



# Tropical Knights

# Fencers Handbook

TROPICAL KNIGHTS FENCING IS A NON-PROFIT / NOT-FOR-PROFIT CLUB FOR THE SOLE PURPOSE OF HELPING ITS MEMBERS LEARN HOW TO BE BETTER FENCERS IN A SOCIAL, FUN ENVIRONMENT.

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## **Learning to Fence**

Fencing is great fun, but it has many other rewards as well. Over time fencers become swift and agile, learn to concentrate and think quickly, and develop superb balance and excellent muscular coordination. Fencing is a fast moving sport that can be physically demanding to a surprising degree. It burns plenty of calories and develops good cardiovascular fitness. Because it is so exciting, fencers often remain vigorously engaged for prolonged periods during an evening's workout, often losing 3 to 5 lbs. of water through perspiration and respiration in just a few hours. Those who become involved in fencing find it so enjoyable that they frequently remain involved throughout their lives and as they enter their senior years the benefits become readily apparent. Many fencers remain active well into their 70s and 80s.

## **Is Fencing for You?**

If there is any drawback to fencing it is that fencing is not easily learned in a short period of time. Those in the United States who take up the sport are frequently surprised at the amount of time required to master the fundamentals. Many novices tend to drop out after just a few weeks of instruction, while others tend to drop out after just a few weeks of instruction, while others may continue longer, but lacking patience, leave when they learn that they won't become expert fencers overnight.

## **If you think you would like to learn to fence but are not sure, consider the following questions:**

1. Do you like your fun fast and exciting?
2. Do you enjoy games that are challenging mentally as well as physically?
3. Are you interested in developing and maintaining physical fitness throughout your life?
4. Are you patient enough to stick with a problem until you solve it?
5. Do you enjoy working hard to achieve a worthwhile goal?

## **If you can answer "yes" to most of the questions, then you may find your decision to take up fencing a good one, and among one of the best you have ever made.**

*You may need to consult your physician before beginning any physical activity or exercise program as demanding as fencing to make sure that your experience is safe for yourself and the other fencers.*

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## **How Long will it Take to Learn?**

Because fencing is so marvelously complex, it has often been said that it requires two lifetimes to master the art, but for those who simply want to get started the amount of time required isn't quite so daunting. Of course, the length of time required to learn the basic fundamentals depends upon a number of factors, not the least of which is one's own native ability. Regardless of how rapidly anyone may learn anything, however, how often one studies and the capability of the teacher are of significant importance. In general one who is reasonably coordinated, begins with a competent teacher, takes at least one fencing lesson a week, and is willing to spend time practicing the learned material may reach a reasonable level of proficiency within a few months. More frequent workouts and lessons will naturally accelerate the process. The most important thing for any newcomer to fencing to bear in mind is that the early days of their fencing experience will be the most difficult, and that with each lesson the process becomes more familiar and easier.

## **How Do I Begin?**

If you live in Dade, Broward or Palm Beach Counties and would like to learn how to fence, you are fortunate in having one of the world's greatest fencing master in residence at the Tropical Knights Fencing. Don't pass up the opportunity to learn fencing from a former Olympic and World Cup Coach. It will be an experience of a lifetime.

## **Typical Development of a Fencer**

We often must remind beginning fencers that they have no better than a one in four chance at winning the Olympics their first year in the sport. This is because the Olympics are held only once every four years. In fact, there are a number of other fencers who want to win the Olympics as well. This increases the difficulty. Fencing is competitive. A strong desire to win is a part of the sport. However, there are a few beginners who will win major competitions. It is important for fencers and parents to understand this. It is also important to understand that we develop a fencer who fences correctly and well. Fencing well is rewarded with winning. No fencer begins by making all actions correctly. There is a period of development. The first victories are correct actions made in a bout, even, if the score is not what the fencer wanted. The winning scores come. Typical development begins with technical development. The tactical skills develop later.

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## **Club Policies**

The policies of the Tropical Knights Fencing are designed to provide order and organization so we may focus our efforts on the sport of fencing. The priorities in the establishment of these policies are:

1. We provide a safe environment for the fencers.
2. We provide high quality instruction and opportunities for learning in the sport.
3. The business aspects of the program are taken care of in an orderly manner to support the program, but not interfere.

Policies stated in this document are subject to change without notice.

## **Membership**

Anyone is welcome to participate in the Tropical Knights Fencing upon payment of all fees and dues.

## **Dues**

All members will pay Quarterly dues of \$120.

These dues will cover Tuesday night fencing from 7-9pm at the Emma Lou Olsen Civic Center, 1801 NE 6<sup>th</sup> Street, Pompano Beach, Florida, 33060 – telephone 954-786-4111

The city of Pompano Beach requires a one-time registration fee of \$5 for city residents or \$10 for all others.

Family Memberships are \$225 per quarter

Each Quarter is 13 weeks long.

Fencing may be canceled due to holidays or unavoidable events. We will make every effort to make up for these nights when possible. There is no refund of membership fees for missed nights, regardless of reason.

All members are required to provide their own equipment.

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## **Fencing Safety**

Newcomers to fencing often express concerns about their safety. Foremost on the minds of many is the question of whether one can be stabbed and possibly killed while fencing. After all, doesn't fencing have something to do with swords and sword fighting? The image above explains in graphic terms what fencing masters of the past have taught their pupils. The beginning fencer's concerns are reasonable ones.

Like virtually everything in life, fencing comes with risks. To evaluate the risk in a meaningful way it may be helpful to compare the risks inherent in other activities. For example, in 1997 approximately 3,100 adults accidentally inhaled food while eating and choked to death. That same year there were 4000 deaths by drowning in the United States, 14,900 from accidental falls, and 43,200 by motor vehicle accidents. There were 36 skiing and snowboarding fatalities in the US during the 1996-1997 season, with serious head and spinal injuries occurring at the rate of approximately 29 each year. In 1997, 808 bicyclists lost their lives on America's public thoroughfares and more than 80% of 650 mountain bikers who participated in surveys were injured in off-road crashes during a one year period. Broken bones consistently accounted for 20% to 30% of the total and brain concussions for 3% to 12%. In the United States there has never been a death caused by a fencing accident. The most common injuries sustained by fencers are pulled muscles and trauma to tendons and the ligaments of the knees and ankles. "Fencer's Elbow," a medical problem experienced by some fencers is also known by tennis players as "Tennis Elbow," or lateral epicondylitis. Infrequently, a weapon's blade may break posing a serious danger, but sturdy masks and modern fabrics provide excellent protection and have made fencing a very safe activity. Most fencers enjoy fencing throughout their lives without experiencing anything more than an occasional case of muscle soreness. Accidents can befall fencers as they do the adherents of any sport, but chances are that the greatest danger faced by any fencer will be that of a motor vehicle accident while driving to the fencing school.

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## Fencing Safety Rules

The following safety rules are followed by this academy.

1. Never cross blades, for any reason, without first putting on your mask. This rule has no exceptions!
2. Most fencing injuries are from muscle, ligament and tendon trauma. Always warm up before fencing.
3. Don't wear clothes with holes. A trapped blade in your clothes could cause a serious accident.
4. Men must wear athletic supporters with a protective shield. Women must wear breast protectors.
5. Legs must be protected with sweat pants, trousers or knickers.
6. Be aware of your surroundings. Don't step out onto the active floor without looking to be sure it's safe.
7. When fencing, do not drive your opponent into the wall or a hazard in your eagerness to win a touch.
8. Inspect your weapon periodically; see that the blade's curve is uniform and that the button is secure.
9. Be mindful of your fencing distance; don't fence too close.
10. If you are repeatedly colliding with your opponent, stop fencing until you can correct the error.
11. Aggressive fencing is OK; violent uncontrolled fencing is not. Nothing you do should ever cause pain or harm.
12. When hit, don't point at the area, but quickly acknowledge the touch in a loud clear voice.
13. First, Last and ALWAYS, Never cross blades, for ANY reason, without first putting on your mask!

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## **Conduct Rules of the Academy**

1. Respect the weapons
2. Respect the Fencing Master
3. Shake hands with the Master and fellow fencers on your arrival and departure
4. Call the Master by the appropriate title, that of "Maestro"
5. Remember that fencing is a martial art with traditions that should be honored and respected.
6. Always be courteous, polite, and well mannered in the salle.
7. If during a bout, you disarm your opponent, you must immediately and courteously retrieve his weapon.
8. It is absolutely forbidden to touch an unmasked person with a weapon.
9. Do not take any of the salle's equipment from the salle without the consent of the Master.
10. Do not borrow equipment without the owner's consent.
11. The complete fencing outfit must be worn while fencing or taking lessons. If you do not have knickers, sweat-pants will be acceptable. Under no circumstances will shorts be tolerated.
12. Respect and take care of the salle's property
13. The salle d'armes is a place of work and training where there should be a healthy spirit of camaraderie and good sportsmanship.
- 14 Do not eat in the salle
15. Respectable clothing should be worn at all times in the fencing salle.
16. No one should be ignorant of the rules of the salle.
17. Any equipment of the salle's which is broken by a student will be replaced by that student.

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## **Fencing Equipment Suppliers**

### American Fencing Supply

415-863-7911  
1180 Folsom Street  
San Francisco, CA 94103  
Tel. 415-863-7911  
<http://www.amfence.com>

### Allstar USA

119 West 25 Street  
Fifth Floor (of the NY Fencers Club)  
New York, NY 10001  
Tel. 888-257-8275  
<http://www.allstar-usa.com>

### Blade Fencing Equipment

245 West 29th Street  
New York, NY 10001  
Tel. 800-828-3090  
<http://www.blade-fencing.com>

### Blue Gauntlet Fencing Gear

479 North Midland Ave.  
Saddle Brook, NJ 07663  
Tel. 201-797-3332  
<http://www.Blue-Gauntlet.com>

### Triplette Competition Arms

101 East Main Street  
Elkin, NC 28621  
Tel. 336-835-7774  
<http://www.triplette.com>

( [www.usfa.org](http://www.usfa.org) also has online links to many more vendors)

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## **Best Fencing Book for the Beginner**

The Art and Science of Fencing by Nick Evangelista

## **Best Fencing Magazine**

Veteran Fencer edited by Nick Evangelista

## **A Few Famous Fencers**

Domenico Angelo 1716-1802 wrote The School of Fencing

Aldo Nadi 1899-1965 World's Greatest Fencer He wrote On Fencing & The Living Sword.

Helene Myer 1910-1953

Giorgio Santelli 1897-1985

Lucien Gaudin 1886-1934

Polly Craus 1924-

Peter Westbrook 1952- wrote Harnessing Anger and he is head of the Westbrook Foundation in NYC

## **The Big Picture of How Fencing in the USA is Organized**

Internationally-Federation Internationale d'Esgrime

Nationally- The United States Fencing Association

Regionally- The Southeastern Section

State - The Gold Coast Division

Locally- The Tropical Knights Fencing

# Tropical Knights

**Name** \_\_\_\_\_

**Address** \_\_\_\_\_

**Address** \_\_\_\_\_

**Telephone** \_\_\_\_\_

**E-Mail** \_\_\_\_\_

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## **EMERGENCY INFO**

Who would you like us to contact in case of an emergency?

**Name** \_\_\_\_\_

**Address** \_\_\_\_\_

**Address** \_\_\_\_\_

**Telephone** \_\_\_\_\_

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## **Equipment Dealers Web-Sites**

- ["http://www.allstar-usa.com/"](http://www.allstar-usa.com/) - On-line catalog and information site for a New York-based Allstar supplier.
- ["http://www.amfence.com/"](http://www.amfence.com/) - Located in San Francisco, California, this supplier offers fencing equipment and stage combat weapons via online shopping.
- ["http://www.battling.com/"](http://www.battling.com/) - Carries fencing equipment, toys and PBT goods; based in London, England.
- ["http://www.big4ourbritches.com/"](http://www.big4ourbritches.com/) - Offers original design casual t-shirts for fencers and friends of fencers.
- ["http://www.blade-fencing.com/"](http://www.blade-fencing.com/) - This New York fencing equipment supplier offers online ordering of Allstar, Russian and Blade equipment.
- ["http://www.Blue-Gauntlet.com/"](http://www.Blue-Gauntlet.com/) - Online catalog and ordering of fencing equipment from this New Jersey supplier.
- ["http://www.armorrx.com/"](http://www.armorrx.com/) - Provides armoring services and repair tools for modern fencing; includes armoring tips.
- ["http://www.estoc.com/"](http://www.estoc.com/) - Contact and online catalog for this French manufacturer of fencing equipment.
- ["http://favero.com/en/fencing.htm"](http://favero.com/en/fencing.htm) - Electronic goods for Olympic fencing (e.g. scoring machines), from this Italian manufacturer.
- ["http://www.fencersedge.com/"](http://www.fencersedge.com/) - Products designed to enhance the performance and enjoyment of fencing.
- ["http://www.fencingfootage.com/"](http://www.fencingfootage.com/) - Videos of various fencing competitions available via on-line catalog.
- ["http://www.thefencingpost.com/"](http://www.thefencingpost.com/) - View products and place orders online for Olympic fencing equipment with this California supplier.
- ["http://www.fencingmultimedia.com/"](http://www.fencingmultimedia.com/) - Offers interactive teaching CD-ROMs and video tapes from the Tyshler fencing school.
- ["http://www.organicpixels.com/fencingwear"](http://www.organicpixels.com/fencingwear) - Retailers fencing themed apparel.
- ["http://www.santelli.com/"](http://www.santelli.com/) - Offers Olympic fencing equipment that may be ordered online or via fax or phone; located in New Jersey.
- ["http://members.aol.com/corralej/ScreensaverScreenshot.html"](http://members.aol.com/corralej/ScreensaverScreenshot.html) - Fencing screensaver, PC icons and custom graphics.
- ["http://users.aol.com/terykins/Fencing/Fencing.html"](http://users.aol.com/terykins/Fencing/Fencing.html) - Sells fencing equipment and offers an online shopping cart.
- ["http://www.leonpaul.com/"](http://www.leonpaul.com/) - British manufacturer of fencing equipment.
- ["http://www.negrini.com/"](http://www.negrini.com/) - Manufacturer and retailer of fencing equipment, clothing and scoring machines.
- ["http://www.physicalchess.com/"](http://www.physicalchess.com/) - This New Jersey supplier offers Olympic fencing equipment via online catalog.
- ["http://www.triplette.com/"](http://www.triplette.com/) - Supplying all your fencing needs. Located in North Carolina
- ["http://www.zivkovic.com/"](http://www.zivkovic.com/) - Online catalog, and order placement facility for this Massachusetts dealer of Olympic fencing equipment.

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## Glossary of Common Fencing Terms

### **Advance** (Marche)

a movement forward by step, cross, or balestra.

### **Attack** (Attaque)

the initial offensive action made by extending the sword arm and continuously threatening the valid target of the opponent.

### **Balestra** (Balestra)

a forward hop or jump, typically followed by an attack such as a lunge or fleche.

### **Beat** (Battement)

an attempt to knock the opponent's blade aside or out of line by using one's foible or middle against the opponent's foible.

### **Black Card** (Carton noir)

used to indicate the most serious offences in a fencing competition. The offending fencer is usually expelled from the event or tournament.

### **Bout** (Match)

an assault at which the score is kept.

### **Counter-attack** (Contre-attaque)

an attack made against the right-of-way, or in response to the opponent's attack.

### **Counter-disengage** (Contre-dégagement)

a disengage in the opposite direction, to deceive the counter-parry.

### **Counter-parry** (Contre-parade)

a parry made in the opposite line to the attack; ie. the defender first comes around to the opposite side of the opponent's blade.

### **Counter-riposte** (Contre-riposte)

an attack that follows a parry of the opponent's riposte.

### **Disengage** (Dégagement)

a circular movement of the blade that deceives the opponent's parry, removes the blades from engagement, or changes the line of engagement.

### **Dry** (Fleuret, épée ou sabre mécanique)

also steam; fencing without electric scoring aids.

### **Engagement**

when the blades are in contact with each other, eg. during a parry, attack au fer, prise de fer, or coule'.

### **En Garde**

also On Guard; the fencing position; the stance that fencers assume when preparing to fence.

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**Épée**

a fencing weapon with triangular cross-section blade and a large bell guard.

**Feint** (Feinte)

attacking into one line with the intention of switching to another line before the attack is completed.

**FIE**

Federation Internationale d'Escrime, the world governing body of fencing.

**Flèche**

lit. "arrow"; an attack in which the aggressor leaps off his leading foot, attempts to make the hit, and then passes the opponent at a run.

**Flick** (Coup lancé)

a cut-like action that lands with the point, often involving some whip of the foible of the blade to "throw" the point around a block or other obstruction.

**Foible** (Le faible de la lame)

the upper, weak part of the blade.

**Foil** (Fleuret)

a fencing weapon with rectangular cross-section blade and a small bell guard; any sword that has been buttoned to render it less dangerous for practice.

**Forte** (Le fort de la lame)

the lower, strong part of the blade.

**French Grip** (Poignée droite)

a traditional hilt with a slightly curved grip and a large pommel.

**Guard** (Coquille)

the metal cup or bow that protects the hand from being hit. Also, the defensive position assumed when not attacking.

**Hilt** (Garde)

the handle of a sword, consisting of guard, grip, and pommel.

**Homologated** (Homologué)

certified for use in FIE competitions, eg. 800N clothing and maraging blades.

**Italian Grip** (Poignée italienne)

a traditional hilt with finger rings and crossbar.

**Lamé** (Plastron électrique)

a metallic vest/jacket used to detect valid touches in foil and sabre.  
an attack made by extending the rear leg and landing on the bent front leg.

**Manipulators** (Manipulateurs)

the thumb and index finger of the sword hand.

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**Maraging**

a special steel used for making blades; said to be stronger and break more cleanly than conventional steels.

**Middle** (Milieu de la lame)

the middle third of the blade, between foible and forte.

**Passé** (Coup passé)

an attack that passes the target without hitting; also a cross- step (see cross).

**Piste**

the linear strip on which a fencing bout is fought; approx. 2m wide and 14m long.

**Pistol Grip** (Crosse; poignée orthopédique)

a modern, orthopaedic grip, shaped vaguely like a small pistol; varieties are known by names such as Belgian, German, Russian, and Visconti.

**Plastron**

a partial jacket worn for extra protection; typically a half- jacket worn under the main jacket on the weapon-arm side of the body.

**Point** (Touche)

a valid touch; the tip of the sword; an attack made with the point (ie. a thrust)

**Pommel** (Pommeau)

a fastener that attaches the grip to the blade.

**Red Card** (Carton rouge)

used to indicate repeated minor rule infractions or a major rule infraction by one of the fencers; results in a point being given to the other fencer.

**Remise**

immediate replacement of an attack that missed or was parried, without withdrawing the arm.

**Right-of-way** (Raison, Priorité)

rules for awarding the point in the event of a double touch in foil or sabre.

**Riposte** (Riposte)

an attack made immediately after a parry of the opponent's attack.

**Sabre** (Saber)

a fencing weapon with a flat blade and knuckle guard, used with cutting or thrusting actions; a military sword popular in the 18th to 20th centuries; any cutting sword used by cavalry.

**Salle** (Salle d'armes)

a fencing hall or club.

**Salute** (Salut)

with the weapon, a customary acknowledgement of one's opponent and referee at the start and end of the bout.

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## **Simultaneous** (Attaques simultanées)

in foil and sabre, two attacks for which the right-of-way is too close to determine.

## **Stop Hit** (Coup d'arrêt)

a counter-attack that hits; also a counter-attack whose touch is valid by virtue of it's

## **Yellow Card** (Carton jaune)

## 10 Best Fencing Movies

**The Duelists, 1975** - Great choreography by William Hobbs. Based on a short story by Joseph Conrad, inspired by a true story. An examination of what is and what isn't "honour." Harvey Keitel is terrific as the brooding little Napoleon -- despite his New York accent. The opening small sword duel alone makes it worth seeing.

**Rob Roy, 1997** - Liam Neeson is outstanding as the Scottish hero. The duel between Rob Roy and Tim Roth is a cautionary classic as well as a textbook example of strategy -- choreography by William Hobbs.

**Robin and Marian, 1972** - Sean Connery at his best as the aging Robin Hood, reflecting on the errors and triumphs of his youth. Robert Shaw does the villain perfection. Choreographed -- again -- by William Hobbs.

**Cyrano de Bergerac, 1950** - The swordplay is more 1950 sabre than 1640 rapier, but it's impeccably crisp. For me, Jose Ferrar is the definitive Cyrano.

**The Three Musketeers/ The Four Musketeers, 1974/1975** - Michael York as d'Artagnon, Christopher Lee as Rochfort, cold as an ice pick. The fights range from tongue-in-cheek to grimly serious. Choreographed by -- who else? -- William Hobbs.

**Scaramouche, 1950** - Stewart Granger out to avenge the murder of his friend by the wicked Marquis (Mel Ferrar, brother of Jose Ferrar). Memorable scenes in the salle d'armes. One of the longest duels on screen.

**Captain Blood** - This is the film that introduced the king of the swashbucklers -- Errol Flynn. Nobody ever looked better sword in hand, devil-may-care smile on his lips. Basil Rathbone was a favorite bad guy in those days. He was a superb enough fencer to make ANY hero look good. He crossed blades with Flynn in Robin Hood, Tyrone Power in "The Mark of Zorro", and Danny Kaye in The Court Jester.

**The Sea Hawks** - So many bits of the Errol Flynn/Henry Daniëlle duel in the palace, were imitated in later films, they became clichés.

**The Mark of Zorro, 1940** - Tyrone Power as Diego and Basil Rathbone as Captain Esteban. Their sabre duel is under cranked to make it faster. Try watching it in slow motion. It's excellent.

**El Cid** - Charlton Heston as Spain's legendary hero. An outstanding film about chivalric virtue with some superb swordplay.

"Honorable mention" for The Prisoner of Zenda with a terrific sabre duel and The Yakuza both for outstanding choreography and a great story about honour and personal responsibility.

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## **Competition**

As you progress in your fencing skills you will want to compete in many competitions. Before you go packing your bags and heading for the tournaments, please be aware of these two things:

**#1** Let your coaches help you select your competitions and events. Some competitions will be inappropriate to your skill level. Additionally, timing between tournaments is important. You do not want to fence a difficult tournament immediately before attending an important tournament such as sectionals, divisionals, or a national final.

Some tournaments have age group limited events. It is usually OK to fence in as many age groups as you can handle. But! Let the coaches help you decide which age groups you can handle. Also, in an important tournament, you may not want to fence an event out of your age group before your event. If you do, you may be worn out before your event even begins.

**#2** There are some important reasons for having your coach at the competition.

Coaches coach. You may be missing a simple movement. If your coach is there, he or she will point it out between bouts. It can make a difference in the outcome of the event.

Coaches keep an eye on adherence to the rules. Sometimes tournament organizers do not understand how to set up pools and elimination tables. It's the coaches job to watch for these things to be sure the fencer is not disadvantaged. More experienced fencers will know the rules and be able to take care of this for themselves.

While the rules are explicit about spectators interfering with the refereeing of a bout, we have seen countless instances where a coach has asked the referee for explanation. This often gets situations straightened out. In local competitions, there are often few or no rated referees. Coaches often explain rules to fencers who are serving as referees at the tournaments. Occasionally coaches are seen reminding rated referees of rules and standards of procedure. It is in your interest to go to tournaments with your coach at hand.

## **Competitions- Getting There and Competing**

### **Registration**

Large national competitions require advance registration. While some may allow late registration, the late fee is often extremely large. If pre-registration is required, get the registration in on time.

### **Travel**

In planning travel to a competition include the following details:

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Some large events require registration on the day before you fence. Include arrival to registration in your plans.

You should arrive at the venue one hour before your start of event. This is to allow you to sign in, warm-up and fence a short practice bout with a team mate.

Expect a seeding round to take at least two hours. Direct eliminations can take an hour in a small tournament and up to 4 hours in a large national tournament. Allow yourself enough time to take first place.

Fencing events usually start late and run later. Allow time for the effects of entropy on fencing.

## Equipment Check

Some competitions require equipment checks. Take care of this when you arrive. Be sure to check your equipment thoroughly before you compete, preferably the night before.

## Warming Up

Before competing, warm-up and stretch out. Depending on the seriousness of the competition, your coach may warm you up or may leave fencers to warm each other up. When you warm-up with another fencer, just work on basic movements. Touches, simple preparatory actions (beats, disengages, binds), and footwork (lunge, fleches, and attack on preparation.) No fancy stuff!

## When Your Done

Speak with your coach before you leave the venue. The coach may have some ideas to pass on to you or may want you to remind her to address some particular items in the next lesson.

Also! Be sure you have indeed been eliminated from the competition before you dress down.