

PART IV
EPEE
Objectives
Syllabus
Technique and Coaching
Evaluation

EPEE OBJECTIVES

1. During the Level 3 epee course the coach will complete the learning and practice of:
 - The Individual Lesson
 - Epee Terminology

2. Having read, assimilated and practiced the contents of this epee section, the coach will have:
 - revised the game and teaching of *epee* fencing
 - revised general basics as covered in Level 2 and dealt with the subject more fully
 - revised counter attacks and counter time as covered in Level 2 and deal with the subject more fully.

3. The coach will learn and practice new techniques to complete the technical syllabus for epee.
They are grouped as follows:
 - Preparations of attack
 - Close quarter fighting
 - Prises de fer
 - Renewed attacks

EPEE SYLLABUS

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THE PRACTICE AND TEACHING OF EPEE

Modern epee fencing is based upon two definitions in the FIE "Regulations of Competition," as follows:

1. there is no right of way, and
2. hits scored on any part of the entire body are valid.

If the two fencers hit each other with the two hits arriving within 1/20th to 1/25th of a second of each other, the situation is called a double hit ("coup double") and a hit is awarded against each fencer; one can lose a bout on such a decision. When the arrival of the two hits is separated by a period of time greater than 1/20th to 1/25th of a second, only the first hit is registered by the electrical apparatus.

Thus, the classical notion of "hitting without being hit" is no longer true for epee fencing. The essential factor is to hit first.

The extension of the valid target would seem to favour the more offensive fencer, but the lack of convention removes this apparent advantage, since it allows the attacked fencer to counter-attack at will.

Finally, the large diameter of the epee guard (coquille) makes it a "shield" able to provide a large measure of protection to the sword hand and arm.

These considerations decide the technique and tactics of modern epee fencing.

The game, apparently so simple, becomes complex. Epee fencers must remain at long distance from each other and must be careful in their preparations, otherwise they will be hit at the first mistake. Contrary to foil and sabre fencing, minor mistakes in technique are not protected by rules of priority or by the off-target hit.

In order to prepare his pupil correctly, the coach will have to make use of series of combinations of offensive, counter-offensive and defensive actions on different targets and at various distances. These combinations of actions are necessary to develop the precision and technique indispensable to modern epee fencing, and will also develop the arm-legs coordination of the pupil.

This manual is designed to show the coach how to teach his pupil each of these types of action.

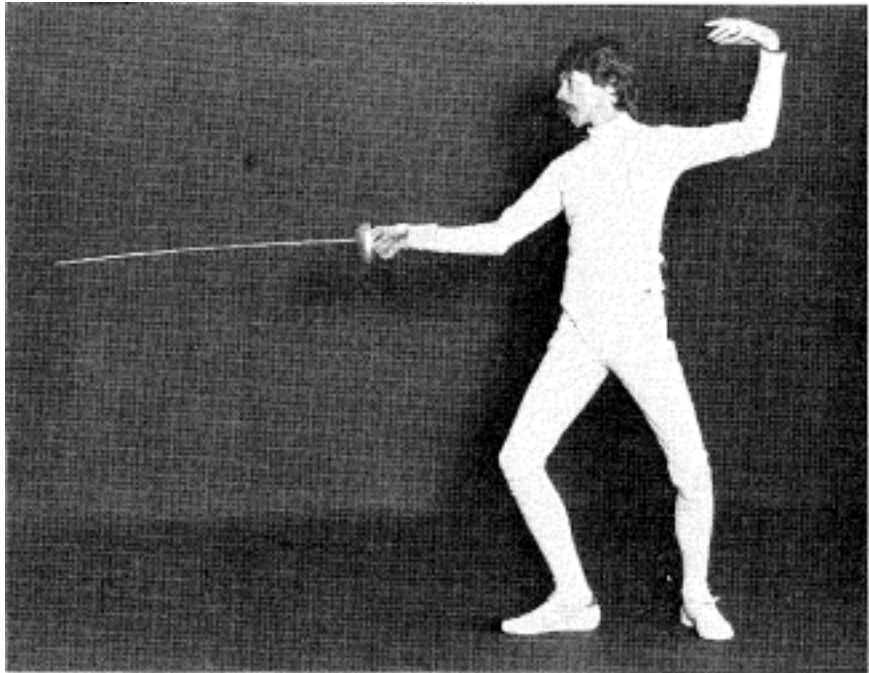
In the course of the different chapters, the coach will complete his apprenticeship in theory and technique, and at the same time learn how to place and conduct himself in front of a pupil.

To avoid any misunderstanding, the reader should note that all described actions are to be understood from a right handed point of view, except if otherwise stated.

THE BASICS

The On Guard Position

A correct on guard position is essential because it will protect the epeeist against any direct attack.



It has the following characteristics:

- stance shorter than for foil,
- legs not too bent in order to keep the knee out of range and to allow the greatest possible mobility,
- body weight resting evenly over the balls of the feet, not over the heels,
- body upright, well effaced (sideways to the opponent),
- sword arm three-quarters extended, but relaxed,
- forearm well protected by the guard,
- hand slightly in supination, and
- point directed at and preferably slightly below the opponent's guard (octave position),

Thus:

- the guard protects the arm,
- the point protects the body and legs,
- derobements are easily executed.

Problems most frequently encountered:

- body weight on the front leg,
- body weight on the back leg,
- stance too large (front leg vulnerable),
- body bent forward (vulnerable),
- "broken" wrist (exposing the hand and forearm),
- elbow not tucked in (the forearm and upper arm vulnerable), or
- sword arm too fully extended (causing shoulder contraction).

The fencing measure:

Due to the many different targets and their respective distance from the opponent's point, the epee fencer must constantly appreciate the distances. Chiefly, we distinguish:

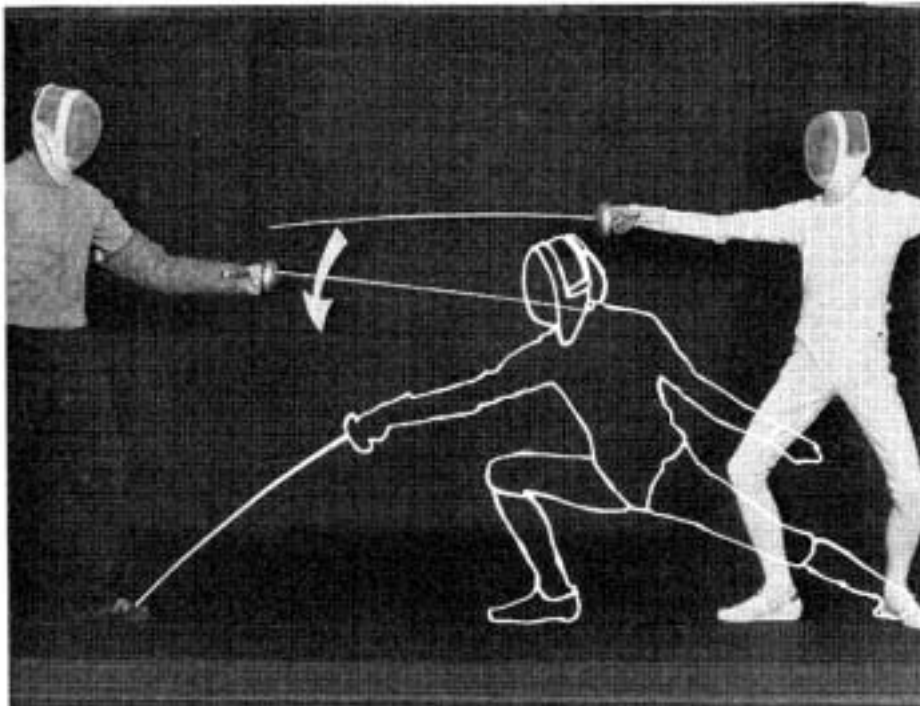
long distance: lunging distance from the advanced target (hand, wrist or forearm),

middle distance: lunging distance from the medium target (upper knee, leg or foot),

short distance: lunging distance from the body.

These are the usual distances during an epee lesson. In combat, one could remain further away for tactical reasons (very long distance). It might also happen that, following a phrase d'armes, one might find oneself nearer the opponent; i.e., at riposte and close quarter distances, such as in foil fencing.

Middle Distance



Footwork:

The epee fencer must be completely mobile so that, according to the circumstances, he may be able:

- to hit the different targets of the opponent, and
- to avoid being hit by his opponent.

There are many ways to move, but two are particularly well suited to epee fencing and should be emphasized. These are the steps and the jumps. One will choose the first and/or the second depending on the distance and the rhythm of the bout.

To Reduce Distance (i.e., to gain fencing measure):

- from middle distance: the moves should be measured and cautious. Because they are executed in two periods of fencing time, small steps are advised.
- from long distance: small jumps are very useful; as they are done in one single period of fencing time, they allow the fencer to gain distance quickly.

It is useful to combine the last move prior to the lunge (or fleche) with an "appel " This can contribute a lot to the change in rhythm necessary to any attack.

One speaks then of "patinando": step with "appel" of the rear foot, and "balestra": jump with "appel" of the front foot.

Increase Distance

Long steps and jumps backward are to be preferred. These are the moves that both ensure the best balance and allow the continuation of counter-offensive and defensive actions.

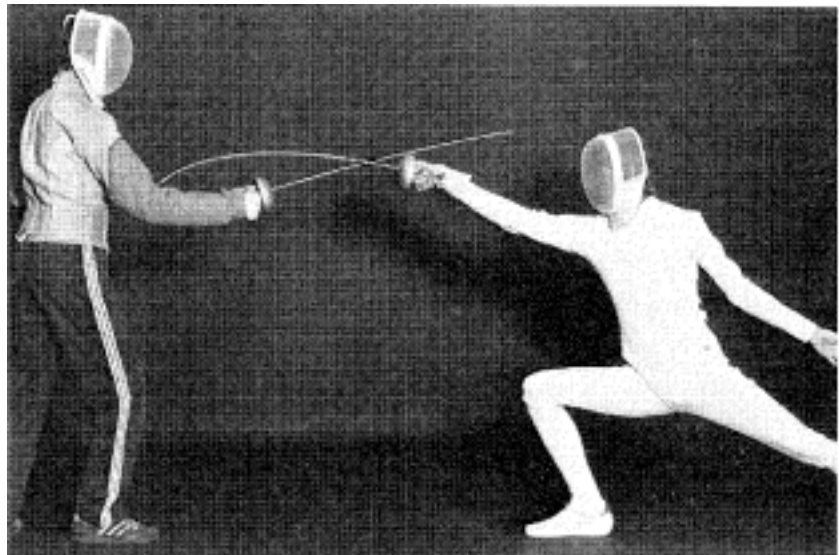
Example: stop hit at the upper wrist followed by sixte opposition at the arm, and so on. . .

Note: There are other types of footwork; in particular the reverse steps and the crossovers ("passes"). The former are not very much used in modern epee fencing, but the cross-overs still have their uses. The cross-over backwards (passe arriere) when combined with a stop hit on the upper arm, serves to remove the front leg from the threat of attack in the low line. The cross-over forwards (passe avant) is little used in combat, but it is an excellent basis for the learning of the fleche. It should, therefore, be in the repertory of the epee fencer.

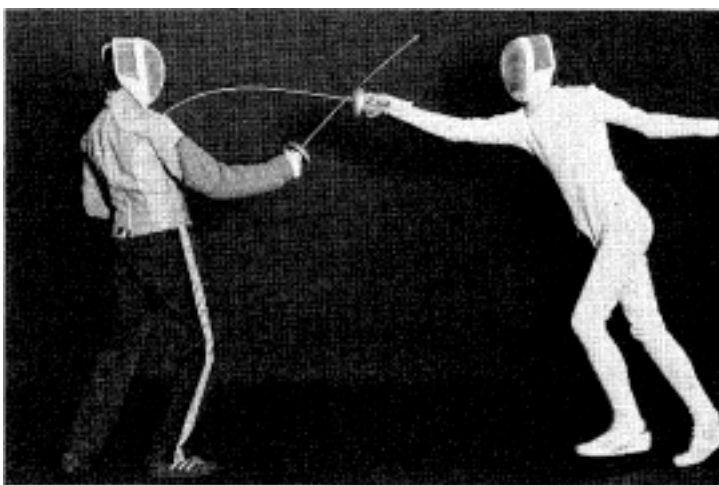
How to Attack:

Three methods of attack are used in epee:

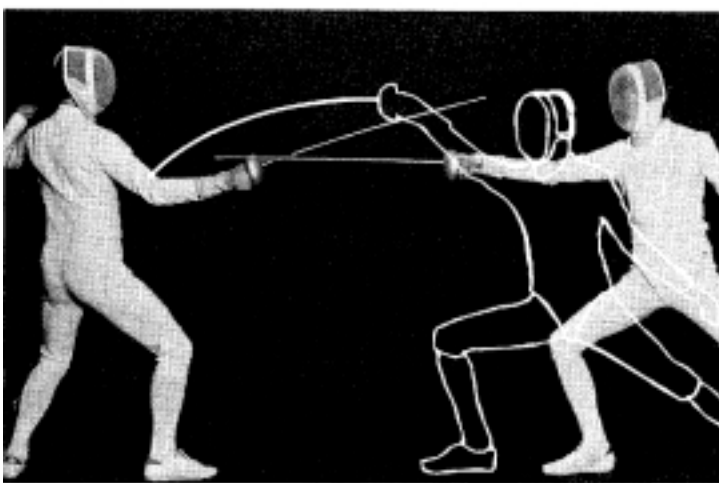
- the lunge,



- the fleche, and



- the half-lunge.



The first two are used at foil, particularly the lunge. The fleche is very frequently used in epee fencing since it allows one to hit from long distance. When combined with a prise de fer in the high line (sixte), it is powerful and leaves almost no room for a derobement. It is much used in second intention actions directed at the body.

The importance of the half-lunge is that it permits the fencer to construct compound actions appropriate to the various targets (and distances) encountered in epee. While it may not always allow the attacker to hit at first try, it is an ideal means of approaching the target without excessive risk. It also tends to provoke the opponent more than a feint executed with a step.

Note: No matter what type of move is used, the sword arm must be fully extended before the beginning of the leg action. Otherwise, the epeeist is exposed to the stop hit, without any real possibility of covering himself so as to proceed with a successful attack.

The Return On Guard:

After a full or half-lunge, the return on guard is done with a rapid movement of the legs, either backward or forward. This return on guard is always done with the sword arm fully extended, the point threatening the opponent's arm. In this manner the epeeist is ready for anything; be it a remise, a redoublement, or a parry.

When the return on guard is forward and is followed by a lunge (or a fleche), it is called a "reprise."

OFFENCE:

Epee, like foil, is a thrusting weapon only. Consequently, the manner in which attacks are executed is the same, only the target differs. For instance, we distinguish:

- the advanced target: hand, wrist, forearm,
- the medium target: upper arm, thigh, foot,
- the body.

In order to hit these different targets, the epeeist must make use of simple or compound attacks with or without preparations.

Remarks:

A certain number of actions particular to epee fencing have already been seen in the Level 2 Coaching Manual. Since the present Manual is to prepare the coach for giving individual lessons, we will recall these actions and complete them with others in order to offer a full view of the attacks used in modern epee fencing.

A. Simple Attacks:

These are offensive actions executed in one period of fencing time, generally with a lunge or a fleche.

Classification:

1. Simple attacks to the advanced targets:
 - a) classic: by straight thrust or disengage,
 - b) in angulation.
2. Simple attacks to the body:

by straight thrust or disengage.

Note: The cut-over is not recommended as it has a tendency to uncover the hand. However, it is an action useful to know and as such finds a place in the repertory. On the other hand, due to the absence of engagement that is characteristic of epee fencing, the counter-disengage is only used in the final of a compound attack, to deceive circular parries.

Technique:

1. Simple attacks at the advanced targets:

Simple attacks can be executed in two manners: they are either straight (classic) or angulated.

a) The straight attack (Classic) is executed by

- straight thrust: at the wrist or forearm (on top, underneath, inside, outside), or at the thigh or foot,
- disengage: at the wrist or forearm (on top, underneath, inside, outside).

In both cases, it is important to cover oneself on the side of the opponent's point and blade before lunging.

The classic attack is used to hit an opponent:

- who is uncovered, or
- on his preparation.

When the opponent is well covered on guard, it is necessary to use a preparation like a beet to uncover a line.

b) The Angulated Attack is generally an action aimed at the hand or wrist. In the final of such an action, the weapon and the arm form a broken line.

- For attacks on top: the hand is higher than the point, thumb on top.
- For attacks underneath: the hand is lower than the point in pronation.
- For attacks inside: the hand is level with the point, in supination and pushing out to the right side.
- For attacks outside: the hand is level with the point, in half-pronation and pushing out to the left side.

The use of angulated attacks is recommended on fencers who are on guard with the sword arm very much extended.

The half-lunge and lunge are the best ways to carry such actions to the target. The thrust must be combined with the start of the front leg movement and directed as near as possible to the guard. It is immediately withdrawn in order to avoid a possible counterattack. Sharp beats facilitate simple angulated attacks.

The best ones are:

- beat quarte attack inside (outside for a left-handed),
- beat septime attack inside (outside for a left-handed),
- beat tierce attack underneath.

2. Simple attacks to the body:

They are fully extended actions by straight thrust or disengage, most often "en fleche." These attacks necessitate covering on the side of the opponent's blade. Their execution is similar to that of foil attacks.

B. Attacks Preceded by One (or more) Feint(s):

We distinguish here two general categories of attacks that occupy more than one period of fencing time:

- compound attacks, and
- attacks on the withdrawal of the hand.

Compound attacks are offensive actions deceiving one or more parries that have been provoked by one or more feints.

Attacks on the withdrawal of the hand are offensive actions comprising one or more feints followed by a straight thrust as the hand withdraws.

Classification:

1. Compound attacks:

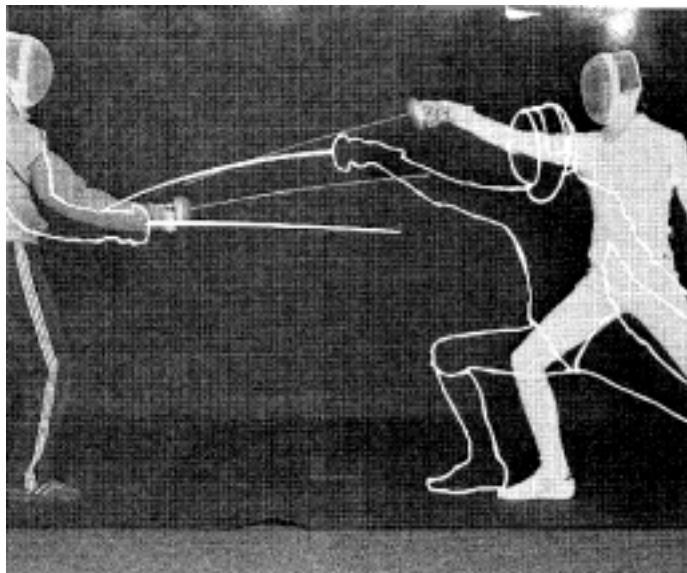
a) with one feint:

- finishing at the most advanced targets,
- at the medium target,
- at the body.

b) with two feints

- finishing at the body.

2. Attacks on the withdrawal of the hand:
 - a) finishing at the advanced targets,
 - b) finishing at the body



Technique:

The following feints are most often used:

- simple: by straight thrust or disengage,
- compound: by one-two, underneath-on top, on top-underneath, doublement.

It can be advantageous to synchronize the feint(s) with the opponent's engagement(s).

1. Compound attacks:

- a) with one feint: This action must be quite emphatic to induce the reflex of parrying. To accomplish this, a half-lunge (or a step) is often necessary. The final hits the target with, the continuation of the lunge, (or the lunge) that follows the deception of the parry. If the attack is to finish at the body, the fleche becomes almost essential.
- b) with two feints: By means of a succession of steps, the feints are more and more emphatic behind the guard and the final is carried with a lunge or fleche, preferably to the body.

Note: To multiply the number of feints is more dangerous than useful. One should try to make as few as possible; two feints should be the maximum.

2. Attacks on the withdrawal of the hand:
 - a) at the advanced targets: preferably one feint, executed as in a compound attack. As soon as the hand withdraws, the final is carried as quickly as possible to one of the uncovered targets.
 - b) at the body: as above, but preferably with a fleche.

General remarks:

Good leg action is fundamental to the success of these attacks, and coordination must be perfect to benefit from the opponent's reaction. All feints are combined with half-lunges or steps, finals always being in lunge, continuation of the lunge or fleche. This implies the need for careful preparation and a change in rhythm at the moment of the final.

Nor is fingerplay unimportant, far from it. In compound attacks, one could deceive the parry (parries) with or without contact of the opponent's blade. The first possibility, while the more difficult, remains the better.

As is true of all actions intended to lead to a hit; a correct appreciation of the fencing measure, combined with quick and precise moves, will contribute a lot to the success of compound attacks.

Coaching:

The coach must ensure that his pupil does not attack at ill-chosen times. Thus, he must first give a definite signal to inform the pupil of the appropriate moment. In the beginning, a verbal indication may be used. Very soon, however, a realistic fencing movement should be used in order to correspond more closely with the reality of actual combat.

A. For simple attacks

1. Classic at the advanced targets:

- by straight thrust: the coach uncovers a target (on top, underneath, inside, outside).
- by disengage: the coach engages the pupil's blade rather slowly at first, transforming this move into a beat when the pupil progresses. At the same time as he prepares, the coach uncovers a target to be hit.

2. In angulation of the advanced targets:

The coach extends his sword arm, remaining covered. Since angulated attacks allow a hit in all times, the coach must first inform the pupil of the action required.

3. At the body: as in foil fencing.

B. For attacks preceded by one or more feints:

1. Compound attacks: the start signal is similar to that used for simple attacks, except that the feint draws a parry that the pupil must deceive.

The coach must demand a menacing feint, otherwise he should not react. When he judges the feint to be realistic, he should form the parry slightly early in order to help the pupil deceive it at the proper time. However, this parry is executed with a limited move of the hand and without the point being far away from the pupil's sword arm. As soon as the precision is correct, ask for an acceleration during the deception.

2. Attacks on the withdrawal of the hand:

- the start signal is similar to that used for simple attacks, but
- the feint must provoke a withdrawal of the hand, that the pupil must quickly use.

Remarks: At a certain level, the coach must vary his reaction to the feint(s); this could be by using different parries, by withdrawing his hand or by counter-attacking. In this manner, he will be able to check the pupil's balance.

Last but not least, no matter what type of attack, the coach should take great care in keeping a correct fencing measure:

- long: for attacks directed at the hand, wrist or forearm,
- middle: for attacks at the upper arm, thigh, or foot,
- short: for attacks at the body.

DEFENCE:

Because of the epee regulations, defence in epee fencing is quite different from that of foil. Accordingly, its study should be undertaken on the basis that epee is a very distinctive weapon. Due to the absence of convention, it should have a defensive-offensive character, concentrating on point thrusts, with opposition, into the opponent's offensive.

Dependent of the fencing measure and the target aimed at by the attack, several technical processes are used. These are:

- the opposition with the guard (often combined with a stop hit) against an attack directed at the advanced targets (long distance),
- the long parry: against an attack directed at the middle targets,
- the short parry: against an attack very deep or directed at the body (short distance).

Thus, there is a whole range of defence at epee. The foil-type parries are recommended only against very deep attacks. The remainder of the time the parry and riposte are usually combined, forming a single period of fencing time.

In Level 2, for the sake of simplicity, only the use of the epee guard and some short parries (sixte and octave) were studied in the "Defence and Ripostes" chapter. They had one thing in common: i.e., the parry was always followed by the riposte, as with the conventional weapons.

The present manual completes these two means of "passive" defence with the study of the long parry which is better adapted to the game and spirit of epee fencing since it is an "active" defence, where one tries to hit at the same time one protects oneself. This parry is the same as the stop hit with opposition or with interception seen in foil.

The principle of the long parry was, however, explained in the Level 2 Manual. It was found in the "counter-attacks" chapter, under the name of "stop hit with opposition," which complies with the logic of conventional weapons.

At Level 3, we have preferred grouping, under the same chapter, all defensive processes used in epee fencing.

Parries:

The parry is the defensive action that wards off, with the blade, the opponent's offensive.

At epee, the fundamental parries are the ones that deflect the blade to the outside of the body: sixte, counter-sixte, octave, and counter-octave. The secondary parries are quarte, counter-quarte, septime, seconde and prime; this last being recommended only against prises de fer finishing in sixte.

We have seen in Level 2 the fundamental parries: sixte, octave (and their counters). To these are now added:

- Prime: parry covering the left side, point lower than the hand, hand turned upside down with the thumb underneath. Used exclusively as a ceding parry.
- Seconde: parry covering the right side, point lower than the hand, hand in pronation. It covers the same line as octave, but is more powerful; it is mostly used against deep attacks.
- Quarte: parry covering the left side, point higher than the hand, hand in supination. Used as both a long and a short parry, particularly in ceding (low quarte).
- High Sixte: a particular form of sixte, taken hand higher than the shoulder. Used exclusively as a short parry.
- Septime: parry covering the left side, point lower than the hand, hand in supination. Not very much used, this parry is taken with the hand high.

While the technique of the short parry is identical to that of the foil, the long parry has certain particular requirements:

- emphasis given to the point's action,
- opposition with the guard till the finale,
- parry executed with the extension of the sword arm coordinated with the beginning of a retreat.

The parries can be semi-circular, circular or direct (lateral). They may be executed in opposition or ceding. The beat parry is generally not recommended on account of the possibility of immediate remise. It can, however, be used against certain attacks directed at the advanced targets, the riposte being aimed at the arm.

Against compound attacks, one uses simple successive parries: for example, sixte, counter-sixte, octave and so on ...

Remarks: In the same way as opposition parries should be coordinated with a retreat, ceding parries should be coordinated with a step forward: in this way the remises may be avoided.

Coaching:

1. Beat parries:

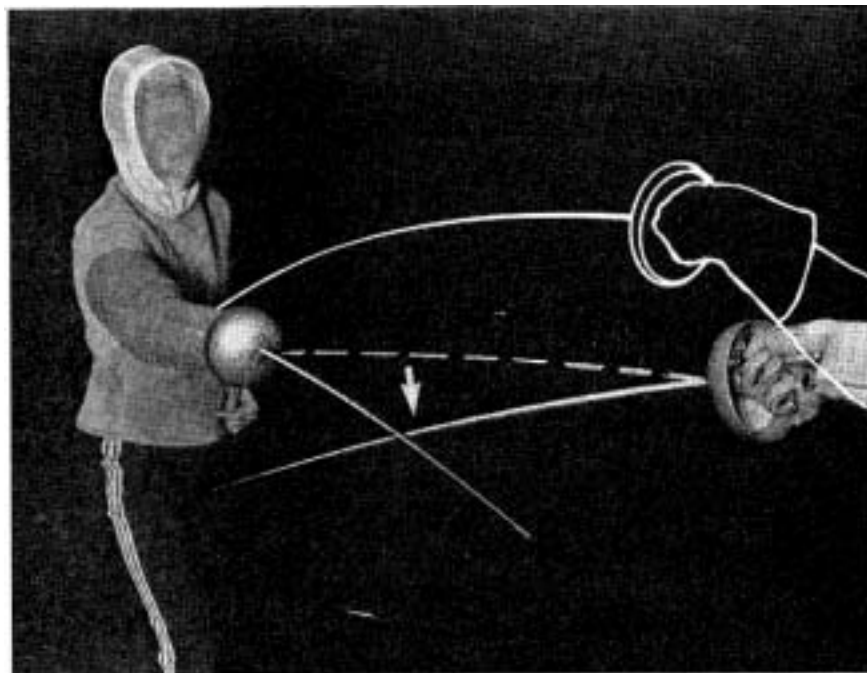
Even if this type of action is generally not advised in combat, the coach will find them useful in order to develop fingerplay and a correct sense of the fencing measure.

From long distance, the coach directs his point towards the pupil's arm and completely extends his sword arm, at the same time coming close with leg action. Without displacing his hand, the pupil beats sharply on the blade presented and directs the riposte as quickly as possible to the wrist. Dependent on the covering, the riposte is done classically or with angulation, so as to benefit from the greatest possible speed.

Action to prefer: quarte, septime, tierce (position similar to sixte, but taken hand in pronation) and seconde.

Presentation of the blade:

- for septime and seconde beats: blade slightly lower than the horizontal.



- for quarte and tierce beats: blade slightly higher than the horizontal.

2. Short parries:

The execution of this type of parry has been described in the Level 2 Manual and will not be emphasized here. For more details see Foil.

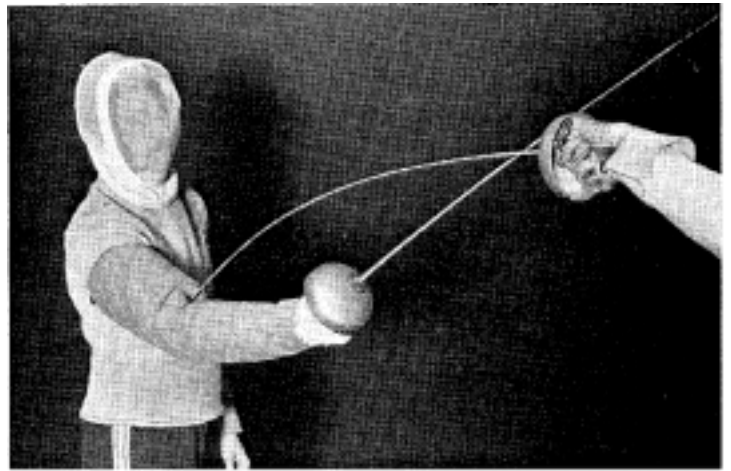
Remarks: The coach must insist on parries executed with opposition. The pupil must be careful not to withdraw the sword arm excessively and must limit the hand movement. If it is necessary to displace the hand, do so after moving the blade.

3. Long parries:

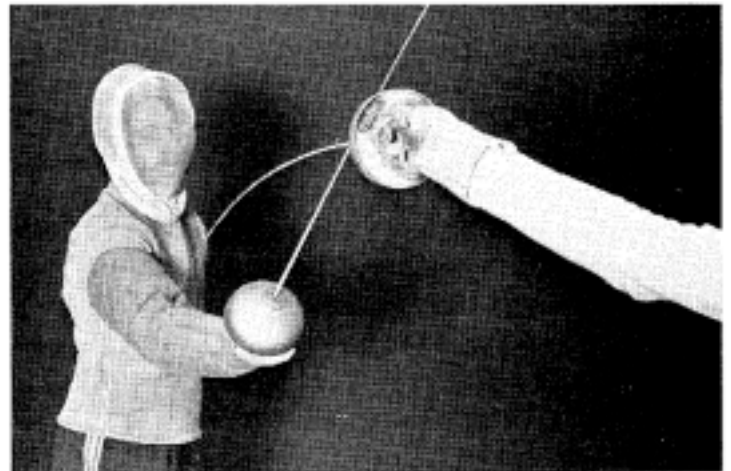
Since the actions are in fact oppositions executed at middle and short distance, the coach should do real attacks (to hit), at a correct fencing measure. He should give particular attention to the target presentation and coordinate it with the attack.

- At middle distance: the coach extends his arm, point directed slightly higher than the pupil's guard;

- for the sixte parry: the hand is placed rather low, on the right;

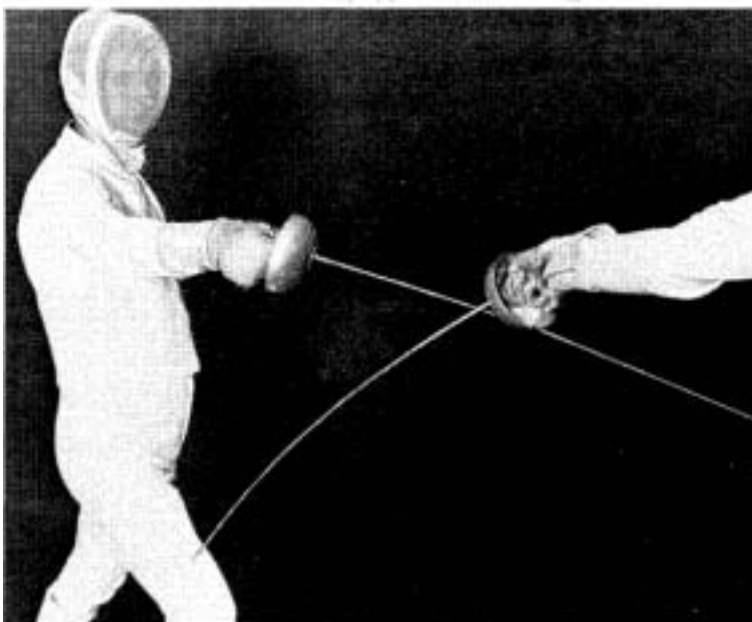


- for the quarte parry: the hand is placed rather low, on the left.



Since these long parries are directed at the arm and are quite difficult to execute correctly, the coach can help the pupil by not completely extending his sword arm, so as to offer the forearm as target:

- at short distance: the coach extends his arm, point directed, slightly lower than the pupil's guard;



- for the octave parry: the hand is placed rather high, on the right;

- for the septime parry: the hand is placed rather high, on the left.

As soon as the pupil's moves are well executed, the coach will increase the difficulty of the exercise by accelerating the attack and by offering some resistance to the opposition.

4. Ceding parries:

This type of parry is exclusively used against prise de fer actions. A ceding parry is intended to divert the opponent's blade into a line other than the one where the attack was intended to end.

In epee fencing, the parries used almost exclusively are prime (or septime) and low quarte.

- Prime: The coach asks the pupil to extend his arm at middle height (shoulder), point directed at the guard. Then, the coach opposes in sixte with a lunge, asking the pupil not to react immediately but to wait till the attack by prise de fer is very deeply committed. Only at that moment will the pupil execute a hand conversion accompanied by a limited withdrawal of the arm, keeping the two blades in contact. The point goes outside for complete covering.
- Septime: As above, but without the hand conversion.
- Low quarte: same beginning, except that the coach opposes in octave. At the same time as the lunge, the pupil yields in low quarte. Half-supination is recommended, to benefit from the protection given by the guard (Coquille) in this position.

As soon as the moves are correctly executed, the coach draws a stop hit or a derobement and then takes the blade (opposition or bind). This counter time should then be parried by the appropriate ceding parry.

Teaching Hints:

The coach should launch really threatening attacks and call for logical reactions: thus an attack directed at the foot should not bring a low line parry but rather a stop hit to the upper arm.

For the long parry, the coach should constantly remind the beginner that the thrust precedes the opposition. It is good from time to time to deceive the parry to verify that the pupil has well understood this essential principle.

The coach should ensure that the pupil does not react to feints. For this, the coach asks the pupil to parry only when the attack is well committed behind the guard, i.e., only when the point is travelling and threatening, not on the simple extension of the sword arm.

Lastly, from the beginning one should coordinate the parry with footwork, since it is the only way to pursue the action. It is good to make the pupil execute a series of parries, in order to check his balance.

Ripostes:

In theory, the riposte is the offensive action following the parry of the attack. Such a definition is clear at foil and sabre, but has a somewhat different interpretation in epee. In fact, there can be both simultaneous parries and ripostes, and parries followed by ripostes.

As long parries are in reality stop hits with opposition, it is difficult to speak here of ripostes, since the hit is already given at the moment of the parry.

We distinguish two types of true ripostes:

- those which follow beat parries, and
- those which follow short parries.

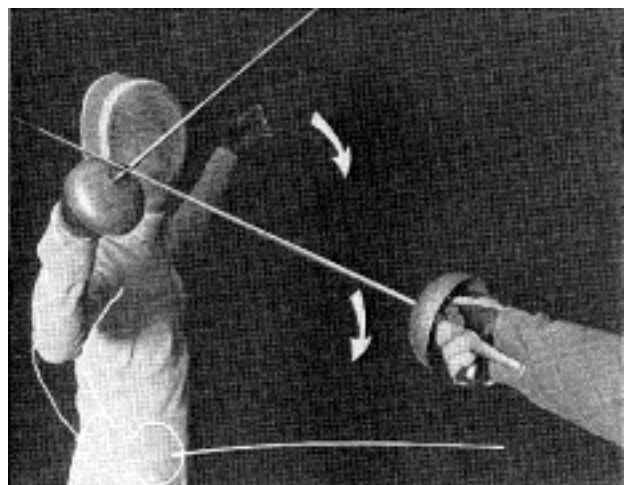
The first are executed at long distance and have already been discussed with beat parries. Our subject will then be limited to ripostes following foil-type parries.

After a short parry (foil-type):

The riposte should be adapted to the distance; as much as possible it should be executed with a prise de fer, in order to avoid the remise.

At short distance, oppositions and croises are preferred. If the opponent tries to retire, oppositions and binds are advised. If he tries to advance, favour croises or indirect ripostes. These are executed only at very short distance, when the opponent's point is beyond the target (body): for example, disengage underneath after high sixte.

As seen, it is essential not to release the opponent's blade when executing the riposte, unless the likelihood of a remise is remote because of a very short fencing measure.



A redoublement is always possible, but would require expert fingerplay if the prise de fer riposte comes quickly.

Such ripostes can be used when retiring, advancing, with a lunge, a step-lunge or a fleche.

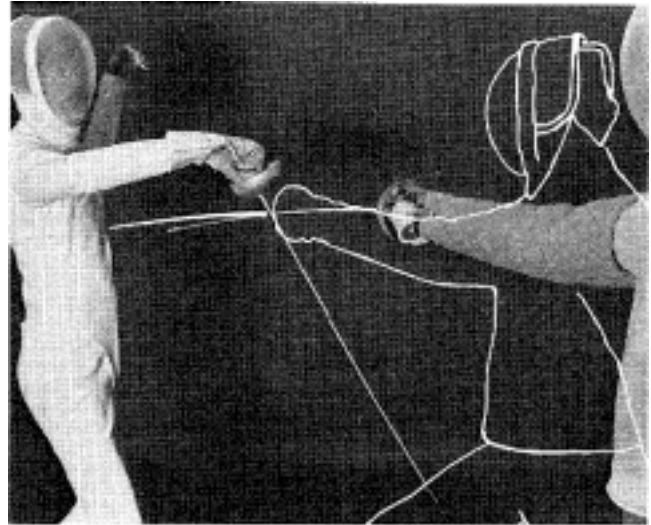
After a ceding parry:

The same ripostes are recommended, but particularly:

- after low quarte: opposition at the arm, and croise at the body with a step forward.

- after prime (or septime): straight riposte at the thigh or at the body with an opposition on the side of the opponent's blade.

After a ceding parry, the riposte is easier when the parry is taken with a step forward.



Coaching:

After the attack, the coach keeps his arm extended and opposes slightly to make the pupil feel the necessity to control the blades so as to avoid the remise.

The placing of the hand in relation to the front shoulder and its height will justify the use of a particular riposte. Ensure a logical choice of action.

Example:

For the sixte croise, the coach's hand should be rather high and on the right side (to prevent the opposition). If the hand is on the left side, then the bind from sixte to septime is more appropriate.

General Recommendations

The pupil should direct his point at the target before extending the arm, or else it is liable to pass. Ripostes should be executed in one period of fencing time and quickly, otherwise there is the danger of a reprise in time.

PREPARATIONS OF ATTACK:

All actions that may assist in the execution of an offensive movement are called preparations of attack. They can include leg movements, certain sword arm movements and combinations of the above.

Classification:

- a) leg preparations
 - any type of footwork (steps, jumps, etc...), and
 - the half-lunge
- b) sword arm preparations
 - engagements,
 - actions on the blade,
 - feints,
 - false attacks,
 - invitations, and
 - absence of blade.

Before going any further, it would be helpful to recall the meaning of these preparations, since they are part of the technical arsenal of the instructor.

Engagement:

A preparatory action that places one's blade in contact with that of the opponent, closing the opponent's line at the same time,. The engagement takes the name of the line in which the hand finishes.

Actions on the blade:

Essentially attacks on the blade ("attaques au fer") and prises de fer. Because of their importance in epee fencing, each category is studied under a separate chapter.

Feints:

A false offensive (or counter-offensive) action intended to make use of the opponent's reaction or absence of reaction.

Strictly speaking, feints are part of the offensive and are discussed under the corresponding chapter.

False attack: A simple or compound attack, often incompletely executed or developed, intended to make the opponent react, and to make use of his reactions.

Invitation: A move to uncover oneself voluntarily.

Absence of blade: An action to leave the opponent's blade with which one was in contact.

For maximum effectiveness, all of these sword arm preparations are usually combined with leg movements. It is, therefore, essential to develop a perfect arm-leg coordination.

As the subject has already been covered in detail in a preceding chapter (see Foil), we will only recall here the general principle: preparations must be completed before the beginning of the lunge or the fleche, that is at the end of the last step or jump; or at the end of the half-lunge, this last move serving to emphasize the feint.

More specifically, any hand preparation combined with foot movement can be executed:

- before the start of the movement,
- at the end of the movement, or
- during that movement.

The most favourable timing (i.e., the least dangerous for the preparer) is:

- at the end, for simple attacks, and
- before the start, for attacks requiring more than one period of fencing time.

Indeed, these are the only moments where the epeeist is in balance and able to synchronize his actions with the opponent's reaction. Because the absence of right of way stimulates the attacked fencer to counter-attack rather than to parry, the coach must attach particular importance to coordination.

Three examples of offensive action:

1. step/lunge
2. step/fleche
3. half-lunge/lunge

1. Step/lunge: an attack on the withdrawal of the hand.

From long fencing measure (lunging distance from the advanced target-hand), the coach is on guard point high.

- Pupil: beat sixte followed by a feint at the hand, underneath,
- Coach: withdrawal of the hand (and retreat),
- Pupil: straight thrust at the hand, underneath,
- the beat is executed stationary,
- the feint is augmented followed by the step,
- the lunge comes immediately after.

2. Step/fleche: a counter time ("contre temps")

From long fencing measure (lunging distance from the advanced target-hand), the coach is on guard point low.

- Pupil: beat seconde,
- Coach: derobement on top of the hand,
- Pupil: sixte opposition at the body,
- the beat is executed at the beginning of the step to draw the derobement. The prise de fer must be completed at the time the rear foot touches the ground. The fleche follows immediately.

3. Half-lunge/lunge: a counter-time ("contre temps")

From middle distance (lunging distance from the middle target-upper arm), the coach is on guard point high.

- Pupil: beat quarte followed by a feint at the hand, on top,
- Coach: counter-attack at the hand, inside,
- Pupil: bind from quarte to octave at the thigh,
 - the beat is executed from immobility,
 - the feint is augmented followed by the half-lunge,
 - the prise de fer is completed,
 - the lunge follows immediately.

Note: These examples give only a flavour of the many possibilities contained in the game of epee. They do not, of course, cover all possible situations.

COUNTER-ATTACKS:

The counter-attack is an offensive or defensive-offensive action executed during an opponent's offensive action. It can be a simple or compound move, done with or without footwork.

Classification:

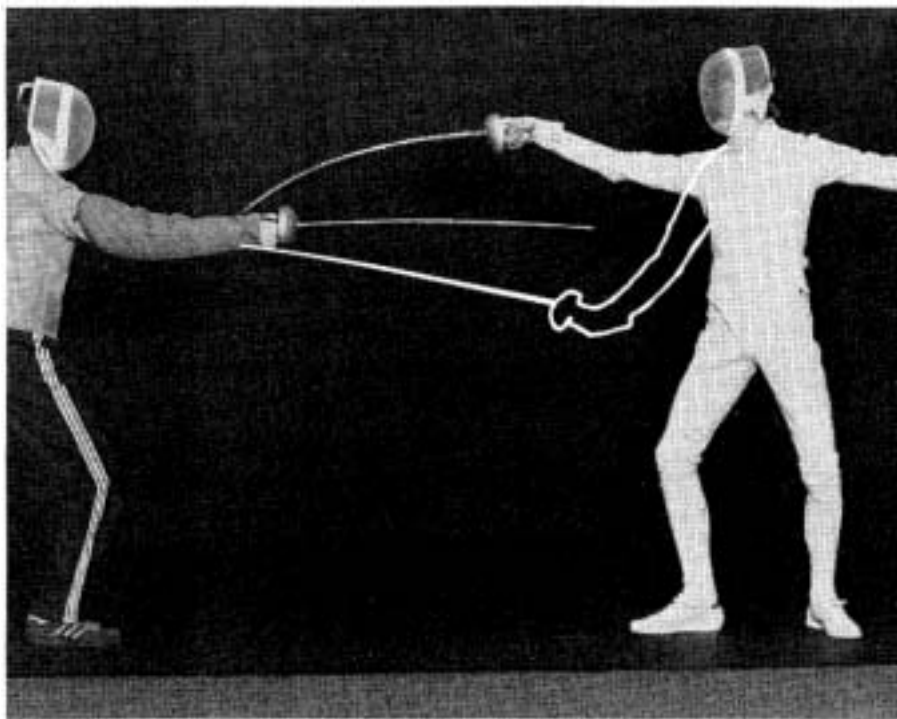
For the sake of simplicity, all types of counter-attacks have been grouped into two general categories. We make distinction between actions executed:

1. without taking the blade,
2. with opposition.

Counter-attacks of the second category are similar to long parries and are studied in that particular chapter.

Counter-attacks executed without taking the blade are subdivided into:

- stop hits, and
- derobements, simple or compound.



The stop hit:

This is the typical counter-attack: a hit given into the opponent's offensive movement, having in mind to gain superiority of length. The technique of the stop hit is identical to that of simple attacks; it is executed either by straight thrust or by disengage, and can be done classically or with angulation. In order to keep an adequate fencing measure, such a move is usually combined with a retreat.

This type of counter-attack is sometimes performed with an evasion of the target (esquive).

Example: on an attack directed towards the foot, stop hit at the upper arm, with a retreat of the leading foot.

Two particular stop hits are also possible:

- stop hit by counter-disengage: with angulation at the forearm, executed on an attack that has been drawn from the opponent,
- stop hit in counter time: with angulation at the forearm, it is a stop hit into a stop hit that has been drawn from the opponent.

The derobement:

It is a counter-attack on the offensive action, preceded by a preparation with the blade. It can, as the deception of a parry (trompement), be executed with or without blade contact:

- without contact: the evasion of the opponent's preparation and offensive movement.
- with contact: one lets the preparation get hold of the blade in order to make the evasion at the moment the opponent becomes well committed to the offensive movement.

This last form of derobement is by far the more interesting. However, it is difficult and requires excellent finger play combined with a perfect estimation of the fencing measure.

The simple derobement is generally done by disengage.

The compound derobement usually includes a feint disengage followed by another disengage or a counter-disengage, depending on the opponent's reaction.

The classical reactions are to be preferred, because of the superiority in length they afford.

Coaching:

From the beginning, the coach must accustom his pupil to defending himself with his point. For this he must respect the logic of epee fencing and adapt his moves to the action required.

For the teaching of stop hits:

From long distance the coach extends his swordarm and tries to hit the pupil with a lunge or any type of footwork. As soon as the counter-attack succeeds, the coach returns to on guard forward, which allows him to verify if the pupil has kept an adequate fencing measure after the hit. For this, ask the pupil to prepare to retreat at the same time as he extends his swordarm. The coach's coordination must be perfect and his movement fluid, so as to keep his student moving freely. The stop hit must arrive on target when the coach is moving and he must verify that the pupil stands erect during the counter-attack, the instructor impaling himself on the point.

- for the execution of classical stop hits, the coach uncovers his hand, much or less, depending on the level of his pupil.
- for the angulated stop hits, he must remain covered.

For the teaching of derobements:

Still from long distance, the instructor tries to make an engagement or a beat before attacking. To develop finger-play, the instructor should concentrate on actions executed with contact of the blades.

As soon as the simple derobements are well done, carry on to the compound moves:

- feint stop hit followed by a derobement, or
- two successive derobements.

Counter-attacks should be practiced in all lines: on top, underneath, inside and outside, and the coach must adapt his speed to that of the pupil.

Remarks:

To keep an extended arm for a long period of time soon becomes very tiring, therefore, counter-attack exercises should not last too long. The coach should, rather mix them with the other components of the fencing lesson.

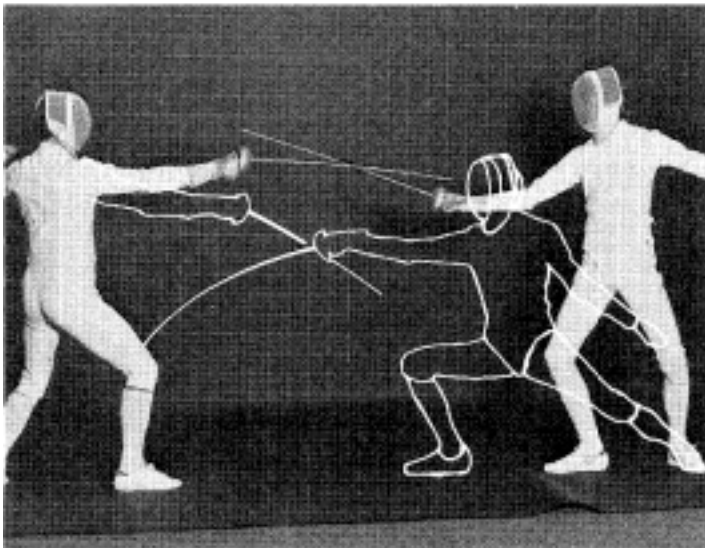
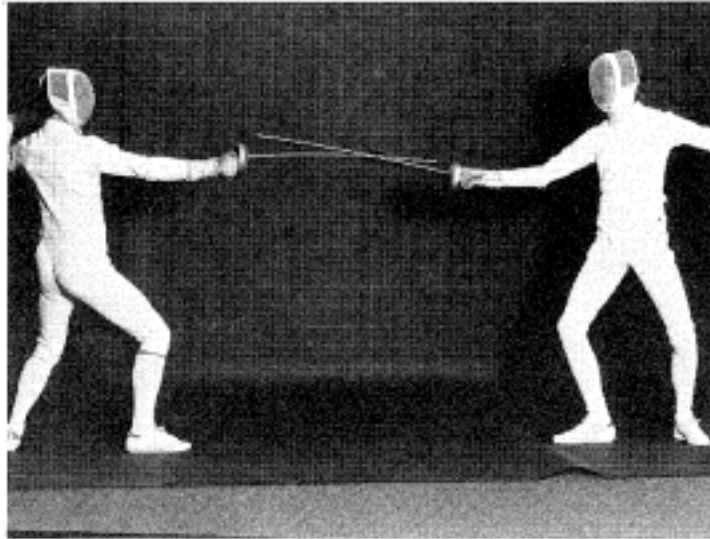
COUNTER-TIME:

Counter-time is defined as any defensive-offensive action executed on a counter-attack. It is an essential action in epee fencing, since epee is the counter-offensive weapon "par excellence."

The execution of counter-time includes three phases:

1. a preparation,
2. the parry of the opponent's counter-attack, and
3. a riposte.

Phase I



Phase 2 & 3

1. Preparation:

In order to draw the counter-attack, the two types of preparations are combined:

- hand (invitation, feint, beat, engagement), and
- foot (steps, jumps, half-lunge)

2. The parry:

Two possible types:

- opposition
- beat

The opposition parry is recommended since it ensures control of the opponent's blade. However, a true beat parry may surprise the opponent and be effective if the riposte is directed at the arm.

3. The riposte:

The prise de fer is preferred, finishing at the body or the thigh.

Coaching:

The coach must make sure that the fencing measure is appropriate for the counter time. If he judges the pupil's preparation unrealistic, he must not react to it. When the move is well executed, then he should:

1. try to hit with his counter-attack, and
2. oppose a little on the pupil's prise de fer.

His particular attention must be given to coordination and to the rhythm of the parry-riposte. The parry is executed with the sword arm extending, reaching out so as to intercept the opponent's blade and begin the prise de fer without stopping (care should be taken to avoid large movements). The riposte must not be hurried, that is it must not be executed at the same time as the parry, but after (very quickly, but after).

From time to time, the coach should:

- execute a compound counter-attack ("finta in tempo"): to check the balance of his pupil and his ability to recapture the blade.
- parry the counter-time: to develop the reflex of renewed attacks (remise and redoublement).

Examples of counter-time actions:

Pupil: beat quarte, feint at the upper wrist;

Master: counter-attack inside;

Pupil: bind from quarte to octave.

Pupil: beat septime, feint at the wrist-inside;

Master: counter-attack on top;

Pupil: bind from quarte to octave

Pupil: beat sixte, feint at the hand underneath;

Master: counter-attack on top;

Pupil: sixte opposition with fleche.

ATTACKS ON THE BLADE:

Attacks on the blade (attaques au fer) are actions executed on the opponent's blade that are intended to provoke various reactions that may facilitate the offensive. As soon as the attack on the blade is finished, the attacker's blade leaves the opponent's blade, in contrast to the taking of the blade (prise de fer).

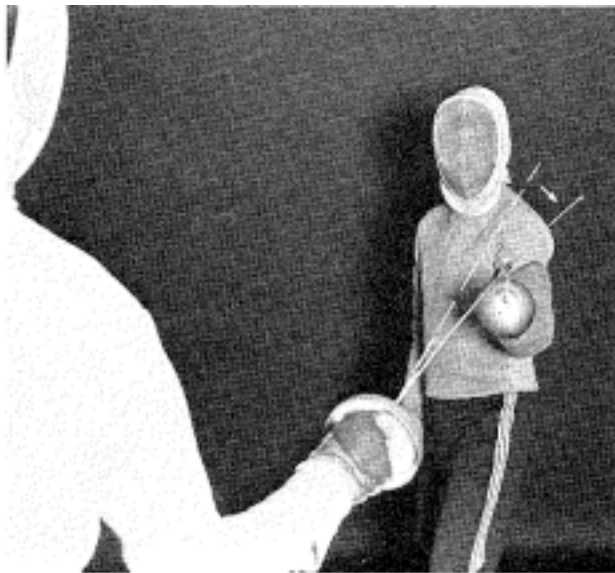
In epee fencing, attacks on the blade are used as preparations of attacks, both to the advanced targets and to the body. There are three different types of attacks on the blade: the beat, the pressure and the graze.

The Beat:

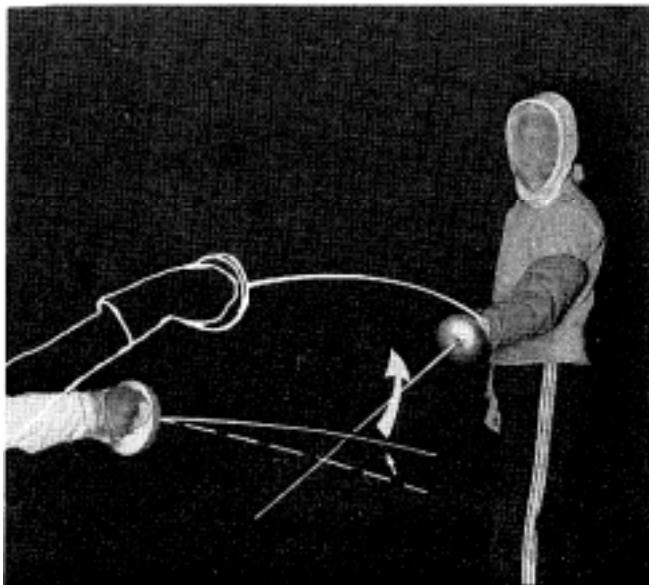
The beat (battement) is the action of striking the opponent's blade, more or less strongly, with a finger contraction and a limited movement of the wrist.

If the beat precedes a classic attack directed at the advanced targets or at the body, the sword arm should be well extended.

If it precedes an angulated attack, the arm should remain rather bent.



Beat in Sixte — Riposte under the forearm



The beats that are the most used are those in quarte and septime (for attacks directed at the advanced targets). Those in sixte and octave are relatively weak. Tierce and seconde beats are powerful, but have a tendency to uncover the forearm.

The Pressure:

Pressure (pression) is the action of pushing the foible of the opponent's blade, after an engagement. More or less vigorous, the pressure is executed with a finger contraction and a slight action of the wrist.

The pressure is generally followed with a simple attack at the advanced targets, direct or indirect, but very rarely compound.

The Graze:

The graze (froissement) is an energetic and continued friction along the entire length of the opponent's blade, from the foible to the forte. It is executed with the combined action of fingers, wrist, forearm and arm against an opponent with a rather extended arm.

By reason of its violence, the graze is always followed with a simple attack, usually at the body, but occasionally at the arm.

Only the tierce and seconde grazes are used. However, the distance between the fencers makes this a difficult action to execute and exposes the attacker to a derobement.

Use of the Attacks on the Blade:

Of the three types of attacks on the blade, the beat is the most used. It may be used:

- to open a line of attack,
- to draw a counter-attack and execute a counter time (or a stop hit in counter time), or
- to tire an opponent who is precise, but who lacks strength in the hand.

All types of attacks on the blade are, nevertheless, useful to develop fingerplay and arm-legs coordination, for they all call for a rigorous series of moves, particularly when the attacker is at a long fencing measure (step and lunge). The teacher must particularly ensure that the attack on the blade is really executed with the last element of footwork preceding the final stage of the attack (the derobement is the best way to verify the pupil's balance).

Usual Mistakes:

- exaggerated movement of the hand or forearm: danger of derobement,
- action non-blocked (i.e., engaging the blade too firmly and pushing the opponent's blade too far, once engaged): causes, while looking for the blade, a loss of time and a lack of precision;
- attack on the blade not followed immediately by the attack itself: removes the surprise effect and allows the attacked fencer the opportunity to counter-attack in time.

Coaching:

As all attacks on the blade are executed on the foible of the opponent's blade, the coach must be particularly careful to maintain a correct fencing measure (long or middle distance). The presentation of his blade must be such that the pupil will be able to limit his hand movement.

For all types of actions, the coach extends his sword arm and directs his blade towards the pupil's arm at one of the two following heights:

- point slightly higher than the hand for actions in sixte, tierce and quarte,
- point slightly lower than the hand for actions in octave, seconde and septime.

The position of his sword arm should be appropriate to the attack being practiced. For example: If the action is by seconde beat followed by an attack at the upper wrist, the arm should be at middle height, i.e., lower than for an attack underneath.

As in all epee actions, the coach must insist on the motion of covering (during and after the attack on the blade). That is why it is good to counter-attack from time to time to verify the placing of the pupil's hand. The coach's reaction to the attack on the blade must be logical and must really suit the action: a beat must not disarm him. As the pupil progresses, the coach must limit his openings to the minimum. Thus, when he asks for a beat followed by an angulated attack, he must not yield to the beat and uncover his hand. It is the pupil who must try to find the target; if the hit is too easy, he will never feel the need to angulate.

TAKING THE BLADE:

Taking the blade (prises de fer) are actions executed on the opponent's blade in order to get hold of it and control it. The French terminology will be used throughout because of its greater precision.

They are very much used in epee fencing because of the absence of convention which leaves the attacking fencer vulnerable at all times to counter-attacks. The extension of the valid target to all parts of the body and the usual on guard position render their use much more important in epee than in foil.

We distinguish four simple prises de fer: the opposition, the envelopment, the bind and the croise. As they have already been considered in foil fencing, we will not redefine them in this chapter.

A peculiarity of prises de fer in epee fencing is the fact that they are usually executed with an extension of the sword arm, in order to adapt to the long distance. Moreover, the weapon must remain in the same straight line as that formed by the forearm.

The fencer will have to combine the different prises de fer, because of the lack of convention and the mobility of the epee game which favours derobements: thus, the actions will be double, compound, or varied, depending on the combinations.

Double Prise de Fer:

Two successive simple prises de fer, executed in the same direction.

Example: sixte envelopment followed by sixte to septime bind.

Compound Prise de Fer:

Two successive simple prises de fer of which the first has been evaded (derobement).

Example: sixte envelopment followed by octave opposition.

In both the double and compound prise de fer, the first prise de fer is generally executed with a step, and the second just prior to the lunge or fleche, and with a change of rhythm.

Mistakes to avoid:

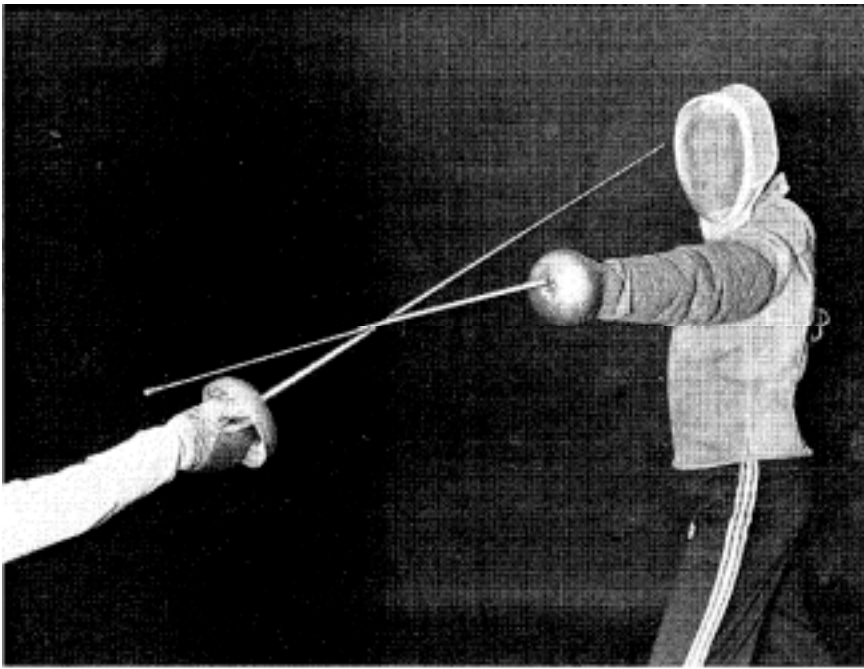
- lack of arm-legs coordination;
- trying to get hold of the opponent's blade with a large movement (hand or forearm);
- attack coming too quickly;
- insufficient opposition at the final.

Use of the Prise de Fer:

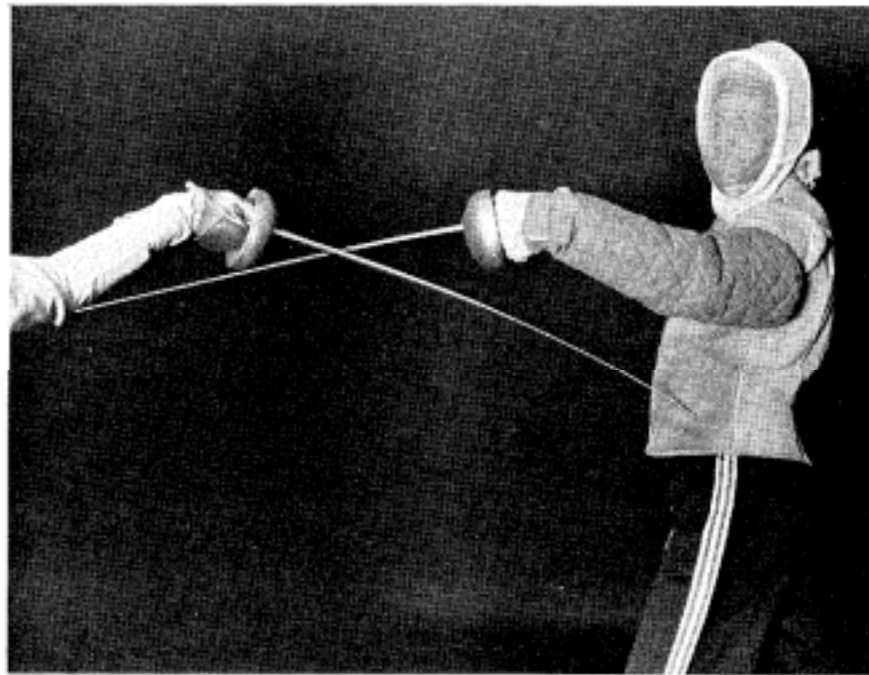
a) In attack: Oppositions and binds are mostly used. Prises de fer finishing in sixte and octave are to be preferred, since they drive the opponent's blade outside.

Examples: oppositions in sixte and octave; binds from quarte to octave and from septime to sixte.

Against a left-hander: oppositions in quarte and septime; binds from sixte to septime and from octave to quarte.



Parry Sixte



Riposte by bind into Septime

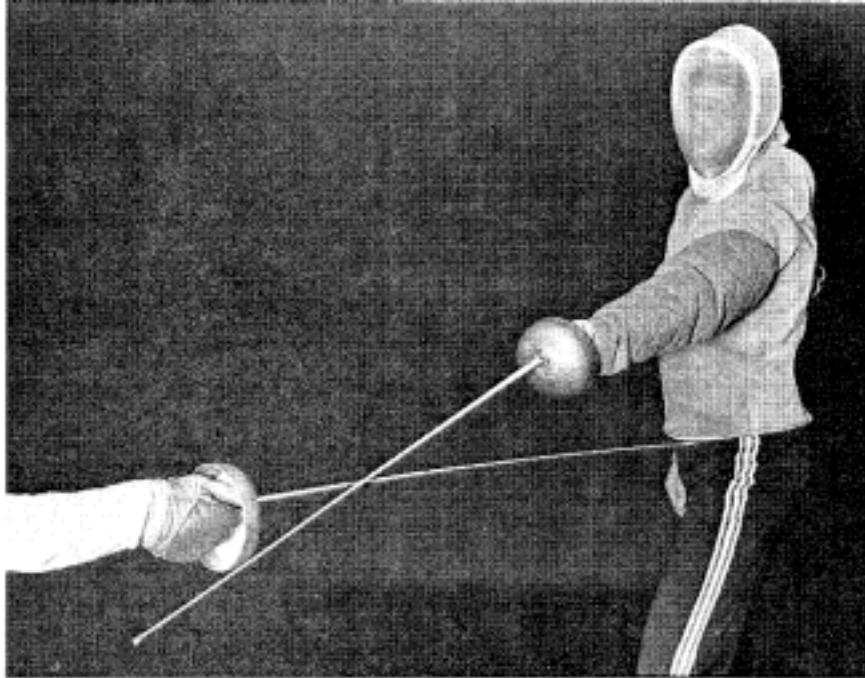
b) In riposte: Prises de fer are very much used for riposting, because of the permanent danger of remise. Oppositions and croises are preferred, to hit at the arm, thigh or body. The bind can also be used when the opponent returns on guard backwards.

Examples: oppositions in sixte and octave; croises from quarte, octave and sixte (dangerous); binds from septime to sixte and from quarte to octave.

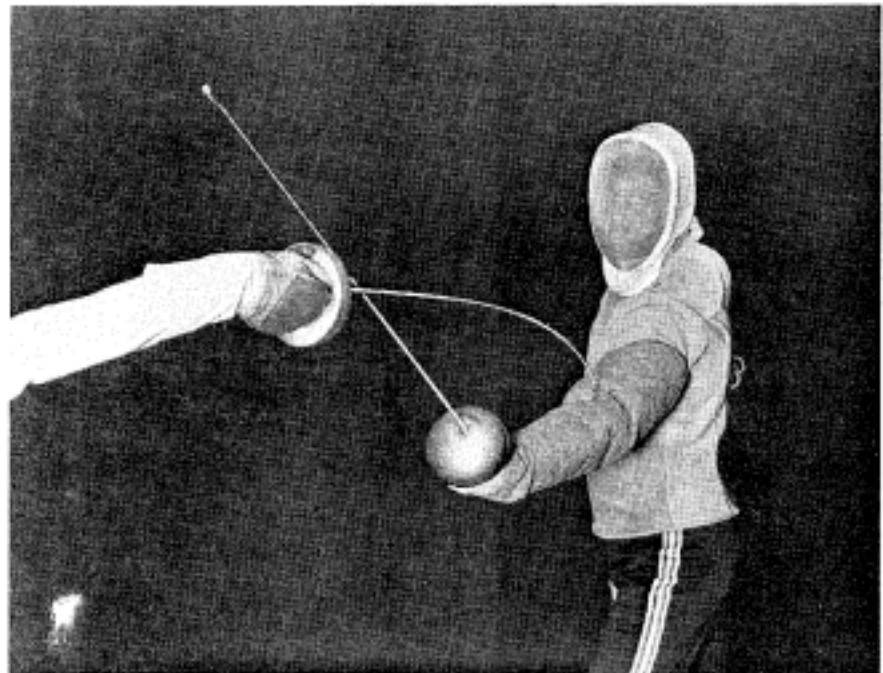
Against a left hander: oppositions in sixte and octave;
 croises in sixte and quarte
 binds sixte to septime and quarte to octave

Remarks:

In order to succeed with prises de fer in attack, it is important to seize the opponent's blade when the arm is extending in order to reduce the possibility of derobement. To control correctly the opponent's blade, one must use his "forte" and his guard. The move must be completed before the lunge (or the fleche).



Parry Octave



Riposte by Croisé into Sixte

Close quarters fighting and corps a corps:

As an introduction to this chapter, let us make a clear distinction between the notion of "close quarters" and that of corps a corps.

Close quarters is a bout situation in which the two fencers are very near each other and able to wield their weapons, but without body contact.

This situation is not contrary to the provisions of the FIE "Regulations of Competition" and the bout is allowed to continue, whereas a condition of corps a corps must stop the bout.

According to Article 34:

"Corps a corps is said to exist when the two competitors are in contact; when this occurs the President must stop the bout."

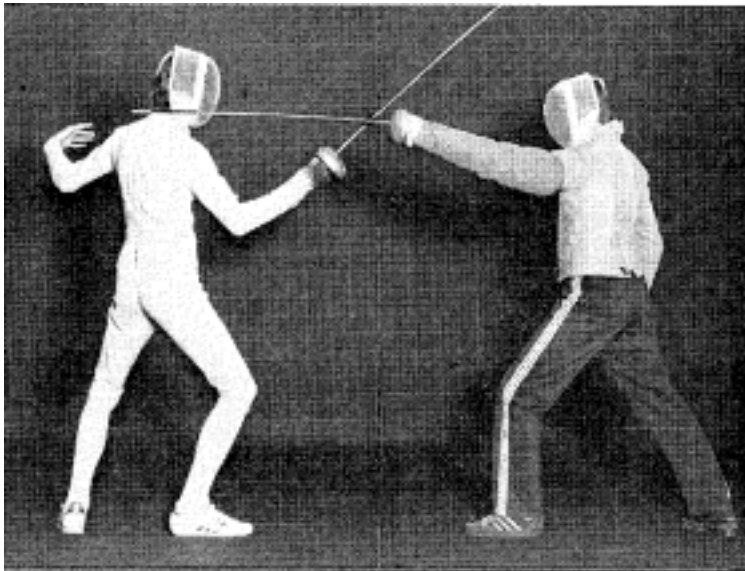
However, and in opposition to foil fencing, the fencer who causes the corps a corps is not penalized unless there was brutality or violence (Article 318).

These preliminary remarks were necessary in order to understand the importance of an adequate preparation to close quarters fighting.

Since it is authorized, the instructor must give a number of basic principles to his pupil so he will not be at a disadvantage when the situation occurs in the actual bout: a fencer can experience great difficulty in fencing epee at very short distance because the length of the weapon is ill-suited to this condition.

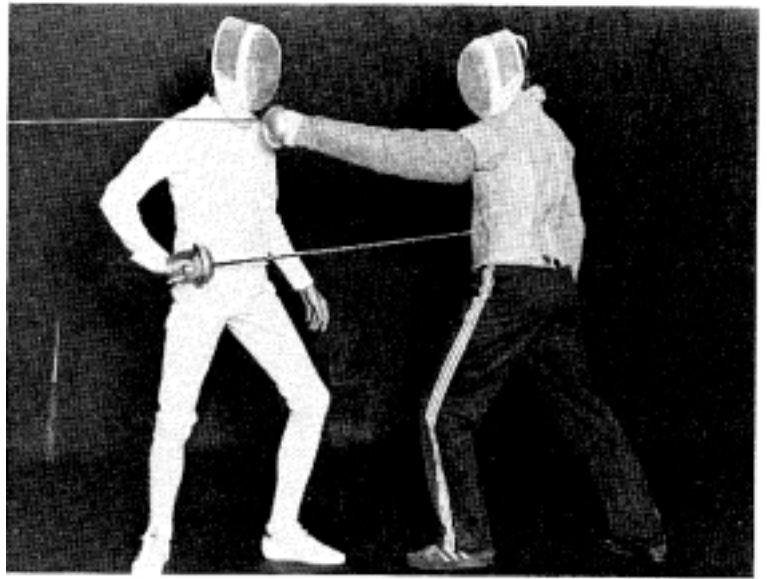
The principles to follow are:

- First: as soon as the fencers come very close to one another;
- croises from sixte and quarte;
- binds from sixte to septime and from quarte to octave.



Parry Sixte

Riposte under at Close Quarters



- Quickly change the on guard position by pivoting about the front foot, maintaining contact with the opponent's blade at the same time.
This new position (right-handed fencer coming on guard as a left-hander) unsettles one's opponent's actions while facilitating one's own.
- Second: hit preferably from high line to low line, to benefit from all the possible targets, stomach, legs, back. It is recommended to adopt the hand positions taken in pronation: particularly prime, seconde and tierce. Since they are powerful they help to dominate the opponent.

Coaching:

From any action executed at short distance, the coach instigates the close quarters situation:

- either by coming closer himself, or
- by asking the pupil to do so.

When the situation is established, he will ask for the change of guard position, stressing the importance of remaining well covered while executing the manoeuvre. As soon as the pivot is completed, make the pupil hit at the appropriate target.

RENEWED ATTACKS:

Renewed attacks are offensive or counter-offensive actions executed after the opponent's parry. The two varieties of renewed attacks that are distinguished for epee are:

The remise: a direct action (re-executed in the line of the parry), and

The redoublement: an action executed in any other fashion than by straight thrust.

The remise and redoublement are executed without withdrawing the sword arm. They are executed either as a continuation of the attack or as a stop hit, at all possible targets. The actions directed at the arm are either classical or in angulation.

With one exception (the classical redoublement at the forearm), these actions are simple:

- the remise is always by straight thrust,
- the redoublement is generally by disengage,

They are executed:

- on the lunge,
- with a reprise (an immediate new attack after returning with the feet to the on guard position),
- with a fleche,
- on the return on guard,
- in the on guard position.

Use:

The absence of convention gives the epee fencer the possibility of using renewed attacks with profit. The remise and redoublement have exactly the same object, which is to benefit from mistakes on the part of the opponent who has just parried, be it hesitation in the riposte, indirect riposte, or anything else.

The remise and redoublement executed in time will allow the fencer to win the fraction of second necessary, such that the electrical apparatus will register his hit, but not his opponent's.

Coaching:

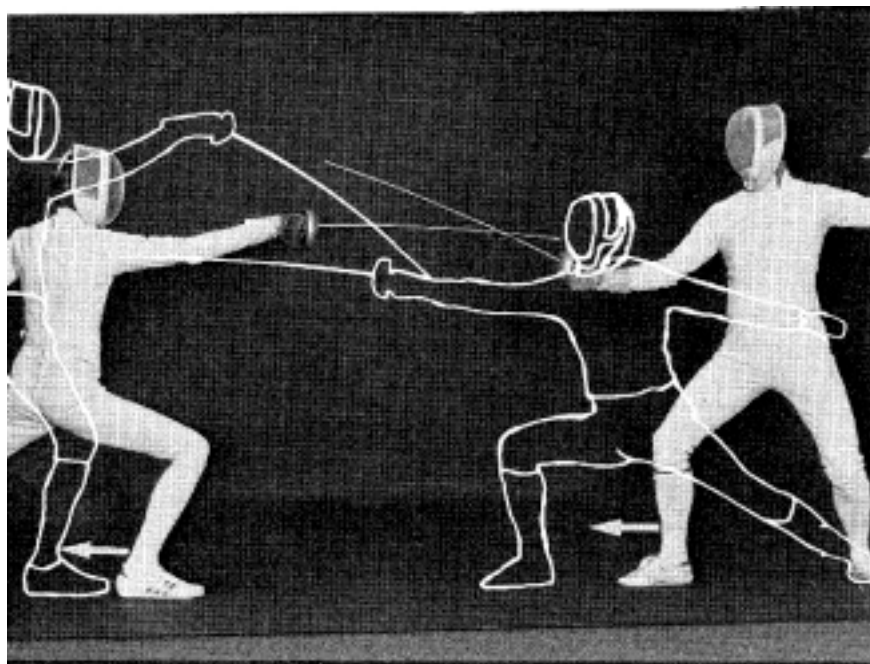
From the beginning, the coach should develop in his pupil the mechanism of remise and redoublement.

In the two instances, the coach must:

1. Draw first an offensive or counter-offensive action, this being done with the help of a preparation or an attack.
2. Parry this action as late as possible, and preferably in opposition, to avoid inducing an abrupt reaction in the pupil.
3. After the parry, give an appropriate signal:
 - for a remise: absence of blade;
 - for a redoublement: prise de fer.

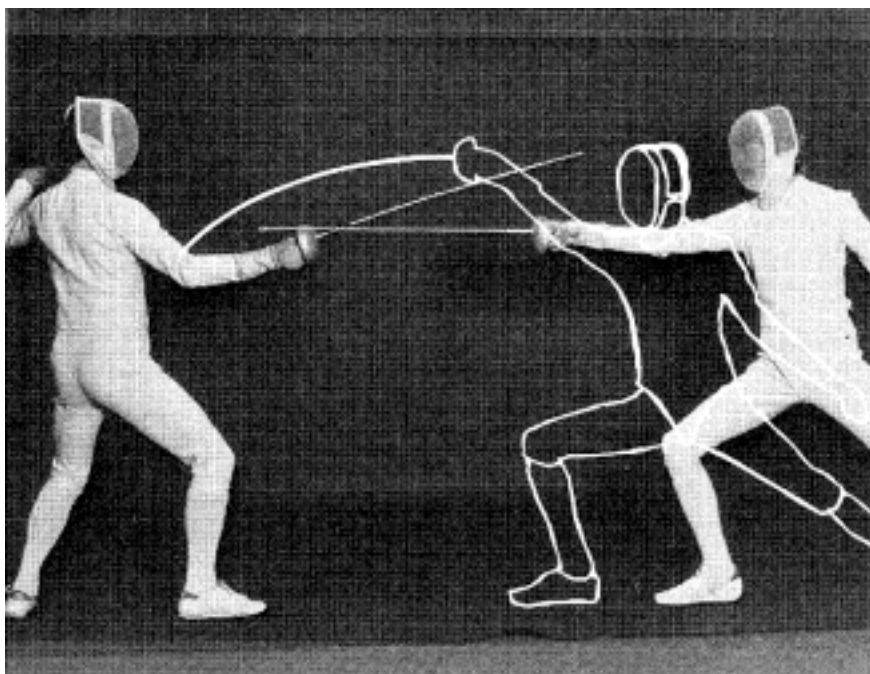
This signal is combined with the presentation of a target to be hit. All of the above must be executed with the coach's point threatening, to force the pupil to cover himself properly.

The renewed attacks are possible only if the fencing measure is correct. Thus, the coach must teach them in all possible situations, i.e.,
in counter-attack: when the coach advances;

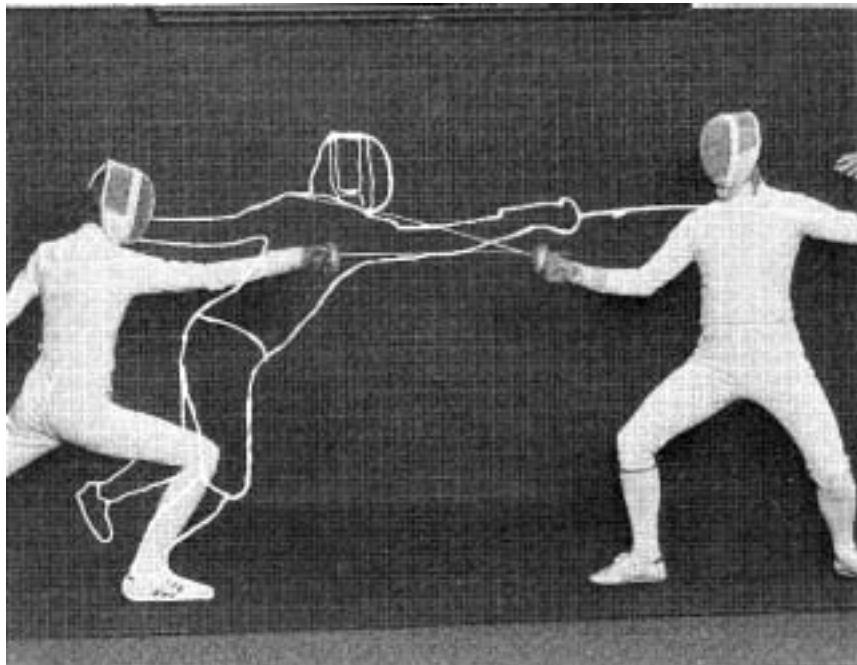


Remise by Rassemblement

in continuation: when the coach retires or stands still, each action being followed by the appropriate footwork.



False Attack with
Half-Lunge Remise
with Full Lunge.



False Attack with Half-Lunge
Redouble en Fleche

The coach should begin slowly, and then accelerate the exercise so that the action suits the reality of the bout.

He should give proper attention to the balance and the hand position of his pupil (supination being recommended because it allows greater precision).

The angulated hits should be taught only when the pupil is proficient enough with the classical renewed attacks.

A few remarks on terminology:

The reader will have noticed that we have limited our treatment of renewed attacks to the remise and the redoublement, without mention of the reprise as a particular action.

The reasons for limiting the treatment in this way are as follows:

- the various fencing schools differ in their interpretation of these three terms: the difference in interpretation is at its greatest when one tries to distinguish between the same actions executed with or without a return on guard.
- in epee fencing, renewed attacks are almost without exception combined with some kind of footwork, thus a differentiation based upon footwork becomes academic.

For the sake of simplicity, we have decided to follow the recommendations made by the Commission Pedagogique Nationale d'Esgrime de France and to confine our treatment to actions of the sword arm. That is why we have differentiated only between the remise and the redoublement in epee, considering that in practice the reprise is merely a special case of these two forms of renewed attack.

The French language edition of this manual also treats only these two varieties of renewed attack, but with different terminology; i.e., "reprise" is used in place of "redoublement" in conformity with the terminology used in the French language literature. The reader will thus be aware of the apparent discrepancy if he refers simultaneously to the two different language versions of this Manual.

**C.F.A. COACHING CERTIFICATION PROGRAM
LEVEL 3
EVALUATION - EPEE**

NAME _____ CLUB _____
PROVINCE _____ PASSPORT _____
COURSE VENUE _____
COURSE CONDUCTOR _____ DATE _____

NOTE: 1. Please complete the following written paper, tear out and hand to the course conductor at the beginning of the Level III Coaches Certification Course.

2. The marks total 100 and 60 is required for a pass.

**EPEE EVALUATION
LEVEL III**

1 - GAME

As a coach teaching a former foilist wishing to learn epee, explain (briefly) how the two games differ. 10

2 - TEACHING

Three general types of actions should be executed during any individual epee lesson. Explain which ones and why. 10

3 - ON GUARD POSITION

As a coach teaching a beginner, explain the classic sword arm position. 5

4 - FENCING MEASURE (Circle the correct answers)

From the following, which ones are the **three** main distances used during an epee lesson: 5

Long

Close Quarter

Short

Very Long

Riposte

Medium

5 - OFFENCE (Circle the correct answers)

Three out of the following parts of the body are considered as advanced target: 3

Thigh

Hand

Foot

Head

Wrist

Forearm

6 - DEFENCE

In a few words, what are the characteristics of the epee defense? 10

7 - PARRIES

Describe three peculiarities of the long parry, as opposed to the short parry. 5

8 - RIPOSTES (One answer)

Which type of riposte is particularly in favour in epee fencing: 5

- by angulation
- by beat-direct
- by prise de fer
- by disengage

9 - TERMINOLOGY (True or false - Circle the correct answer)

An example of an invitation is the action to leave the opponent's blade with which one was in contact, uncovering the forearm. 3

- True
- False

10 - COUNTER ATTACKS (True or false - Circle the correct answer)

A derobement is always a simple action. 3

- True
- False

11 - COUNTER TIME

a) What is counter-time? 5

b) Give one major peculiarity in the execution of the epee countertime, as compared to foil. 5

12 - PREPARATIONS OF ATTACK (Multiple choice - Circle the correct answer) 3

A pressure is:

- a) an attack on the blade
- b) a way of enforcing a parry
- c) a prise de fer

13 - PRISES DE FER

a) Explain a croise. 10

b) You want your pupil to execute a riposte by sixte croise.
How do you proceed? 10

14 - CLOSE QUARTER (True or false - Circle the correct answer).

Close quarter fencing is a bout situation in which the two fencers are very near each other *without body contact*. 3

True

False

15 - RENEWED ATTACKS 5

What is the difference between a remise and a redoublement? Two lines maximum.

Total Marks	/100
Pass	60