



## Swordplay Fencing Camp 2019

This camp will cover the basics of foil fencing and allow participants to see what is involved in this sport. Each day, they add a little more and the final day there will be a little competition so they can get a taste of that and try their new skills on the strip. Parents may want to attend and watch—the time will be announced as it may vary depending on number of people fencing.

No special attire is needed, however long athletic pants/sweats—not too baggy, not too long—are what they must wear. NO shorts! Comfy T shirt and sneakers—please try to get ones that are as flat as possible. Wide heels and large soles interfere with footwork. Camp participants can bring snacks and a light lunch as well as any addition drinks. There is a small fridge at club. They should be ready and rested, arrive at club around 9:45 to get settled in.

The next pages give a little bit of information about fencing and what is involved.

If you have any additional questions, please do not hesitate to contact me. [treasurecoastfencing@gmail.com](mailto:treasurecoastfencing@gmail.com) is the best way!



## Why Fencing?

If you're reading this guide, you obviously have some interest in this unique activity. Maybe it's the cool weapons that initially sparked your curiosity, or the distinctive clothes, or the intricate strategy involved. No matter your initial ingress into the world of fencing, the more you learn about it, the more you will want to participate.

Coordination, speed, agility and self-assurance are just a few of the qualities this sport requires of its participants. A fencer needs not only to be quick of body but of mind as well. The intensity of fencing, and the extreme demands it places on one are a natural result of fencing's violent history. And while fencing has morphed from combat to sport, and possessing these skills no longer carries a life or death consequence, they are, however, in large part what make fencing such an exhilarating endeavor.

A successful fencer must be capable of mounting powerful driving attacks or conversely, of making subtle and crafty defenses, all within the space of a few seconds. Brawn only, however, will only take you so far in fencing: 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 honor is an integral part of fencing. A maximum 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 affect their lives.

Physically demanding, mentally challenging, character developing and cool weapons, what more could one ask for?!



## 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 "swordfight" 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 aggression in a safe and controlled environment.
- Finally, many great colleges have fencing teams and are always looking for experienced fencers. While scholarships are few and limited to top-level competitors, having fencing on your college resume provides you with another way for your child to market themselves.

*Olympic-style fencing* (or simply "fencing") refers to the fencing seen in most competitions, including 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.



Valid target in foil.  
© FrancoisCartegnie

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).

**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.
- **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.

### Foil

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.

Fencing is a life-long sport that welcomes duelists 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, or using your guile – which allows the parents to teach their children a thing or two while our children do the same to us.





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. (In other words, you don't get points by committing suicide and running onto your opponent's blade once they have established the start of their attack.)

However, if a fencer hesitates for too long while advancing on their opponent, they give up right-of-way to their opponent. A touch scored against an opponent who hesitated too long is called an attack in preparation or a stop-hit, depending on the circumstances.

Although some foil fencers still employ the classical technique of parries and thrusts, the flexible nature of the foil blade permits the modern foil fencer to attack an opponent from seemingly impossible angles.

Competitors can execute "marching attacks" where they move down the fencing strip towards their opponent, looking to flick the point of their blade at back or flank of their opponent. Because parrying (blocking) these attacks can be very difficult, the modern game of foil has evolved into a complicated and exciting game of multiple feints, ducking and sudden, explosive attacks, making it a lot of fun to watch.

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#### Getting Started: Basic Skills

*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.