

How to go to a tournament!

Last updated Oct 11 – by V Hanes

Note: This document was assembled for general, local-level use and is NOT intended to be a be-all and end-all guide to fencing tournaments. There will be variances from one event to the next and it is not reasonable to expect every eventuality and situation to be addressed in a brief how-to guide. That being said, please feel free to share and distribute this document as much as you'd like. Please report any suggestions, corrections, or inconsistencies to coach@iwfc.net.

Additionally, see [Sam Signorelli's 'Prep Package'](#), another great trove of information!

Things to know before you go

USFA membership: You must be a USFA member to enter USFA-sanctioned events. If you're already a member, be sure to bring your membership card as you'll have to show it at check-in. If you're not currently a member, you can join online at any time by visiting usfencing.org; both annual and one-day only memberships are available. One-day members will need to print out the card and bring it to the tournament. Annual members should print their receipt to bring with them to the tournament in case their card hasn't arrived by then. If you prefer to mail in your registration or to fill out a registration form at the tournament, an additional \$10 processing fee will apply. (Note: some events require that USFA membership and event entry fees be paid on separate checks so be prepared. USFA memberships can also be paid via credit card.)

Equipment: In addition to your regular jacket, mask, and glove (and chest protection if you're female), you'll also need:

- A plastron (underarm protector)
- Knickers – sweats, jeans, football or baseball pants, etc. are not allowed
- Tall socks – they must come up to the bottom of your knickers and stay up
- Two working electric weapons (at a *minimum*)
- Two working body cords
- A lamé (foil and saber only)
- A manchette and two mask cords (saber only)

Eligibility:

Novice: You can only enter if your first USFA-sanctioned tournament was less than a year prior to the current event's date. If your first event was less than a year ago and you've already earned a rating, you can still enter novice events. If you've only competed in non-sanctioned club events, regardless of for how long, you're still a novice. And the novice 'clock' never resets. Even if you've only fenced in one USFA-sanctioned event and it was twenty years ago, you're not a novice now.

Open: Competitors must be at least 13 years old as of December 31 of the current season to enter. There is no other limitation on age, nor is there any limitation on experience, ratings, etc. Opens may offer all three weapons or just select weapons.

Ratings-Restricted: Only fencers at or below the specified rating may enter. For example, a 'C and under' (also sometimes listed as just 'C') event is only open to C-, D- and E-rated and unrated fencers. A- and B-rated fencers cannot enter. Sometimes these events are called ratings rallies because they provide fencers a chance to compete and possibly earn or improve a rating without having to encounter top-rated fencers.

Youth: Youth events are restricted to fencers below a specified age. The events and ages are usually indicated by Y14 or Youth-14 as part of the name, for example. Other age breaks are Y12 and Y10. It's important to remember that the age break is driven by the fencer's birth year, not the actual age of the fencer. For example, these are the birth year breakpoints for the 2006-07 season per the Athlete's Handbook of that year (for events prior to Summer Nationals):

Category	Junior	Cadet	Youth-14	Youth-12	Youth-10
Birth Years	1987-1993	1990-1993	1992-1995	1994-1997	1996-1999

Also note the Junior and Cadet categories. Please view the current Athlete's Handbook for the current year breakpoints if you are unsure of your status for the current season. (The Handbook is available for download at usfencing.org.)

Senior: This does not mean 'senior citizen'. Again using 2006-07 as an example, fencers born between 1966 and 1985 are in the senior category for that season.

Veteran: Veteran events are restricted to fencers aged 40 and higher. Some veteran events are also age-restricted, indicated by Vet-50, for example, to indicate that particular event is for fencers aged 50 or higher. Again, the age is driven by your birth year, not your actual age.

Prior to the competition

Consider pre-registering online via askFRED.net when available. You'll still need to check in the morning of the tournament but this way you'll already be on their list. Also, note the entrance fee policy for the tournament. Some provide a discount if you pay your entry fee online or charge a late fee if you wait to pay until the day of the tournament (same net result, just different ways of looking at it).

The day before the event:

Test *all* of your electric weapons and body cords, even if you *know* they're working just fine. (Here and throughout the rest of the document, 'test' means weight for foil, weight and shim for epee, as well as proper lights for all three weapons.) Make sure there are retaining clips for all cords (or weapons, depending on the manufacturer) – rubber bands and hair elastics work well if the regular clips are missing or not working well.

Wash all of your fencing clothing then inspect it for holes or tears so you can make any necessary repairs. Inspect your lamé for corrosion or frayed metallic threads that may need some attention to fix a dead spot. Make sure your mask doesn't have any broken wires or any dents large enough to snag a point. These will result in the automatic failing of your mask at inspection and if you don't have a backup mask, you'll be done for the day before you've even started. If you have a design painted on your mask, make sure you have a solid-colored mask for backup in case the painted mask isn't allowed. (Some events will allow them, some won't.)

Make sure your name or at least your initials are on everything. Every event winds up with a lost and found but it's hard to get things back to their owners without some sort of identifying mark.

Start hydrating! Drink water, juice, and the like, not soda, energy drinks, or other caffeinated drinks. Remember how much you sweat during one night at the fencing club? Now expand that across all day. Exactly.

Eat a good dinner so you've got a solid start on building energy for the next day. Many athletes swear by high-carb meals, especially pasta, the day before competitions. Over time you'll find what works best for you.

Pack (do *not* wait until the morning to do this, doing so guarantees you'll forget something important):

- Fencing clothing – jacket, plastron, knickers, mask, glove, socks, shoes, protectors, lamé
- Weapons
- Body cords
- Sweats or warm-ups (if you're not wearing them for the drive)
- Towel (white if you don't have a white cloth in your armory kit)

Armory kit (if you have one)
Extra hair elastics if you have long hair
Dry clothing for the trip home
Bottled water, juice, or similar – avoid caffeine
Granola bars, fruit, or similar munches – there is no break for lunch and often there isn't food available on site. You want something easy to nibble on throughout the day to keep your energy up that won't give you a sugar high to crash off of.
USFA membership card if you're already a member
Checkbook (for entry fee), cash (for food in case it is available)
Folding chairs (one for you and others for any non-fencers going with you)

Double-check the entry fee and the time. Remember, the time listed is the *close* of check-in, not the start of it. Plan to arrive at the start of check-in. Make sure you have directions to the venue so you don't have to do a mad hunt in the morning.

Get a good night's sleep. Sure you can function just fine on four hours of sleep but tomorrow isn't a regular day. If you're tired, it will affect your point control, reaction time, endurance, etc. These may not have much impact on a normal day but they'll definitely make themselves felt at a tournament!

The morning of the tournament:

Eat at least a light breakfast (fruit is good), even if you don't normally eat first thing in the morning. You're going to burn a lot of energy throughout the day and if the energy doesn't come from food, it's going to come from your body turning on itself. Keep hydrating.

Allow time for unexpected stops, such as gas stations, getting lost, etc.

Once you're at the venue, find a place to put your stuff. Then pick up your checkbook and USFA membership card (if you have one, your application form if you don't) and go to the check-in table. If your division does equipment checks as part of check-in, bring that along as well (some divisions wait to check masks until the beginning of the pools). If you're not sure when your division does the equipment checks, ask when you check in. If your mask has a design or pattern painted on it and your division does mask checks at the beginning of the pools, show your mask to the bout committee now so they can tell you up front if it will be allowed or if you'll need to use your plain backup mask. (Sometimes the bout committee also runs the check-in, sometimes not. Start with asking the people at the check-in table and if they're not who you need to ask, they can tell you who is.) Pay your entry fee and if applicable, turn in your USFA membership application and payment.

Test your weapons again. Yes, weapons that were working perfectly well the night prior and haven't done anything but sit in the bag overnight have been known to have problems the following morning. Never let it be said that the fencing gods don't have a sense of humor! More to the point, there is a degree of variance allowed in testing equipment so test your weapons with some of the weights and shims that will be used at the tournament. These will be set out by the scoring boxes at the strips. *DO NOT* take the weight or shims from a table over to your equipment bag to test your weapons. Bring your stuff to the table, *never* the other way around!

Stretch and warm up. Jump rope, do a bit of footwork, whatever your normal warm-up routine is at the club. You can do some light bouting with a clubmate or a fellow competitor, even if it's someone you've never seen before. Remember, this is to loosen up and get your mind and body into fencing mode. Do not fence this person to win, do not show him or her your best moves, do not go all out on anything. (It would stink to pull a muscle during warm-ups, right?) It's all right to hook up to the scoring boxes at the strips to warm up.

Stay relaxed, stay focused. Don't waste energy on nerves. Remember, we started fencing because it's fun, right?

The tournament begins!

After registration is closed, the bout committee will post a list of the fencers in the tournament. Check the list to make sure you're on it and that your information is correct. If anything is incorrect, let the bout committee know so they can take care of it. Someone will then call the fencers together to discuss the event, make announcements, etc. Listen well!

Next, the bout committee will divide the fencers into pools of (usually) between 6 and 8 fencers. As soon as the pools have been set up, the pool sheets will be posted. (Do not ask the bout committee when the sheets will be posted. The answer is that they'll be posted as soon as they're ready. And the fewer interruptions they get, the faster they can set the pools.) These pages list each pool's number, the fencers in the pool, their club affiliations, and their ratings. Find your name on the list and note which pool you're in and the strip on which it will be fenced. (Which strip is also sometimes handled via an announcement instead so keep an ear open.)

The pools are set up so that clubmates and ratings are evenly spread throughout the initial pools. In other words, you won't find one pool with four people from the same club unless every pool has several members from that same club as well. You also won't find yourself in a pool with all three A-rated fencers while your clubmate is in a pool with all unrated fencers.

If there are more pools than there are strips or referees available to handle them, the pools will be 'flighted'. This means that pools 1 through x (x being however many pools they can handle at once) are in the first flight and will fence first. The remaining pools are in the second flight and will begin fencing after at least one strip used in the first flight becomes available. As a result, not all second-flight pools will start fencing at the same time. Also, as more strips (or refs) become available, it is not uncommon for a second-flight pool to be fenced on two strips so things go faster. Again, keep your ears open!

You'll fence everyone in your pool once. Fencers are called to the strip in a specific order, based on the number of entrants in the pool (your number will be listed next to your name on the pool sheet):

Pool of 4 6 Bouts	Pool of 5 10 Bouts	Pool of 6 15 Bouts	Pool of 7 21 Bouts	Pool of 8 28 Bouts	Special Bout Orders For Teammates			
					Pool of 6	Pool of 6	Pool of 7	Pool of 8
1-4	1-2	1-2 5-3	1-4 5-13-5	2-3 8-33-7	1-4 6-4	3-1 2-5	1-2 6-21-4	2-3 3-68-7
2-3	3-4	4-5 1-6	2-5 4-31-6	1-5 6-74-8	2-5 1-2	4-2 3-6	4-5 3-42-7	7-4 2-85-6
1-3	5-1	2-3 4-2	3-6 6-22-4	7-4 4-22-6	3-6 3-4	1-4 4-5	6-7 7-55-3	6-8 5-43-4
2-4	2-3	5-6 3-6	7-1 5-77-3	6-8 8-13-5	5-1 5-6	2-3 6-2	3-1 1-66-4	1-2 6-18-1
3-4	5-4	3-1 5-1	5-4 3-16-5	1-2 7-51-7	4-2 2-3	5-6 5-1	4-7 4-27-1	7-5 3-75-2
1-2	1-3	6-4 3-4	2-3 4-61-2	3-4 3-64-6	3-1 1-6	1-2 6-4	2-3 7-32-5	4-6 4-86-7
	2-5	2-5 6-2	6-7 7-24-7	5-6 2-88-5	6-2 4-5	3-4 5-3	5-1 5-63-6	1-3 2-68-3
	4-1	1-4		8-7 5-47-2	5-3	1-6		8-5 3-51-5
	3-5			4-1 6-11-3				4-2 4-17-2
	4-2			5-2				1-7
		Same order for 3 teammates 1*2*3, 4*5*6			3 pairs of teammates 1*4, 2*5, 3*6	four teammates 1*2*3*4	3 teammates 1*2*3	3 teammates 1*2*3

When you're called to the strip:

If you have long hair, make sure it is secured so there is no hair covering any part of your lamé. If they haven't checked for plastrons yet, leave your jacket and lamé partially unfastened so the ref can check. Once your plastron's presence has been verified, report to the strip for your remaining bouts with your jacket and lamé already fastened.

The first fencer called hooks up on the referee's right unless one (and only one) of the fencers is a lefty, in which case the left-handed fencer hooks up on the referee's left. Bring at least two of your weapons and your other body cord (and other mask cord if saber) to the strip – you should already be wearing your primary body cord at this point. Set the extra weapons and cords to the side of the strip by the reel.

Hook yourself up to the reel then push the tip of your foil and make sure the score box's off-target (white or orange) light goes on. (In epee, make sure the colored light goes on.) If it doesn't, swap weapons and try again. This is a simple check to make sure nothing hugely wrong has happened to the blade, such as a broken wire. If you find a problem *before* you present the weapon to the referee, you can generally replace it without any penalty. However, if you present the weapon to the referee and *then* a problem is found, it's a yellow card (warning) for you. The weapon is then confiscated and you'll hook up one of your alternate weapons. Again, test the tip yourself first because if the ref finds a problem with this one, too, it's now a red card for you and a touch for your opponent before the bout has even begun. (Also remember that the yellow card is for the duration of the bout so anything else you do during the bout that would normally merit a yellow card will now automatically escalate to a red card and a touch for your opponent.)

Go to the center of the strip and present your weapon to the ref for the weight test. Do not point your weapon at the ref or wave it around! Hold the bell guard so the blade is vertical and is resting against your shoulder. Keep the blade steady while the ref balances the weight on the tip of the weapon to make sure the spring is within regulation. If the score box's light doesn't come on at all or if it stays on after the weight is released, the weapon fails and is confiscated. And yes, out comes the yellow card (red card if you've already received a yellow for this bout). If you're fencing epee, the ref will also do a shim test. Saber has no tip test.

The ref will then make sure your weapon has two screws, that there's a retaining clip on the body cord/weapon plug, that there's nothing unallowed under the bellpad, that your alligator clip is correctly connected, and that the retaining clip is in place on the reel end of the body cord. Once this is done, go stand behind your on guard line and wait for the ref's next command.

The bout

Once both fencers have been checked over, the ref will announce 'test fair' (or 'test target,' 'test valid,' or 'test positive').

Foil: Hold your mask in front of your face and poke (don't stab) your opponent in the torso – your opponent will be doing the same thing to you at the same time. Both colored lights should come on. If your light doesn't come on, wait until your opponent's light goes out then try again. If your opponent's light doesn't come on, stand still so she can try again after your light goes out.

Epee: Touch your opponent's bell guard (take turns). Aim for smudgy marks and dents so any grounding problems can be found and resolved before the bout begins. No lights should come on.

Saber: Hold your mask out so your opponent can touch it with his or her weapon. At the same time, lightly touch your opponent's mask with your own weapon (just let your blade rest against the metal). The colored light should come on. You can touch the lamé instead of the mask but by touching the mask, you're also making sure your opponent's mask cord is correctly connected and functioning. If your light or your opponent's light doesn't come on, retest as for foil.

Once the testing has been completed, return to your on guard line.

Note: In foil or saber, if your opponent's hair is covering any part of the lamé, you are within your rights to ask the referee to ask the fencer to secure his or her hair correctly. This particular rule is often only lightly enforced at local-level events but it's usually very stringently enforced at higher-level tournaments. So if you have long hair yourself, just get into the habit now of always having it up and out of the way so it's a non-issue.

The ref will say:

Salute, mask, and on guard. Salute your opponent, then the ref, then the spectators. Put your mask on and assume the on guard position, making sure your toe is behind the line. It is not sufficient to just stand with your toe behind the line, you *must* be in the guard stance including proper blade position. Do not bounce around waiting for the command to fence.

Fencers ready? (Or sometimes just 'Ready?') If you're having trouble getting your mask on or are about to sneeze or are having some other sort of problem, be sure to clearly answer 'No!' No response is taken as a 'yes' and if you get hit while you're tying your shoe because you didn't say something, the touch will stand.

Fence! (or Allez!) Do it! Keep doing it until the ref calls 'Halt!' no matter if you hear the scoring box go off, even if you *know* you got a hit. You may not taunt your opponent, either verbally or via gestures, during the bout (yellow card if you do).

If you see a safety problem during the bout, such as an unfastened lamé, a kinked or broken weapon or someone walking across the strip behind your opponent (it happens!), you cannot call 'halt' yourself. Instead, back up from your opponent and raise your off hand to get the ref's attention. Stomp your back foot as well, if necessary. The ref will call halt and the problem can then be addressed.

Halt! Stop fencing – finish your immediate action (a lunge, for example) but nothing more. Do not move forward or backward on the strip until directed to do so by the ref or a touch is awarded. If a touch is awarded, return to your on guard line.

The ref will call the action and, if applicable, award the touch. Do not address the ref until the action has been called. You *may not* challenge the ref's description of the action. If the ref says you did a parry-riposte and you think you did a beat-attack, for example, you may *politely* ask, 'It wasn't my beat attack?' but be advised that while the ref may take a few seconds to explain, he or she may also legitimately respond, 'No. Fencers ready?' (It is not the ref's job to teach you how to fence or to understand right-of-way, after all.) If an explanation *is* given, take it to heart and move on, even if you disagree with it. Neither coaches nor spectators may address the ref at any point during the bout.

You can also ask the ref to repeat the phrase. However, don't overdo this. It's annoying when it's misused or abused.

Keep in mind that referees have to go through certification exams, both written and practical. So although they do make the occasional mistake, they will be right far more often than not. Just because what you think you did or what you meant to do is not what the ref calls, it doesn't mean that the ref is incorrect. It may well indicate that your timing or distance, for example, didn't work like you thought it did. Take the ref's explanations as free advice and move on. If you get a truly rotten call (it happens!), don't let it chew you up. The touch is over, move on to the next touch and try to prevent that situation from happening again.

Although you may not challenge how the ref described the action, you may challenge the ref's application of the rules if an error was made. For example, if your opponent retreated off the end of the strip and the ref gave the fencer a yellow card, politely remind the ref that no card is issued and that a touch should be awarded to you. If the ref stands by the incorrect application, your next step is to appeal to the bout committee. However, be certain that you're correct and the ref is not before asking to appeal the call. If the bout committee determines that you're wrong and the ref is right, it's a yellow-card for you for an unjustified appeal. Note: Once the next 'Fence!' command has been given, nothing prior to that moment can be changed or challenged. (If you appeal to the bout committee, your bout stops until a resolution has been reached.)

If your opponent is covering target area and causing your hits to land off-target or is leaving the strip during the action but the ref isn't seeing or calling the infraction, you can ask the ref to

please watch for the action in question. If the ref still doesn't see it, you can ask for side judges (assessors) whose job will be to watch for the infraction in question. Be aware, however, that the ref can deny the request, especially if he thinks you're just stalling for time.

If you notice a kink or unwanted bend in your blade after an action, you are allowed (in fact are required) to fix the blade before the next command to fence. You can flex the blade by hand or you can put the blade under your foot against the floor to re-work it but you may *not* re-work it against the surface of the strip. (And if you're in a gym, don't work your blade on the bare floor. Use the tape or a handy towel if you must use your foot.) Just make sure the ref is aware that you're fixing your blade – in other words, if the ref says 'Ready?' answer 'No' and indicate your goofy blade. Fix it quickly and return to your guard stance when you're done so the ref knows you're now ready to fence.

If a problem develops with your weapon during the bout, such as a kink or an S-curve that won't come out, show the weapon to the referee and ask if you may switch weapons. If you suspect the tip has gone bad or has come off, the barrel is loose, or another, less visible problem, *do not* fiddle with the problem area yourself to verify it. Show the weapon to the ref and explain what the problem is. The ref will inspect the weapon and determine if you need to switch. In these situations, there is no penalty card for a failing weapon so don't stress about it. Give your original weapon to the referee and hook up one of your alternates. The referee will test the new weapon's just like it's the beginning of the bout, have you test valid, and then will resume the bout. If your pistol grip is coming loose, you can ask the ref for permission to tighten it but if there's not a wrench within handy distance, permission may be denied (ask to switch weapons then). Or you may be penalized for delay of bout if a club mate has to run across the room and dig through three separate bags to find a wrench. So if you have a grip that's prone to loosening up, make sure you have a wrench stripside, just in case.

Other things you may ask the referee are: how much time is left in the bout (if not displayed on the score box), the score (again if not displayed), to attend to your equipment (untied shoes, the aforementioned blade problems, etc.), or to remove your mask (to move your hair out of your eyes, to wipe sweat off your face, ex.). You may also ask for side judges (as above) or even for the referee himself to be observed but do not do the latter unless you're *absolutely certain* the ref is making a total hash of things.

Pool bouts are fenced to five touches or to three minutes, whichever comes first. (That's three minutes of fencing time, the time between each 'Fence!' and 'Halt!' command, not three minutes from the start of the bout.) If both fencers are tied at 4-4, it's called *la belle*. Traditionally, fencers salute each other at this point but it's not required. (Is there ever any reason *not* to give an honorable gesture to an opponent, though?)

If time runs out before one of the fencers gets five touches, whoever is ahead at that point wins the bout. If both fencers are tied, the referee will randomly assign priority to one of the fencers, usually via tossing a coin or such. The fencers will then fence for up to one more minute. If a touch is scored during this time, the bout ends and the actual number of touches scored is recorded – the winner is not automatically awarded with five points. If no one scores during the final minute, the fencer who was awarded priority at the end of regulation is awarded the victory (no additional touches are awarded).

The end of the bout

Return to your on guard line then salute your opponent, the referee, then the spectators. Remove your mask and put it under your weapon arm. Shake bare hands with your opponent and say something positive, even if it's as simple as 'nice bout.' It's okay to compliment your opponent's fencing, win or lose. Just be sincere about it. Shaking the ref's hand as well is generally appreciated but the ref may be busy recording the bout results at the moment.

Walk down to the reel before unhooking your body cord from the reel cord. *Do not let go of the reel plug and let the cord automatically retract on its own!!* Some events will actually fine fencers

who do this as it can damage the reels. Either hand the plug directly to the next fencer or gently return it to the reel manually.

Pick up your extra weapons and cord(s) and if any weapons were confiscated by the ref, retrieve them so you can try to fix them before your next bout.

Between bouts

Test your weapons again to make sure they still pass weight (and shim if epee), making repairs or replacements as needed. Tighten any grips that have started to loosen up. Repair any significant nicks in your blade tape. (You don't have to strip and redo all the tape, just put a piece over the bare spot.)

Drink throughout the day, don't wait until you're thirsty. Keep munching on whatever you brought to keep your energy steady. Sit to give your legs a rest. Some fencers like to wear sweats or warm-ups over their knickers in between bouts in order to stay warm. Others like to keep a towel draped around their necks or over their laps (or both). On the flip side, you can unfasten your jacket and lamé to let a little air in. Some fencers even take off their lamé between bouts to let it dry out a little. If you bring an MP3 player or such, be careful not to get so engrossed in your music or have it turned up so loudly that you miss hearing your name called for your next bout!

After all matches in your pool have been fenced, each fencer must sign off on the score sheet. Make sure your total number of victories is correct and check the scores as well, just in case. If you see any errors, politely bring them to the ref's attention before signing the sheet. Shake the ref's hand after you sign the sheet. Once all fencers in the pool have signed the sheet, the ref will give it to the bout committee.

Direct Eliminations (DEs)

Sometimes 100% of the fencers will be promoted to the DEs but not always. The percentage to be promoted is announced after registration closes and before the pools start. In the Virginia Division, '[e]ither 100% or 80% will advance to DEs depending on total size of each event and at the bout committee's determination. In general, events larger than 60 people will have a cut, and smaller events will not' (from va-usfa.org).

After the bout committee has all of the pool sheets, they'll sort all of the fencers based on their results. First, they're sorted by the number of victories. Then fencers with the same number of victories are sorted by indicators (touches scored minus touches received). If two or more fencers have the same number of victories and the same indicators, they're then sorted by the number of touches scored. If there are still any tied fencers at this point, the bout committee will flip a coin or do something similarly random to determine placement of the fencers in question. (See the example at the end of the document.) Needless to say, this can take a while even with software so don't bug the bout committee! They'll post the results as soon as they're ready!

As soon as the DE table has been posted, find your name. If you're not listed and you think you made the cut (if less than 100% were promoted), see the bout committee immediately.

The DE table is a standard high-low seeding bracket (see the example at the end of the document). Lose a DE bout and you're done for the day, unless you're in the round of four (i.e. the 'Final Four') in which case you may fence-off for third, depending on the event.

Most DE bouts are to fifteen touches. However, veteran DE bouts are to ten touches and youth events fence three five-touch bouts with the winner of two bouts winning the DE. Regular and veteran foil and epee DEs are broken into three three-minute periods with a one minute break between periods. Saber DE bouts have a one-minute break when one fencer reaches eight touches. Youth events have their break between bouts. During the breaks, you *may not* leave the strip. However, if a chair can be brought to you on the strip, consider sitting to give your legs a brief rest. You can usually keep a drink bottle at the side of the strip (depending on the venue's

rules) or have someone bring a drink to you. Only one person is allowed on the strip with the fencer during the break.

If both fencers are tied at 14-14, it's *la belle* and the next touch wins. Again, give your opponent the courtesy of a salute.

Just as in pool bouts, if time runs out, whoever is ahead at that point wins. And again, if the fencers are tied, the referee will randomly assign priority to one of the fencers. The fencers will then fence for up to one more minute. If a touch is scored during this time, the bout ends and the fencer scoring the touch is the winner.

Spectators, friends, parents

'It might be of interest to note that fencing is one of the few sports where the competitors pay a fee, but the spectators get in for free.' – Robert Asprin, Phule's Company

Be prepared for long stretches of waiting. Bring something to do during those times your fencer is not on the strip.

Food may not be available at the tournament venue so consider being prepared to run out to pick up some lunch for yourself and your fencer. (And dinner if things go well!)

Don't make your fencer crazy with 'When are they going to start whatever?' queries. Your fencer wants to know as much as you do! Keep in mind that the bout committee, refs, etc. have been there even longer than you have and will not leave until well after you do so they're doing their best to keep things running as quickly and as smoothly as they can.

Cameras are okay, flashes are not. If you have a digital camera, make sure you know how to turn off the flash before you start taking pictures. Be wary of disposable cameras – most of them have automatic flashes that you can't turn off.

Taking pictures of fencing is tricky because of the speed involved. Try snapping a picture when you think something is just *about* to happen. If you take the picture right *when* the action occurs, you'll usually actually catch the split-second right *after* that moment because everything happens so fast. If you miss trying to get a picture of an exciting bit of action, keep your camera up and try for a picture of your fencer's *reaction* instead. Also try taking pictures of your fencer at other times, such as when she's hooking up, when he's watching another bout, when he's saluting, when she's thinking over the bout she's just finished, etc. Although these obviously aren't action shots, they often make for some very good pictures of your fencer in 'fencing mode'.

Please do not take chairs that are set out for the fencers.

It's okay to cheer for your fencer in between touches. However you can't yell advice during the bout (between the 'Fence!' and 'Halt!' commands), nor can you *ever* address the referee. Also, if you are rude, offensive, insulting, abusive, etc. you can actually be black-carded and ordered from the venue.

Feel free to wander about the venue but be careful to avoid stepping on fencers' equipment or the fencers themselves – some will stretch out and take naps during downtime!

Pay attention to where you're walking! Do not walk across any tape lines on the floor unless you're absolutely certain the strip is not being used. Do not walk between the fencers and the referee. Although the referee should be dressed up (compared to the rest of the participants), sometimes last-minute refs are in jeans and look like spectators to the unwary eye. When in doubt, walk around.

Ironically, the better the fencing gets, the fewer people there are to enjoy it. Tournaments can make for a long day but if your fencer is knocked out early, consider going out for a bite then returning to the venue to watch the final DE bouts. You'll probably see the best fencing of the day!

Pool scoring sheet:



Tournament: _____
 Competition: Bragging Rights Open
 Round: 1 Pool: 6 Strip: 3
 Referee: Onelight, I.C.

Barrage	#	1	2	3	4	V	TS	TR	Ind
	1	■							
	2		■						
	3			■					
	4				■				

Club	Name	#	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	V	TS	TR	Ind	PI
AFC	Leahy-Hu, Yoda	1	■	V5	V5	V2 ^P	V5	V5	V5		6	27	10	+17	1
BCF	D'walrus, Ima	2	0	■	2	3	4	3	3		0	15	30	-15	7
UFC	Toannes, Eartha	3	2	V5	■	V4	4	V5	V5		4	25	20	+5	3
TFS	Mortyme, Juan	4	2	V5	3	■	V5	V5	V5		4	25	19	+6	2
CFA	Ugeste, Shirley	5	4	V5	V5	4	■	2	4		2	24	28	-4	5
TBC	Furniture, Lon	6	2	V5	3	4	V5	■	V5		3	24	22	+2	4
STF	Noh, Ida	7	0	V5	2	2	V5	2	■		2	16	27	-9	6
		8								■					

How bouts are record:

A fencer's results are recorded by row and which block in the row is determined by his opponent's number. For example when fencer 3, Toannes, fenced fencer 6, Furniture, Toanne's results were recorded in row 3, column 6 and Furniture's results were recorded in row 6, column 3. (V = victory, D = defeat, and the number is the number of touches that fencer scored.)

The 'P' in Leahy-Hu's #4 column indicates that this fencer was tied with fencer #4, Mortyme, at the end of three minutes and that Leahy-Hu was awarded priority via a coin toss. Neither fencer scored in the extra minute so Leahy-Hu was awarded the victory even though both fencers scored two touches. (Look down the #1 column to row #4, to see Mortyme's final result, D2.)

V: The number of bouts the fencer won, i.e. the number of Vs in that row.

TS: Touches scored. The numbers in each row are the touches the fencers scored in each bout. These numbers are added across and the totals written in the TS column.

TR: Touches received. The numbers in each column are the touches the fencers received in each bout. These numbers are added down and the totals written in the TR column.

Ind: Indicators. This is the number in the TS column minus the number in the TR column.

PI: Place. The fencer's ranking after the pool bout has been tallied.

The V column is looked at first for seeding.

- Leahy-Hu won all six bouts (there were just seven fencers in this pool) so is seeded #1
- No one won five bouts but two fencers won four bouts, Toannes and Mortyme. To break the tie, indicators are looked at next. Toannes had a +5 but Mortyme had a +6 so Mortyme is #2 and Toannes is #3.
- Only one fencer won three bouts so Furniture is seeded #4.
- Two fencers won two bouts, Ugeste and Noh, so we look at indicators again. Ugeste's -4 is higher than Noh's -9 so Ugeste is seeded #5 and Noh is seeded #6.
- The remaining fencer, D'Walrus, won zero bouts and is seeded #7.

If there were multiple pools (i.e. more than seven fencers), this seeding would be done by comparing indicators and such from all bout sheets, not just this one. However today, there are just these seven fencers. So now the initial DE table can be posted:



Because there are only seven fencers, the top-seeded fencer, Leahy-Hu, gets a bye and doesn't have to fence in the first round. As the other three bouts are completed, the winners' names are added to the next round's brackets and the ousted fencers are done for the day.

At the round of four, the two losing fencers might fence one more bout against each other to determine third and fourth place, depending on the tournament's policy.

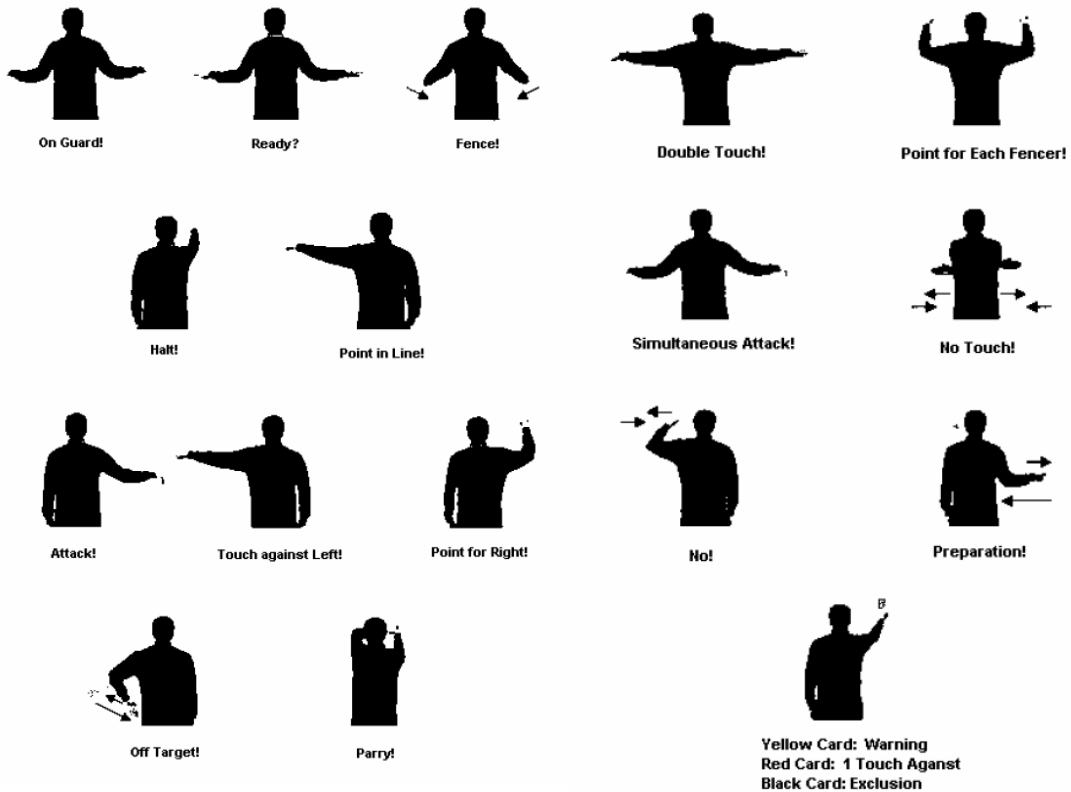
The final results of the day are:



Juan Mortyme was the tournament winner with Yoda Leahy-Hu coming in second, Shirley Ugeste getting third, and Eartha Toannes finishing fourth.

From the 09-2006 Fencing Rules manual:

Hand Signals for USFA Referees



Notes

- 1st The Referee calls the action and give the hand gestures at the same time.
- 2nd The Referee should refrain from excessive verbage; Use only the appropriate phrase with the gesture i.e. Attack from Left! Parry! Reposte! Touch against Right! Point for Left!
- 3rd After the action is called, the fencers may ask the referee to restate the analysis of the phrase.
- 4th Each gesture should last for 1-2 seconds; be expressive and correct in their execution.

Penalty chart from the 09-2006 Fencing Rules manual:

OFFENSE	ARTICLE	PENALTIES		
		1st	2nd	3 rd and add'l
1st group				
Leaving the strip without permission	t.18/3			
Simple Corps à corps (foil and sabre) *	t.20			
Corps à corps to avoid a touch *	t.20, t.63			
Turning the back to the opponent *	t.21			
Using the non-weapon arm or hand *	t.22	Y	R	R
Touching/taking hold of electrical equipment*	t.22	E	E	E
Covering/Substitution of valid target *	t.22, t.49, t.72	L	D	D
Crossing the side of the strip to avoid being touched	t.28	L		
Delaying the Bout	t.31	O	C	C
Placing the weapon on the strip to straighten it	t.46, t.61, t.70/d	W	A	A
Clothing/equipment not working or not conforming; absence of second regulation weapon or bodycord	t.45/1 et 3.b		R	R
Bending/dragging weapon point on conductive strip (F,E)	t.46, t.61	C	D	D
Grounding the weapon on the metallic vest (F) *	t.53	A		
In Saber, touch scored with the guard*; any forward movement crossing the legs or feet*	t.70, t.75/3	R		
Refusal to obey the Referee	t.82, t.84	D		
Jostling, disorderly fencing * ; taking off mask before the Referee calls 'Halt'; undressing on the strip	t.87			
Unjustified appeal	t.122			
Abnormal fencing action *				
Touches with brutality or while falling *				
Fencer or team member not present upon 1 st and then second call. If still not present at 3 rd call Elimination from the competition.				

2nd group				
Interruption of bout for claimed injury not confirmed by doctor	t.33	R	R	R
Absence of equipment control mark(*)	t.45/3.a	E	E	E
Dangerous, violent or vindictive action, blow with guard or pommel *	t.87	D	D	D
Deliberate touch not on opponent	t.53, t.66			
Absence of name on back, absence of National colors where required	t.45			
3rd group		1 st Offense		2 nd Offense
Falsified weapon inspection marks, intentional modification of equipment *	t.45/3.(c), (d)	R		B
Fencer disturbing order on the strip (4)	t.82, t.83	E		L
Dishonest fencing;(*) refusal to salute before the beginning of the bout (only one fencer).	t.87	D		A C
Offence against publicity code	Publicity Code			K (1)
Any person not on strip disturbing order	t.82, t.83	1 st : Warning (YELLOW CARD) or (4) 2 nd Expulsion (3) or (4)		
Refusal of one fencer to salute the opponent after final touch scored	t.87	Winner: Annulment of Touch Scored Loser: Suspension (5)		
Changing the order of bouts in a team match, intentionally or unintentionally	t.86	Loss of Match		
4th group				
Manifest cheating with equipment (2)	t.45/3.e	B		
Offense against sportsmanship (1) or (2)	t.87	L		
Deliberate brutality (1), refusal of both fencers to salute: before the bout (1); after the final touch scored (5)	t.87, t.105	A		
Profiting from collusion, favoring an opponent (1)	t.88, t.105	C		
Doping (2)	t.129	K		
Fencer equipped with electronic communication equipment permitting him to receive communications during the bout	t. 45/3 (f) (1) or (2)			

* Annulment of any touch scored by the fencer at fault.

Yellow Card = Warning (valid for bout, whether one or several encounters). Red Card = Penalty touch. Black Card = Exclusion or expulsion.

(1) Exclusion from competition. (2) Exclusion from whole tournament. (3) Expulsion from competition venue. (4) In serious cases, Referee may exclude/expel immediately. (5) Suspension for two competitions. (6) Disqualification.

If a fencer commits an offence in the First Group after having been penalized with a Red Card, for whatever reason, he or she receives a further Red Card. A fencer only receives a Black Card in the Third Group if he or she previously committed an offence in this Third Group (demonstrated by a Red Card).