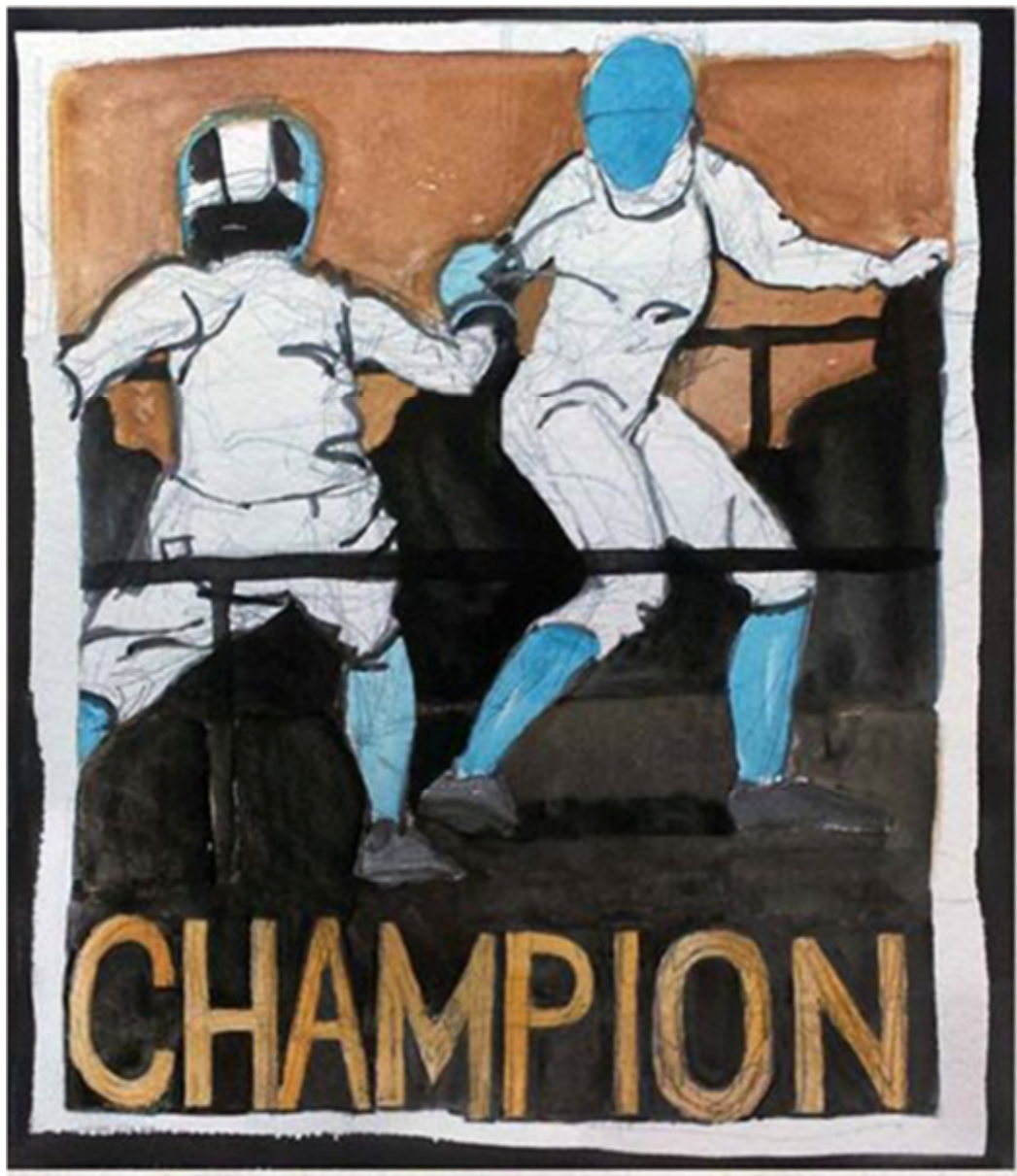


Lake Macquarie Fencing

*At PCYC Lake Macquarie
Salon d'Escrime*

A Parent's Guide to Fencing



Lake Macquarie Fencing

Coaches: Scott Evans,
John Frew,
Graeme Hill

Address: PCYC Lake Macquaire
Lake Street
Windale NSW 2306

Phone: 02 4848 6622

Lake Macquarie Fencing

PARENT'S AND THE SPORT OF FENCING



The first thing to know about fencing is that it can be a whole family activity. Fencing gives parents and children alike the opportunity to have a healthy, highly aerobic sport activity which everyone can enjoy.

Fencing/, noun

1: the art or practice of attack and defence with the foil, épée, or sabre

2: deriving from the expression, "The Art of Defence," meaning the art of defending one's self.

Lake Macquarie Fencing

Why Fencing?

Reading this guide means you have some interest in this unique sport activity. Maybe it's the neat equipment that initially sparked your curiosity or the curiosity of your children. Perhaps it's the distinctive clothes, or the intricate strategy involved, no matter your initial interest in the world of fencing, the more you learn about it the more fun you have and the more you will want to participate. Coordination, speed, agility, sportsmanship, personal development and self-assurance are just a few of the qualities this sport obliges of its participants.

A fencer needs not only to be quick of body but of mind as well. The intensity of fencing, and the high physical demands it places on one are a natural result of fencing's history. And while fencing has morphed from combat to sport, it is still calling on these physical demands. Fencing no longer carries a threat of injury as a consequence of participation in this thrilling endeavour, in fact fencing is one of the safest sport activities in which young people can engage. It is also unique with its evolved courtesy and demands for a high level of sportsmanship from all participants.

A successful fencer must be capable of mounting powerful driving attacks or conversely, of making subtle and astute defences, all within the space of a few seconds. Muscle will only take you so far in fencing: agility and intellect is paramount. A good fencer must be clever and with unwavering concentration able to conceive and execute calculated moves quickly. The spirit of fair play and honour is an integral part of fencing. A maxim of politeness and consideration is always observed while competing with others.

Fencing is as much an attitude as it is a sport and those who participate in fencing find that it can profoundly and positively affect their lives. Physically demanding, mentally challenging, character developing and great equipment, what more could one ask for?

The course information we have provided is as a brief introduction for our beginner's class. After the student has completed the starter course they are assessed as capable:

- To act in a safe manor with fencing sport equipment
- Understand and comply with our club rules,
- Respect themselves, other athletes and the sport.
- To identify, wear and look after club supplied safety clothing items.
- To properly use club supplied sports equipment.
- Basic knowledge of the exercise and training activities of the sport.
- Basic knowledge of the rules of the sport and scoring.

After the student has completed the introduction training course they will join the PCYC as a club member to their continue training as a fencer.

Club training for Newcastle (Broadmeadow) is:

Tuesday evenings 6.00 pm to 8:30 pm, (including school holidays)

Lake Macquarie Fencing

How Will Fencing Benefit My Child?

The main benefits of fencing align nicely with the benefits of any sports activity.

- First, they are active and doing something, not being passive receptacles for programming beamed out from the TV.
- Fencing helps children get fit – you can't "bout" without a good bit of movement!
- Fencing helps children learn to pay attention and to develop their decision-making abilities.
- Because fencing is an individual sport, the fencer is responsible for their success or failure, which becomes a great lesson in responsibility.
- It provides an outlet for getting out our natural dominance inclinations in a safe and controlled environment.
- Finally, many universities have fencing clubs and are always looking for experienced fencers.

Having fencing on your student resume provides you with another way for your child to market themselves. Fencing is suited for those that like to do things for themselves – if your child is into puzzles and other problem solving games then the individual and mental components mesh nicely into a new and distinctive activity.

Fencing: So Many Flavours to Choose From

Sword fighting as a competing event is recorded in the Last Book of the Iliad (23) during the Patroklos games, the origin and inspiration for the first Olympic games. We find fencing is one of only four events to have been contested at every Olympics since the modern Olympic Games from 1896.

Most commonly in modern history fencing is associated with training in swordsmanship during the period from the middle ages, to the art of duelling up to the mid 19th century.



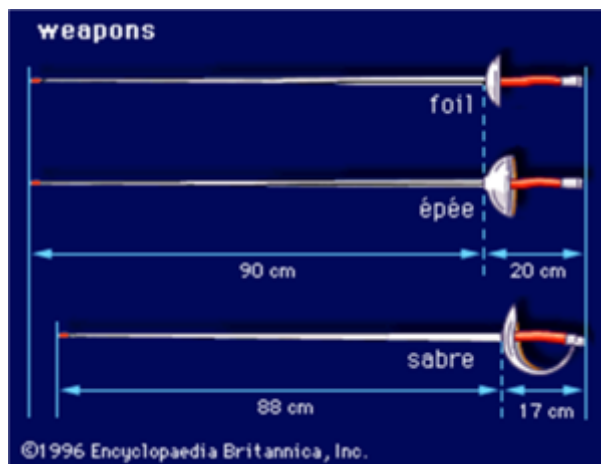
Lake Macquarie Fencing

As fencing has moved away from warfare we now direct our interest to fencing as a competitive Olympic sport. Since the majority of fencing done in Australia falls under the Olympic fencing umbrella, this guide focuses on this genre. Olympic-style fencing (or simply "fencing") refers to the fencing seen in most clubs in Australia, in school, state, national, international competitions and the Olympic Games.

It is marked by the use of electronic scoring equipment, and conducted according to rules laid down by the Fédération Internationale d'Escrime (FIE), the sports federation governing international fencing competitions. The current rules are loosely based on a set of conventions developed in 18th- and 19th-century Europe to govern fencing as a martial art and a gentlemanly pursuit. The weapons used are the foil, épée, and sabre (more on equipment later).

Overview of the Three Weapons

Foil...épée...sabre, what's really the difference?



Each weapon has its own distinct "character" and resulting pace of action.

For example, the sabre is the fastest and most aggressive, épée is the slowest and requires the most patience while foil is in between and attracts fencers who like to employ both aggression and patience.

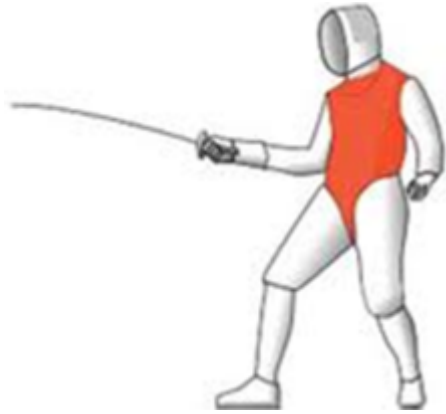
Though many recreational fencers compete in multiple weapons, Olympic level fencers generally concentrate on one weapon for their competitive careers.

Foil – The Court Sword

The foil used by fencers today is the modern version of the original practice weapon used by nobility to train for duels. It all evolved as fencing for exercise - based on speed and skill – (as opposed to the ability to cut someone in combat), began to emerge. As this practice became more popular, a longer, lighter weapon was developed. The weapon's extended length forced opponents to fight at a distance with quick but controlled lunges, attacking the enemy with the point of the sword, replacing rudimentary hacking techniques.

Under Louis XIV in France, a change in fashion led to a new kind of sword, a shorter sword. (Apparently the long sword clashed with the brocaded jackets, breeches and silk stockings.) The court sword, as it was known, turned out to be an excellent weapon for fencing because it was both lighter and stronger, so it could be used for defence as well as offense. As a result, the modern one-handed fencing technique developed, with the left hand and arm used primarily for balance.

Lake Macquarie Fencing



To score points with the foil, the fencer must land the tip of the blade on a valid target: along the torso from shoulders to groin in the front and to the waist in the back. The arms, neck, head and legs are considered off-target. Off-target hits will temporarily halt the fencing action, but does not result any points being awarded.

The concept of on-target and off-target evolved from the theory of 18th-century fencing masters, who taught their pupils to only attack the vital areas of the body (i.e. the torso). While the head is also a vital area of the body, attacks to the face were considered rude and therefore discouraged. You have to remember, fencing prides itself on being a chivalrous sport.

Because the foil was a training sword, it was important for the rules of foil to reflect the logic of combat. For newcomers to foil fencing, one of the most challenging concepts to grasp is the rule of right-of-way. Basically, the right-of-way rule states that the fencer who started to attack first will receive the point if they hit a valid target, and that their opponent is obligated to defend themselves.

Because parrying (blocking) these attacks can be very difficult, the modern foil bout has evolved into a complicated and exciting game of multiple feints, ducking and sudden, explosive attacks, making it interesting and a lot of fun to watch.

Epee – All Target

While a special version of the court sword, the foil, was developed for practice, another type of sword, the colichemarde, was created for duelling. The blade had a triangular cross-section, with slightly concave sides to reduce weight without reducing strength. The colichemarde evolved into the modern epee.

As the epee (pronounced "EPP-pay") evolved, the idea was to develop epee fencing in a manner that reproduced as closely as possible the conditions of an actual duel to "first touche". As a result, in epee the entire body is considered a valid target and there is no "right-of-way" rule.

Epee fencers score a point by hitting their opponent first. If the fencers hit each other within 1/25th of a second, both receive a point - this is commonly referred to as a double touch. The lack of right-of-way combined with a full-body target naturally makes epee a game of careful strategy and patience - wild, rash attacks are quickly punished with solid counter-attacks. So, rather than attacking outright, epeeists often spend several minutes probing their opponent's defences and manoeuvring for distance before making an attack.

Lake Macquarie Fencing



The epee target is the whole of the body, reflecting its origin as a combat weapon.

Sabre – Slash and Dash

The sabre is the modern version of the cavalry sword and was introduced into Europe in the late 18th century and, used by the Hungarian cavalry. It was quite popular (it was very effective) and was adopted by several European armies. In fact, in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, the cavalry of all nations practiced sabre fencing and fighting. In Newcastle we have a long history of sabre fencing with the first soldiers and officers stationed in the area during the 1840's.

Initially heavy and curved, the present day weapon is extremely light and straight. To simulate a cavalry rider on a horse, the target area is the entire body above the waist, excluding the hands. In addition, sabre employs rules of right-of-way, which are very similar to foil, but with some subtle differences. Like foil, the fencer who starts to attack first is given priority should his opponent counter-attack. However, sabre referees are much less forgiving of hesitation by an attacker. It is common to see a sabre fencer execute a stop cut against their opponent's forearm during such a moment of hesitation, winning right-of-way and the point. A major distinction of the sabre is that sabre fencers can score with the edge of their blade as well as their point.



The sabre fencer's uniform features an electrically wired metal departure from foil is that off-target hits do not register on the scoring machine, and therefore do not halt the fencing action. Sabre fencing is also the first of the three weapons to feature a wireless scoring system.

If epee is the weapon of patient, defensive strategy, then sabre is its polar opposite. In sabre, the rules of right-of-way strongly favour the fencer who attacks first, and a mere graze by the blade against the lamé registers a touch with the scoring machine. As a result, sabre is a fast, aggressive game; with fencers rushing their opponent from the moment their referee gives the instruction to fence. As fending off the attack of a skilled opponent is nearly impossible, sabre fencers very rarely purposely take the defensive. However, when forced to do so, they often go all-out using spectacular tactical combinations in which victory or defeat is determined by the slightest of margins.

Lake Macquarie Fencing

Getting Started: Classes & Costs

At the PCYC Fencing we offer fencing classes individually or through schools as a part of their continuing sport and education curriculum. Our fencing coaches are trained in fencing theory, technique and the art of teaching itself. We always aim for our first instructional experience with prospective or new students to be positive. At the PCYC Fencing we extend an invitation to parents and guardians of students to observe the instructor and his pupils as they take their lessons.

The most important experience for each student is to have fun, to learn and to participate with their club associates and their peers.

Classes typically cost on average \$180 for a 6-8 week first level (ab initio) training session. At the completion of which our students will be invited to engage in a competition with the awarding of certificates of school achievement and medals to the top place finishers. From here if the students choose to continue fencing they will be able to participate in club and

While there are benefits in terms of having something unusual and conversation provoking to put on a student resume, the true benefits of fencing go much, much deeper. By learning fencing, a child learns self-discipline, respect for others, independence and the importance of honesty and fair play.

Such skills are transferable to any endeavour and help to create a well-rounded and active person. Fencing is a life-long sport that welcomes sports people of all ages. You can learn it when you're young, or when you're young at heart. While most sports only reward speed or power, fencing lets you choose whether you are going to win by using your speed, timing, technique or using your astuteness – which allows the parents to teach their children a thing or two while our children do the same to us.

Join us and Share Your Experiences

Lake Macquarie Fencing

Basic Skills and Gear

Attitude: Fencing is often called the sport of kings, a gentlemanly sport. Not only because of its obvious history with nobility but also because it is steeped with the tradition of royalty, respect and civility. Politeness on and off the strip is integral to the sport. In fact rudeness can earn a fencer a black card (more on that later) and removal from a tournament.

Patience: This is something that you (the parent) need more of than the kids! Fencing is an obscure sport; there are lots of basic techniques to learn that aren't as natural to us as throwing or kicking balls, so there is a large learning curve. Have patience with the process of learning and everything will eventually click.

Basic Gear: Besides a good attitude and a dose of patience, there are several things a fencer needs to actually fence. While equipping oneself for a competition is a little more involved than this, to get started one just needs:

- _ Jacket
- _ Mask
- _ Glove
- _ Practice weapon (foil, sabre or épée).

At the PCYC Fencing we will lend you equipment when you are just starting and doing your first level training course. Once you've completed the course, and are hooked, you will be encouraged to buy your own equipment.

Overview of Basic Skills:

Fencing is a multi-faceted discipline giving the fencer a workout that requires strength, cardiovascular endurance and mental skills. This is achieved by executing the three essential skills of fencing:

- **Blade Work:** This is perhaps the most difficult of the essential skills to master. It permits a skilled fencer to deceive his opponent and reach the target area despite attempts of an opponent to defend themselves. The fencer needs to be strong enough to execute parries and beats of the blade against their opponent's but also need the fine motor coordination and dexterity to move their point quickly around attempted parries.
- **Footwork:** The "cardio" component. This is the most physically demanding of the skills, is the one which permits a fencer to move into appropriate positions and distances and allow him to effectively utilize blade work to touch the opponent's target area and allow him to get away from an opponent's attack.

Lake Macquarie Fencing

- **Tactics:** The “mental’ component. This is often the hardest to learn of the skills. Fencers will spend most of their competitive careers focused on learning and executing the nuances of fencing strategy and tactics. Tactics consist of the plans and counter plans utilized by fencers to coordinate use of blade work and footwork against the fencing style of opponents.

Good fitness is the key that will empower the fencing student to achieve better results sooner.

Lake Macquarie Fencing

Basic Equipment: A Little more Detail

You have the list of equipment needed, but now what? Before you actually buy anything or start using your new equipment, it's a good idea to have a basic understanding of the capability and purpose of each.

Jacket: The fencing jacket is to help protect the fencer. It's important to select a fencing jacket that is well made and that will provide adequate protection.



Mask: The mask is also for protection so be sure to choose a mask that has sufficient interior padding, does not press on the top of the head or chin, and fits comfortably.



Lake Macquarie Fencing

Glove: Although you can buy non-electric gloves it is almost always worth buying a glove with a Velcro cuff that can be used for electric fencing. The Velcro cuff allows you to easily connect the body cord from under your sleeve to an electric weapon. These are sized either as small, medium or large, or in individual glove sizes. Going for gloves that are individually sized will usually get you a better fit but they tend to be more expensive.



Foil: The foil is designed for thrusting. The blade is very thin, with a blunted (or foiled) tip. Foil blades are flexible enough to bend upon striking an opponent, in order to prevent injuries.



Sabre: The sabre weighs only a 300 or so grams and is designed primarily for cutting. It differs from the other modern fencing swords, the épée and foil, in that it is possible to score with the edge of the blade. For the other two weapons, valid touches are only scored using the point of the blade.



Lake Macquarie Fencing

Epée: French for "sword," this weapon is similar to a foil, but has a stiffer, V-shaped blade, has a larger bell guard, and is heavier. Epée is the only weapon in which the entire body is the valid target area and in which there are no rules of "right of way".



Besides the basics, there exists a whole host of other pieces and parts which fencing equipment suppliers (such as JG Fencing or Leon Paul Australia) can provide for you. These consist of everything from spare blades and parts to replace broken gear to component upgrades, premium uniforms, and tools to help you test and fix your own gear.

Lake Macquarie Fencing

Fencing Competitions

The formats can vary, but in general the following setup is observed:

The entire field of fencers who have entered a tournament are divided into groups, called "poules." The bout committee (the organizers of the tournament) balances poules as fairly as possible so that the first poule and the last poule, in theory, should be about the same level of difficulty, with some variation.

Poule size varies between five and seven fencers per poule, depending on the size of the field. Each competitor fences a bout against all of the other members of the poule. The bouts last a maximum of three minutes (start-and-stop time, not continuous time), or until one fencer scores five points. During a bout, if time runs out, and the score is tied, the referee will flip a coin or otherwise randomly select one fencer to have "priority." One minute of overtime is added to the clock and the fencers fence one minute of "sudden-death" overtime.

Once all of the bouts in the poule have been completed, the referee counts up all of scores. The referee lists the number of victories each fencer has earned, the number of points each fencer has scored in all of his or her bouts combined, the number of points that were scored against each fencer in all of his or her bouts combined and then the referee determines the differential between points scored by and against each fencer (referred to as their indicator). These sets of numbers are used to determine the "seeding" of fencers into the Direct Elimination (DE) table (also referred to as the bracket or tableau).

Fencers with the highest percentage of victories are seeded highest. It is important to note that it is the percentage of victories are used, not the actual number of victories. The win-loss percentage is calculated by dividing the number of victories earned by a fencer, divided by the number of bouts he or she fenced.

Once the seeding has been completed, and the bout committee has arranged the fencers on the DE table, the next round of fencing will commence. DE bout lasts for three by three-minute periods with a one-minute break in between the first and second periods. When one fencer reaches 15 points, that is the end of the bout.

If eliminated early, it's proper etiquette to stay around and cheer on fellow club members. Watching the bouts later on in the event is also one of the best ways to learn. Encourage your child to change clothes and come back out to watch their friends after elimination. (Just give them the time and space they need to get over the loss first.)

Lake Macquarie Fencing

Being a Spectator: How to Follow the Action

As a family member watching fencing bouts is one of the best things you can do to help familiarize yourself with the sport. It may take a while to truly understand and appreciate all the complexities of modern fencing, here are some basic concepts that will help.

Scoring: All bouts are scored electronically with a referee or director watching and all weapons are scored the same way: 5 touch, 4-minute poule bouts, 15 touche, 3-minute period D.E. bouts (U12 and Veterans are exceptions.)

Epee: Pretty simple, when their light goes off, they've scored.

Foil and Sabre: Which fencer actually gets the touch is determined by the right-of-way rule so that a fencer can only score when he/she has the right-of-way. In foil, there are white lights that indicate an "off target" hit. An off target hit stops the action, but no point is scored.

Penalties: The penalties handed out are the same for all weapons:

- Yellow card = Warning. No points are awarded but a fencer can't score a touch if he or she gets a yellow card while they are scoring. Any subsequent penalty results in a red card. An example of a yellow card offense would be coming to strip with a weapon that fails inspection.
- Red card = A point is awarded to the offended party. Also, a second yellow card action in the same bout results in a red card. An example of a red card offense would be dangerous, violent or vindictive action; blow with guard or pommel. Another more common example is the fencer who comes to the strip and whose first two foils fail inspection – they have to get a third foil and they start the bout down 0-1.
- Black card = The worst offense. If a fencer receives a black card he/she is eliminated from the tournament. An example of a black card offense would insulting a referee, or throwing a fencing weapon or mask down on the strip.

Action Distinctions Among Weapons

Epee: Epee fencers tend to fence defensively, so look for subtle tactics and deeper strategy.

Foil : Foil tends to feature a rich array of tactics, mobility, and long complex attacks. Look for a balance of aggression and defence.

Sabre: Sabre tends to be a fast and simple game, where athleticism and aggressiveness are key. Because it is a cutting weapon, defensive options are often limited. Look for simpler tactics, and lots of movement.

Lake Macquarie Fencing

Right-of-What? A List of Important Terms

As with any sport, a specific vocabulary is necessary to describe the equipment and explain the movements. To follow is a short list of commonly used terms within the fencing community.

Advance:	Taking a step forward (towards one's opponent.)
Attack:	Offensive movement, or series of movements by which a fencer tries to score a point. In foil and sabre, the fencer who attacks first acquires the "right-of-way." In order to execute an attack properly (i.e. one that the referee will acknowledge), the fencer's hand must be clearly extending towards their opponent's valid target in a threatening manner.
Balestra:	A short, sharp jump forwards; usually used as a preparation for an attack. Often followed by a lunge.
Beat:	Sharp tap on the opponent's blade to initiate an attack or provoke a reaction.
Breeches:	This is the name given to the short trousers worn to just below the knee.
Disengage:	Evasive action in which the fencer avoids the opponent's attempt to take their blade.
Engagement:	Contact between the fencers' blades - often as the prelude to an attack.
En Garde:	Position taken before fencing commences.
Epée:	French for sword. Descendent of the duelling or court short sword, it is the heaviest of the three fencing weapons and has a stiff, V-shaped blade, and a large bell guard for protecting the hand from hits.
Feint:	A false attack intended to get a defensive reaction from the opposing fencer, thus creating the opportunity for a genuine attack. ("feint-disengage attack"). In epee, fencers also use the feint to invite an attack from their opponent.
Foil:	Descendent of the court sword. The foil was used for training in the duel and featured a blunted (or foiled) tip.
Fleche:	Explosive, leaning and lunging (arrow) attack (foil and epée only).
Flunge:	Action unique to sabre - a combination of a lunge and a fleche. Evolved recently after sabre rules were modified in 1992 to prohibit Fleche or running attacks.
Guard:	Part of the weapon between the blade and handle; protects the hand, also known as: "bell-guard."
Lame:	This is the conductive over jacket that is used for electric scoring in both Foil and Sabre. (Pronounced La-may not lame).

Lake Macquarie Fencing

- Lunge:** Most common footwork technique for an attack, the fencer gains distance on their opponent by pushing off from their back leg.
- Opposition:** As in "thrust with opposition" and means to simultaneously deflect the opponent's point with one's guard while making an attack of one's own. Commonly used in épée to avoid a double touch.
- Parry:** Defensive action in which a fencer blocks his opponent's blade.
- Piste:** French term for the fencing strip: where the actual fencing action takes place. It is 14 meters long and 1.5 to 2 meters wide. Retreating off the end of the strip with both feet gets a touch against
- Plastron:** Also sometimes called an underarm protector; this is worn under your jacket on your sword arm and gives extra protection to the most commonly hit part of your target area.
- Point-in-Line:** Action in which the fencer, who is generally out of attacking range, points their weapon at their opponent with their arm fully extended. A fencer who establishes a point-in-line has right-of-way, and their opponent cannot attack until they remove the blade from line by executing a beat.
- Recover:** The return to the en garde position after lunging.
- Remise:** Attacking again immediately after the opponent's parry of an initial attack.
- Riposte:** Defender's offensive action immediately after parrying their opponent's attack.
- Sabre:** The sabre is a light and fast weapon. The blade is V-shaped, or Y shaped and not as stiff as the epee. The sabre uses both cuts and thrusts to score points.
- Stop Hit/ Stop Cut:** A counter-action made at the moment of an opponent's hesitation, feint, or poorly executed attack. To be awarded the point, the fencer attempting a stop hit must clearly catch their opponent's tempo. Hence, if their Stop Hit is not "in time," the referee may award the touch to their attacker. A stop cut is specifically for sabre.