, training should be started to qualify the individual as a Moniteur.



Knowledge Requirements

Types and Characteristics of Fencing Weapons –

Modern fencing as a sport uses three weapons, each with distinctive characteristics. Men and women compete in all three weapons under the same rules. Most programs start new fencers with the foil as the basic training weapon. For beginning fencers the normal starting weapon is a dry weapon (one which is not configured with the point, wires, and socket required for electrical scoring).

The Foil

- Lighter weapon (up to 500 grams in weight).
- Scores touches by arriving on the target with the point in a way that it would cause a wound if the point were sharp
- Hits off the target stop the action.
- Uses right of way to determine priority of hit.
- Target is the torso – not including arms, legs, or mask.

The Épée

- Heavier weapon (up to 770 grams in weight).
- Scores touches by arriving on the target with the point in a way that it would cause a wound if the point were sharp.
- Whoever lands first scores the hit – no right of way
- if the hit lands at the same time, both fencers score a touch.
- Target is the entire body.

The Sabre

- Lighter weapon.
- Scores touches by arriving with the point or with the edge of the blade in a cut
- Off target hits do not register.
- Uses right of way to determine priority of hit.
- Target is the body above a line drawn across the tops of the hips.



Safety

One of the most important responsibilities of any instructor is to ensure a safe environment for the fencers. Fencing is a sport in which people hurl themselves at others with 35 inches of thin steel with the intent to hit. The potential exists for a wide range of injuries from bruises and minor sprains and strains – injuries that every fencer suffers – to life threatening puncture wounds from broken, or even unbroken, blades. A large percentage of disabling fencing injuries occur when the fencer is not actually fencing, in warm-up activities that are poorly designed and conducted. Your responsibility is to make sure accidents and injuries do not happen when you are on duty – failing to fulfill that responsibility can disable fencers and can result in law suits and in significant financial penalties against you or your club.

Fencing safety depends upon (a) proper technique, (b) adherence to the rules of fencing, (c) proper maintenance of equipment and the uniform, (d) correct wear of the uniform and use of protective equipment, and (e) safe conduct on and off the strip. For the Assistant Moniteur:

- No horseplay, running, or other uncontrolled activity in the salle.
- Weapons will be carried point down at all times unless the fencer is facing an opponent who is masked and is wearing appropriate protective clothing.
- Fencers must always wear a mask when facing each other with weapons, even in the parts of the lesson that do not involve any contact.
- Fencers when fencing each other should wear proper uniform, with jacket, underarm plastron, glove, knickers, and stockings. Jackets must be fastened. All clothing should be in good repair with no tears or holes, and fit properly so that no skin is exposed when fencing.
- Fencers must be taught to avoid hard hits, punching the weapon, and physical collisions with opponents. Adult fencers or larger, stronger teenagers must be taught to be responsible for using caution when fencing smaller, younger opponents to prevent injury. Bad physical technique must be stopped and solved on the spot.
- Be alert to the condition of buttons on the tips of weapons. Teach fencers to check their buttons at the start of each bout, and when observing drills or bouts be alert to a missing button.
- Monitor the position of students in drills – do not run students into walls or weapons racks or other parts of the building by doing your footwork without being conscious of where they are.
- Be conscious of the sound of a broken blade. A broken blade means everyone stops fencing until you can identify which blade broke, and replace it.
- In the case of injury or emergency follow all instructions given by the senior professional instructor – and implement your club or salle's emergency plan.
- If you observe an unsafe or possibly unsafe condition call "Halt." If you hear a call of halt, honor the call.
- Pay attention to the hairs on the back of your neck – if they stand up when you see someone doing something (or if you flinch and say "oh that hurt" to yourself), it is time to act.
- Brutality, uncontrolled anger, deliberate attempts to injure other fencers, bullying, and hazing have absolutely no place in a fencing program. If you observe these, stop the action immediately, take the participants off the strip, and turn the matter immediately over to the senior professional on duty.



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- People who cannot act appropriately in sport are a danger to others and will, if not immediately controlled, result in bad outcomes for your club or salle.
- Be alert to the entire environment - immediately report any spills of liquids, damage to strips, electrical equipment malfunctions, or other potentially hazardous conditions to the senior professional on duty and take action to protect the fencers.

Activity

During a typical group lesson or club fencing session in your organization, note situations that cause you some concern about Safety. Discuss these situations with your professional coach to determine if your concerns are justified, and if so, how you can help resolve them.

Terminology

Parts of the Weapon

The Foil has the following parts (electric foils used in competition have additional parts related to how they function):

- The **blade**, divided into
 - **Foible** – weak part, toward the tip
 - **Forte** – strong part, toward the bell
 - **Tang** – the threaded part inside the grip.
- The **button** or tip – typically a plastic covering for the hammered over end of the blade.
- The **bell** or guard – a protective metal shield that covers the fingers and hand.
- The cushion or **thumb pad** – a pad inside the bell to cushion impact.
- The **grip** or handle – the handle the fencer holds.
- The **pommel** – a threaded cylinder or insert that attaches to the tang and holds the weapon together.

Lines

Lines are areas, which the fencer uses in both attack and defense. We attack into an opponent's open (unprotected) line and we come on guard or parry to close our own line against possible attack. There are four lines defined by the position of the bell of the weapon:

- **High line** is above the bell.
- **Low line** is below the bell.
- **Inside line** is toward the fencer's chest.
- **Outside line** is toward the fencer's back.

This results in four quadrants that move as the weapon arm and the weapon move:

- High outside.
- High inside.
- Low inside.
- Low outside.



Distance

Distance refers to the physical distance separating the two fencers when they are on guard or moving. At the beginner level there are three distances:

- **Long distance** – the opponent can be reached by your advance-lunge.
- **Medium distance** – the opponent can be hit by an attack using a lunge.
- **Short distance** – the opponent can be hit by simply extending your arm with the weapon threatening the target.

Basic Offensive and Defensive Movements

Offensive movements are intended to arrive on the opponent's target scoring a touch. These include:

- **Attacks** – initial actions that are made by extending the weapon arm with the blade continuously threatening the opponent's target.
 - **Simple attacks** – those executed with one movement. In foil, they include attacks to the body with straight thrust, disengage, coupé, counter-disengage. In épée the same attacks can also be made to the advanced targets, such as the arm, foot, thigh and elbow. For sabre: attack are executed to the head, cheek (left and right), flank, chest, point, and to the advanced targets of the arm.
 - **Direct attacks** – those that start in one line and stay in that line. The straight thrust is the basic direct attack.
 - **Indirect attacks** – those that start in one line and move through another line. The most basic indirect attack is the disengage, an action that passes the point of your weapon around the opponent's bell (i.e., below the bell from one side to the other in the high line) to hit.
- **Ripostes** – offensive actions to hit an opponent after you have parried their attack.
- **Counter-riposte** – all ripostes made after the first riposte.
- **Compound attacks** – those attacks made with more than one movement, intended to feint to draw the opponent's reaction opening a line into which the final action of the attack can arrive.
- **Feint** – an action designed to look like an attack to draw an opponent's reaction, but not intended to actually land.
- **Counter-attack** – an attack into an opponent's attack without any attempt to parry.
- **Remise** – a renewal of any offensive action.

These actions may be executed from:

- The **on guard** position – the basic position from which all actions flow.
- An **advance** – a step forward.
- A **retreat** – a step backward.
- A **lunge** – a forward extension of the body led by a kick and driven by the rear leg.
- A **retreat-lunge** – a retreat followed immediately by a lunge.
- An **advance-lunge** – an advance followed immediately by a lunge.



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Defensive movements are designed to prevent the arrival of the opponent's touch. These include:

- **Parries** – defensive actions to block the blade by interposing the blade between the opponent's blade and your target area. The four basic parries used in foil and épée include:
 - **lateral parries** – the blade moves horizontally across the body from one line to another
 - **circular parries** – A parry executed first by moving the point *under* (high line) or *over* (low line) the opponent's blade and then taking his blade in a lateral parry and returning to the original position.
 - **semi-circular parries** – the blade moves from high to low line or low to high line on the same side.

Parries meet the foible of the opponent's blade with the forte of your blade.

Point weapon parries:

- **6th** – a high outside parry – the position of 6th is the normal position for on guard, ensuring that one line is closed when the fencer is on guard.
- **4th** – a high inside parry
- **8th** – a low outside parry
- **7th** – a low inside parry

Sabre parries:

- **3rd** – protects the shoulder, arm and cheek is the normal position for on guard, ensuring that one line is closed when the fencer is on guard.
 - **4th** – protects the inside target
 - **5th** – protects the head and upper shoulders
 - **2nd** – protects the lower arm
- **Distance control** – generally by a rapid short retreat to move the target sufficiently back so the attack falls short.
 - **Evasions** – any movement of the body designed to avoid being touched such as a ducking or sidestepping.

Basic Rules

The rules of fencing are published by the Federation Internationale d'Escrime (the International Fencing Federation, or FIE), and the complete text in English is available online at the United States Fencing Association website. However, to referee practice bouts in the club or salle you can work with an abbreviated set of rules.

The Fencing Strip

The fencing strip is 14 meters long by 1.5 to 2 meters wide. On guard lines are 2 meters from the center, and fencers come on guard behind these lines at the start of the bout and after each touch is scored. Warning lines are 2 meters from the end of the strip.

NOTE: Not every club has sufficient floor space for full sized strips. However, any shortened strip used for training should preserve the relationship of the on guard lines to the center of the strip and of the warning lines to the end of the strip.



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Bouting Basics

Bouts are fenced for 5 touches in 3 minutes of fencing time. If the score is tied at the end of 3 minutes, the referee flips a coin and the fencers fight for one additional minute. If at the end of that period neither fencer has scored a hit, the winner of the coin toss wins the bout.

Bouts are started by having the fencers salute and come on guard at the on guard lines and in the center of the strip. The command “fence” starts the action, and “halt” stops it. Actions that start after the halt cannot result in award of a touch. Fencers return to the on guard line position after each award of a touch. If no hit is awarded because a touch did not occur or hit off target, the fencers take distance from each other in the center of the strip and fencer from where the action halted.

In foil and saber the fencers may not come into physical contact with each other. The fencer causing such contact (corps a corps) is warned and then has a touch scored against him or her. At epee corps a corps is permitted without penalty, but the action should be stopped when the fencers are in body contact and cannot wield their weapons. Forcing a corps a corps to avoid being hit is warned and then receives a touch penalty in all weapons.

If a fencer steps off the side of the strip with one or both feet, the other fencer will advance one meter, and the offending fencer will take distance from this new position. If a fencer steps over the rear line with both feet a touch is awarded against the fencer.

The referee determines the right of way in foil and saber and the priority of the hit in epee (if electric scoring apparatus is not being used).

- Right of way belongs to the fencer initiating an attack by extending the weapon arm with the weapon continuously threatening the target, and is retained until the attack either misses or is parried. If both fencers arrive on target the fencer with right of way wins the touch.
- In epee the first hit to arrive scores the touch. If the referee cannot determine a time difference between the two hits, both fencers are hit.

Fencers must fence in a controlled, orderly, and safe way. Falling in an attempt to score a hit, turning the back on the opponent, removing the mask before the referee calls halt, and disorderly fencing are all penalized by a warning and then by the scoring of a hit against the fencer.

NOTE: Although not provided for in the FIE rules, training bouts in the salle or club should also require that fencers must remain in a position to defend themselves until the referee has called a halt and the other fencer has stopped fencing. Similarly fencers should not turn to look at the scoring apparatus when they believe a hit has arrived. Assessment of local penalties for failing to adhere to these safety standards may be included for club bouts.

Fencers are required to behave courteously toward the referee and toward each other. Jostling or running into opponents is warned and then results in a touch scored against the initiator. Deliberate brutal heavy hitting, bad sportsmanship, throwing items, berating the referee, etc., should receive an immediate penalty of loss of the bout.

At the end of a bout the fencers will salute and shake hands.

NOTE: The rules about saluting are enforced and the failure to shake hands can result in disqualification. Enforcing these in practice bouts is important training.



Activity

Referee at least five bouts during club practice sessions or club practice competitions.

Fencing Organizations

Among the Olympic Sports (fencing has been an Olympic Sport since the first modern Olympics in 1896) the International Olympic Committee recognizes certain international organizations as the governing bodies for their sports. In fencing, the recognized organization is the Federation Internationale d'Esgrime (FIE – International Fencing Federation). The FIE in turn recognizes the Academie d'Armes Internationale (AAI – International Academy of Arms) as the international federation of national associations of professional fencing coaches.

In the United States, Federal law establishes a relationship between sports organizations, and assigns certain organizations the role of national governing bodies. The United States Fencing Association (USFA) is recognized as the governing body for fencing. The USFA is also the United States's amateur fencing member of the FIE.

The USFA and the AAI both recognize the United States Fencing Coaches Association (USFCA) as the association for professional fencing coaches in the United States. The USFCA is internationally recognized as the only organization in the United States authorized to grant credentials to professional coaches, and grants Moniteur, Prévôt, and Maître d'Armes certifications in its own name and in the name of the AAI.

Types and Roles of Professional Coaches

Professional coaches are certified by the United States Fencing Coaches Association at three levels – these titles are French in origin and follow the titles used by the Academie d'Armes Internationale:

Moniteur

Moniteur is the first professional level of certification, designed to prepare dedicated fencers to serve as instructors in clubs, schools, or community sports programs. The Moniteur teaches basic fencing skills and techniques effectively in group lessons and insures the safety of fencers.

Moniteurs complete both a written and a practical examination. The written examination includes fundamental fencing concepts, basic rules of the sport, and safety management. In the practical examination, the Moniteur candidates must demonstrate their skills by teaching a group class or an individual lesson. In either case the Moniteur candidate must show organization skills, use of appropriate teaching methods, properly warm-up students, use games and drills, teach correct technique, and follow standard class or individual lesson safety procedures.

Moniteurs may be certified to teach in a single weapon, two weapons, or all three weapons.

Prévôts

Prévôt is a professional coaching qualification, demanding a complete tactical understanding of the sport. Individuals qualified as Prévôts are capable of coaching at the college level or managing or owning a fencing club.



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Prévôts complete both a written and a practical examination. The Prévôt must be familiar with modern fencing coaching theory and practice at a high level, understand risk management, be able to develop appropriate physical fitness activities and training cycles for his or her students, and be knowledgeable of tournament organization. In the practical examination the Prévôt must demonstrate the ability to teach complex tactical actions, controlling the distance and proficiently using appropriate cues and corrections.

Prévôts are required to be capable of teaching foil, saber, and epee.

Maître d'Armes

Maitre d'Armes (Fencing Master) is the senior professional position in the sport. Fencing Masters are expected to be able to prepare fencers for higher levels of competition and to manage and oversee all activity in their club or program.

Fencing Masters are required to conduct independent research and prepare an appropriate thesis on a subject relevant to modern fencing. Fencing Masters complete a practical examination that requires a high degree of proficiency in tactical cueing, the development of a logical progression of actions, development of fencers' strategic skills, and recognition and correction of even minor flaws in technique.

Fencing Masters must be capable of teaching foil, saber, and epee. In addition, Fencing Masters should be able to develop Moniteurs and Prévôts.

Fencer Classification

The United States Fencing Association uses six lettered ranks to classify competitive fencers. All fencers start as Unclassified, denoted by a U. As fencers become more experienced and develop their abilities they may be promoted to E, D, C, B, and finally A classifications based on the place they achieve in amateur competitions, the size of those events, and the number of classified fencers participating. Fencer classifications are specific to the weapon and must be renewed. Refer to the current USFA rulebook and Athlete's Handbook for more information about earning classifications.

Coaching Ethics

As an Assistant Moniteur you assume responsibility for how you treat the fencers in your salle or club. Ethical conduct sets the tone for how you will be perceived by people from a wide variety of backgrounds, determines what they will think about the sport, and even influences their values and how they will develop as fencers. The Assistant Moniteur has a basic responsibility to adhere to core ethical and performance values:

- Be loyal to, support, and actively assist the other Assistant Moniteurs and the professional coaches in your club or salle in making the organization a good place to fence. Don't criticize other instructors in the Salle in front of students, and in general do not criticize other coaches in the sport.
- Treat your students equally and with respect. Do not play favorites – every fencer deserves the same level of care and expertise from you. And do not make jokes at the expense of students, even when the last one has left.
- Treat confidences as confidential – if a student tells you something in confidence do not repeat it to other students. Even if you are not told specifically "in confidence," treat all personal information as confidential.

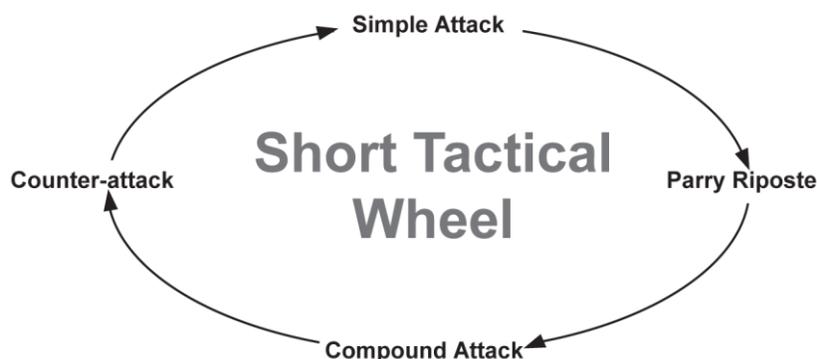


- Be prepared – always come prepared to do your job as an Assistant Moniteur.
- Be on time – students have made the effort to get there in time for the session start; you should be there ahead of them, not 15 minutes late.
- Dress appropriately – your uniform and equipment should be clean, in good repair, and present a professional appearance. Your Mickey Mouse T shirt may be your favorite item of dress, but it will be very difficult for some students to take you seriously if you are wearing it.
- Praise strongly, criticize gently – beginners need positive feedback. They also need to be corrected, but correction works better if it helps the student find good technique, not if it is just an insult.
- Model good performance – students will follow your example, how you perform fencing skills and how you interact with others in the sport.
- Speak carefully and after thinking – and never speak in anger. Consider what your words and gestures mean and use them to improve the student, not to vent your anger or frustration.
- Never, ever be brutal in your fencing actions – a student may hit you so hard your eyes water, and you must remain in control, stifle the urge to wallop them back, and gently correct them so that their next action is closer to good fencing.
- Don't date the fencers – this can be difficult with adult instructors and adult students, or teenage instructors and teenage students, but is an absolute no-brainer with adult instructors and underage fencers or vice versa. Personal relationships complicate fencing relationships, and you are there to help them be better fencers.
- Remember – you are there to make a positive difference in people's lives and to make them believers in a wonderful sport. Treat them like you would like to be treated.

Basic Fencing Tactics

Technique is important for fencers, but tactics win bouts. Therefore it is important to start teaching students about tactics early in their development as fencers. The basic tactical approach is the four step short tactical wheel.

The short tactical wheel is not a perfect solution to all problems in dealing with difficult opponents, but it gives the fencer a framework for analysis of what the opponent is doing and what possible answers may be. As you teach students, think about how to link actions so that they will begin to think of each technique as part of a greater whole.





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- The fencer first uses simple attacks against the opponent. If simple attacks work the fencer continues to use them until the opponent demonstrates success with a parry riposte.
- When the riposte begins to produce results the attacking fencer should shift from a simple attack to a compound attack.
- When the compound attack becomes successful against the parry riposte then the defender should shift to a counter-attack.
- When the counter-attack is successful against the compound attack then the attacking fencer shifts back to a simple attack and the tactical wheel begins again.

NOTE: The tactical wheel is theoretical only. It is by no means an exhaustive review of all tactics, but provides an excellent basis in the development of tactical thinking.

Activity

Fence a bout, or more than one, using the short tactical wheel. Each fencer is assigned a pre-determined role, one fencer will take the role of the attacker and can execute either simple attack or compound attack and the other fencer will take the defending role and may choose to either riposte or counter-attack. Did this help you understanding the tactical wheel better? Discuss with your professional coach how you could apply that experience to the work you do in teaching.

Group Lesson Format and Organization

Class or group lessons offer the most efficient way to teach large numbers of fencers. As an Assistant Moniteur you can expect to be asked to teach or assist in teaching various parts of a group lesson. The standard group lesson format taught to Moniteurs (and which you should be able to assist with) is:

- Warm-up – 5 to 10 minutes. The warm-up should include a fitness component - traditional sport exercises, mini-games or other methods used to prepare for the main body of the lesson. Exercises and games must be appropriate for the age, coordination, and physical condition of the students.
- Group Footwork – 5 to 10 minutes. Footwork exercises help students develop smooth movement. Typical themes used in such exercises include various combinations of:
 - On guard, advance, and retreat
 - Lunge and backward recovery
 - Advance lunge and retreat lunge
- The Main Lesson – 15 to 20 minutes. This is the part of the lesson during which new material and review of already known material is presented. In general the lesson should be planned to move from what students already know to what is new to them, and to move from simpler techniques to more difficult and complicated techniques. Although the content will vary based on the level of students, you could expect to see lessons that use the components of the tactical wheel:
 - The grip, lines of attack and defense, target areas, the thrust and the concept of simple, direct attack
 - Simple attack and parry riposte



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- Parry riposte and compound attack
 - Compound attack and counter attack
 - Counter attack and simple attack
- Conclusion – 5 minutes. The conclusion puts a formal end on the group lesson and typically will cover:
 - Quick review (check for student's understanding of material covered in the class)
 - Answers student questions
 - A formal salute and dismissal of the class

Class Format

The common method of one straight line, or of several straight ranks works, and works well, subject to several caveats.

1. Put left handed students on the right side of the line as you look at it from the front. In addition to left or right hand you may need to arrange students by height so that smaller fencers' vision is not blocked by taller ones.
2. A long line creates difficulty in hearing instructions and in seeing the instructor.
3. Multiple ranks are fine, but students need to be able to move their position left or right to see the instructor through the line in front. In practical terms, when you have three lines, the rear rank will have a lot of difficulty seeing what is going on at the front.
4. Some types of drills and instructions will require the fencers to all move in the same direction. For these, make certain there is sufficient clearance between the ranks for safety, and that there is sufficient clearance behind the rear rank to avoid backing into the wall at full speed.
5. Some types of drills and instructions will require fencers to work facing other fencers. For these, make certain that the pairings are of people of skill levels that make sense for the exercise (unless you plan to rotate the line after a set number of executions). This may mean that you have to do a bit of shifting at the start. Consider also the issue of whether you want left-handers facing left-handers or right-handers.
6. In every case allow enough room for the instructor to circulate among the fencers and make corrections.
7. A circle or an arc may be excellent positioning in small groups where you want to be able to quickly move from student to student.

Instructor Positioning

Instructor positioning is an important consideration in any group teaching situation. You need to be where the students can see and hear you clearly. This means:

- Generally be to the left of your right handed fencers and to the right of your left handed fencers. If the left handed are on your right, this means line up facing the first right handed fencer.
- Position yourself so that you can see every fencer. Don't count on them positioning themselves so that they can see you.



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- Be relatively static in front of the formation when you demonstrate a skill, move with the formation when you are doing footwork drills, and circulate through the formation when the students are learning skills.
- Watch your own safety - while you are correcting a problem on the part of one student be sure that you are out of the lunge envelope of the fencer behind him or her.

Making Corrections

The presence of more than one student forces the instructor to modify how corrections are used. Corrections are vital to student learning – they prevent incorrect performance becoming part of the student's muscle memory and help form correct technique. You must selectively focus on each student for a short period of time, quickly identify the performance problem, and formulate a plan to correct it. Corrections can be general or specific.

1. General corrections are those that you make to the entire group when you observe a common problem in execution of a skill - you stop the exercise and demonstrate again the correct technique.
2. Specific corrections are made individual by individual. You stop at one student, quickly correct that error with your weapon and/or non-weapon hand, set the skill with two or three performances, and move on.

When making corrections there are three key ground rules:

- First - demonstrate correct performance, remember that people learn movement predominately through visual cues. Poor modeling may result in poor performance by the students.
- Second – Praise good performance. Positive reinforcement goes a long way in motivating the student.
- Third - frame corrections in positive ways that will make sense to and encourage the student.

Do not become frustrated if students are unable to at first perform correctly. Learning is a long-term process and improvements show up gradually. Be patient and confident that your teaching skills will lead the student to good performance in the long run.

Demonstrating Techniques

As a more experienced fencer you will be called on to help the professional coach demonstrate various techniques, either alone or with the instructor. Demonstrating is a specific skill. As a general rule a demonstration is a four part process which you should be prepared to perform as the four specific parts:

1. a fencing speed demonstration of the technique. This does not mean as fast as you can possibly perform the skill - it means a reasonable speed at which you can perform the skill perfectly and at which the students will be able to see, even if imperfectly, what you do.
2. a slow speed demonstration of the technique. This should be as slow as you can do it and still maintain control and form. You want the students to be able to easily see what you do.



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3. a demonstration of the parts of the skill. Now you break the action down into its individual parts so that the fencers can see each step that they will have to take to execute the skill.
4. a final demonstration again at fencing speed.

Lesson Plan

When you assist a coach in a class you need to understand what the plan is for that class – what will be taught, in what order, what role you will play, and how long a time do you have allotted for your activity. Some coaches have detailed written plans for every lesson they teach in group classes – many rely on years of practice and run classes out of their mental plan. You, on the other hand, are relatively new to this and need to have thought about what you are to do, what order it will be in, and how you will complete your task. If there is a written plan that specifies what drill at what time, identify with the coach what is your part and ask any questions you need to ask to clarify your responsibilities. But if there is not, you need to be ready to make your own mini-plan for your parts, perhaps on something as small as a note pad or 3x5 index card. Such a plan should identify:

- What activity comes before yours
- How long you have to do your assignment
- What you are to do – what skill you will teach, what drill you will lead
- Key points for any introductory remarks
- Any added details – for example, footwork starting with advance and retreat, add lunge on dropped arm, accelerate for faster actions for about 2 minutes, decelerate to work students on retreat lunge, relaxed advances and retreats, end
- Key points for summation
- What activity follows yours

Print in large print, condense thoughts to one or two words to key your memory, and keep the card where you can easily refer to it. With practice, this process should take you no more than 2-3 minutes. You will find that the process not only helps organize what you are doing, but it sets it in your mind so that you rarely have to refer to your plan.

Activity

Construct a lesson plan for a segment of the lesson that you will be assigned to teach. Discuss your lesson plan with your professional coach. Then teach it. Did it work? If so, what did you learn? If not, why did it fail?



Record Keeping and Fencing Statistics

Your salle or club may already have standard forms and records policies. If so, work with your professional coach so that you can understand what parts of the records you are responsible for. If your club does not keep records you need to do some basic things to help your instructing skills develop and to protect you.

Basic Personal Records

As a minimum you need to know:

- Who you taught
- On what date
- What skills
- And if there were any major problems, unusual events, accidents, etc.

Your written lesson plans become a key part of this. Date them, list the students in the class, and save them forever. If you don't keep written lesson plans (even of the mini-type described above), at least keep an instructor log that records the same basic information. These are contemporaneous records that help establish in legally accepted ways:

- That you have used good judgment and adhered to commonly accepted practices in preparing your athletes – in case of litigation coming from injury.
- Who was present in the salle – critical if there is ever a question about your conduct, in any litigation involving an injury, accident or sexual misconduct.
- That you are teaching students professionally – in the case of tax questions if you are receiving pay to teach and are charging expenses as business expenses.

If there is an accident that requires more than a band aid or a cold pack for a bruise, write a report as soon as possible after the accident that documents the answers to:

- What happened
- When it happened
- Where it happened
- Who it happened to, and who else was there as possible witnesses
- How it happened

Save accident reports for forever – statutes of limitations on personal injury vary from state to state, and some may run from when the effects of the injury were discovered, not from the date of the injury.

Improving Performance

Your teaching records are a gold mine of information on how your teaching evolves, something that is very important if you want to qualify as a professional coach. Make notes on the lessons you teach – again just simple notations of what worked and what did not, common student problems and how you fixed them, questions that you have about your own technique that you need to ask about or seek more training on, etc. Review these after each course you assist with, and use your reflections to be more ready for the next one.



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Basic Statistics

In other sports athletes and coaches and fans can rattle off in great detail all of the elements of performance that are considered important for even little known teams and players. As an instructor there are things you need to know about your fencer's performance. At the simplest level it is to your advantage to keep records even in beginners' classes of the:

- Number of bouts fenced by each fencer
- Bouts won versus bouts lost
- Number of touches scored versus touches received

Why? Fencing more bouts is an indicator of people who are more enthusiastic about what they are doing, who have or are developing better conditioning, who have a fighting spirit, etc. Trends in numbers of bouts won indicate overall improving performance balanced against the population of fencers they are exposed to. And touches scored and touches received indicate even more clearly improvement or may highlight specific problems that need help.

Activity

Start an instructor log. An example instructor log is included at the end of this document.

Equipment and Clothing Maintenance

Each fencer is responsible for ensuring that his or her equipment is in safe and serviceable condition. However, this is not an out for you - as an instructor you bear two responsibilities. First, you must ensure that fencers in the salle or club are wearing proper equipment. Second, you must ensure that the club's equipment is serviceable, well maintained, and safe.

General Checks for ALL Fencers

Before fencing you should always check fencers' equipment and clothing. Some of this can be done quickly by visual inspection of students as they come onto the fencing floor. Some can be done by asking or in general conversation. As a general rule you do not want to put your hands on the fencer to check clothing items without specifically asking for permission, and you really do not want to do this for fencers under age 18 without a parent or an independent witness present and without the parent understanding the process. Never put your hand inside a fencer's clothing to check items – have them open jackets to show you plastrons, and to knock on their own breast protectors.

1. Mask - the bib is secure with no holes, the restraining strap fastens securely across the back, the tongue is tight enough to prevent the mask coming off the fencer's head, the mesh is in good condition with no corrosion or dents.
2. Jacket - the jacket fits and covers 10 centimeters below the waist of the knickers when the fencer is on guard, the jacket zips in the back or closes away from the opponent's sword, the jacket is in good condition with no tears or holes and with all stitching secure, and the jacket is clean.
3. Plastron - the plastron (or underarm protector) is in good condition with no tears or holes, its securing straps are secure, and the plastron is the appropriate size for the fencer.
4. Glove - the glove is in good condition with no tears or holes, the glove covers over the jacket sleeve approximately half way up the fencer's forearm.



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5. Breast plates - breast plates are appropriately sized for the fencer and correctly positioned. This is a real problem with the standard cups designed to be inserted in jacket pockets. Encourage female fencers to transition to appropriately sized torso plates as soon as possible.
6. Knickers – knickers, or pants, are in good repair with no holes or tears, knickers are clean, if the knickers open to the front, the opening is covered by the cuissard of the jacket, if the knickers open to the side the opening is away from the opponent's weapon. If the beginner is wearing other types of pants, they should meet the same general requirements as for knickers and should be of strong enough fabric to protect the legs.
7. Socks – socks cover the entire leg below the knickers, stockings are in good condition with no rips or holes, stockings are clean.
8. Shoes - shoes are either fencing shoes or similar flat soled athletic shoes, tied, with adequate protection for the weapon leg heel, and with the sole in good condition.

Club Uniforms and Equipment

In general fencing clubs are responsible for providing adequate and safe equipment for beginners. Maintaining club equipment is hard work and must be done on a regular schedule:

- Weapons – your weapons must be kept in good condition with even bends in the blade, guards in their original shape with no deformation, coverings of the grip intact (not frayed, unraveling, or disintegrating), buttons in good condition on the point of the weapon. Blades should be sanded with a medium to fine grain sandpaper to remove nicks that could cause stress, to eliminate steel splinters, and to prevent corrosion forming.
- Masks – inspect all masks monthly and document your inspection. Minor corrosion may be removable using sand paper or steel wool, minor damage to bibs may be repaired, elastic straps can be replaced, and small dents can be gently hammered out with a ball-peen hammer. However, until these things are done by the armorer the mask should not be in service. Major damage means the mask should be immediately either discarded or retired to the head of a practice dummy.
- Jackets – jackets need to be washed after use, period. Allowing sweat to stay in the cloth weakens threads, and letting dirt particles stay in the cloth can actually result in strands of fiber being cut. A dirty, yellowed, jacket that you can smell from the on guard line is disgusting, sends a horrible image of your school to beginners, and is unsafe. Minor tears and points of wear should be immediately patched – until they are, the jacket should not be in service.
- Gloves – most beginner level gloves now are washable. The comments above about jackets are just as true of gloves. Holes in the leather part of a glove mean replacement.
- Plastrons (underarm protectors) – there have been enough accidents that involve penetrating injuries in arm pits to make plastron wear mandatory whenever fencers are going to fence each other. The same rules that apply to jackets apply to plastrons.

The bottom line – never handle a piece of club equipment without looking at it. If there is a problem, do not give that piece of equipment to a student to use.

Activity

Inspect one complete set of the equipment your club or salle issues to beginners. Does it meet the standards above? If not, what could be done to correct the situation.



Evaluation Sign-Off Checklist

Candidate's Name: _____ **Weapon:** _____

As the Assistant Moniteur candidate demonstrates acceptable performance to the standard indicated below, initial and date the entry. Skills may be demonstrated over a period of weeks and months or may be evaluated in a single observation.

Skill	Date	Initials
1. Leads warm-up with safe exercises, appropriate for level of condition of students		
2. Leads footwork drills: . . . Footwork selected builds in speed and complexity . . . Uses a variety of techniques: 1) sets of footwork to solve specific drill problems 2) instructor leads with students following movements 3) footwork paired with another student in bout-like conditions . . . Shows good technique . . . Appropriate for student level		
3. Understands coach's plan for lesson and can carry out his/her part: . . . Follows lesson plan . . . Ready to teach at appropriate time in uniform with equipment . . . Uses, but does not exceed, allocated time . . . Reports results and points for follow-up		
4. Observes and corrects students: . . . Identifies students with performance issues . . . Makes individual corrections as required . . . Makes group correction as required . . . Corrections lead to correct execution by students		
5. Identifies, stop, and corrects unsafe conditions or conduct.		
6. Teaches beginner level techniques in technical drills: . . . Selects appropriate formation . . . Correctly positions himself/herself . . . Correctly demonstrates technique alone or with professional coach . . . Teaches: 1) Footwork – advance, retreat, lunge 2) Offense – straight thrust, disengage, direct riposte, counter-riposte 3) Defense – 2 parries		



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7.	Referees beginner level bouts: . . . Applies basic fencing rules . . . Determines the flow of the action and applies right-of-way or priority . . . Maintains safety . . . Applies penalties as required . . . Maintains appropriate relationship with fencers		
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Comments:

I have observed the above fencer assisting with teaching, and believe that he or she is competent at the Assistant Moniteur level and will be able to appropriately assist a professional coach in the performance of instructional tasks. I recommend certification at the Assistant Moniteur level for:

Weapon: _____

Signed: _____ **Date:** _____

Print Name: _____

USFCA Credential: _____



Instructor Log

Instructor Name: _____

	Date	Weapon	Length	Student / Group	Content
1		F S E			
2		F S E			
3		F S E			
4		F S E			
5		F S E			
6		F S E			
7		F S E			
8		F S E			
9		F S E			
10		F S E			
11		F S E			
12		F S E			
13		F S E			
14		F S E			
15		F S E			