

# PARENTS' GUIDE TO FENCING

EVERYTHING YOU NEED TO KNOW TO START  
YOUR CHILD IN THE SPORT OF FENCING

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## En Garde!: Introduction

Welcome to the exciting sport of fencing. While certainly not as prevalent in the U.S. as football or baseball, you may be surprised to learn that the United States Fencing Association (USFA) has over 30,000 members (as of April 2014) with competitions across the country. You're making a great decision for your child by introducing him or her to this unique sport that teaches discipline, focus, mental preparation, and the skills for dealing with success and failure. Not to mention the sense of accomplishment that comes with learning something new.



## About this Book

My wife and I cofounded the Academy of Fencing Masters (AFM) to create the fencing club of our dreams and to pursue our shared passion for teaching children the art of fencing. For us, coaching fencing is not a job, but a lifetime mission to create a positive environment for children: a place where we would be proud to take our own children—and we do! Our children are currently training at AFM.

Why did we decide to write this book? The short answer is that because fencing is not well understood or mainstream in the U.S., we've realized that new parents need a one-stop resource to educate them on the sport. Here's the longer answer...



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At our academy, we provide a parent orientation every few weeks to educate parents who are new to the sport. We've noticed that parents tend to have the same questions and that, because fencing is such a niche sport, they have very little understanding of the sport prior to the orientation. Plus:

- The rules are complicated.
- Existing information is spread across countless sites and new parents often don't know where to begin.
- Comprehensive sources may be overwhelming for new parents (e.g., the Athlete Handbook of USFA is a great resource further down the road, but likely too advanced to start).

However, when parents leave our orientation, they are relieved and feel much more comfortable in supporting their children as they train. This book combines all of the introductory information and commonly asked questions in one place. We haven't invented this information; we've simply assimilated what's out there into one concise resource with the goal of simplifying what we can and focusing on what new parents really need to know.

This book covers the basics of fencing (including terminology, ratings, and major fencing organizations), fencing competitions (why to compete, what to expect), and the equipment needed for fencing.

I've also included some additional helpful information and insights from our blog: <http://academyoffencingmasters.com/blog/>



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My hope is that I believe this book is informative, but also easy and fun to read! My goal is to educate you on the sport, and help you to be prepared to support your child in the pursuit of learning to fence: to share with you everything you need to know to get started.

Note that anytime you see a box of this color, the information provided is specific to the San Francisco Bay Area of California as an example or for those who live in the area. This book is intended for a general audience across the U.S., but also provides specifics from the Silicon Valley where it makes sense based on our experience and expertise.





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## What is Fencing?

Okay, let's start by getting the basics out of the way. What is fencing?

The Olympic sport of fencing means to fight with one of three weapons: **foil**, **epee**, or **sabre**. The fencer tries to "touch" the opponent while not allowing the opponent to "touch" him or her. A touch means contacting your opponent with your weapon. Depending on the type of weapon, only certain parts of the body are considered valid touches. Portions of the weapons and of the fencing gear are electronic to detect touches.

We'll dive deeper into the rules of fencing shortly, but first...

## Isn't Fencing Dangerous?

First, let's address a common question: Isn't fencing dangerous? As a parent, I certainly understand that it can sound scary to put your child into a sport where the objective is to stab each other with a sword! However, the short answer is "No." Fencing is actually one of the safest sports you can choose for your child. I'll address a few misconceptions and then show a graph that really sums up the safety of the sport.

- The blade is not sharp.
- The contacts are partially absorbed by the flexibility of the blade.
- The point of the weapon is flat with a small spring inside the point.
- Fencers wear protective equipment particularly designed for the sport.



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While fencing is a combat sport, it is **distinctively gentle on the body**. The sport requires no direct contact between competitors or with objects. In baseball, players slide into each other and dive on the ground; in basketball players are constantly in contact with each other or the hard floor as they fight to score, or in football... well, do we really need to specify for football?

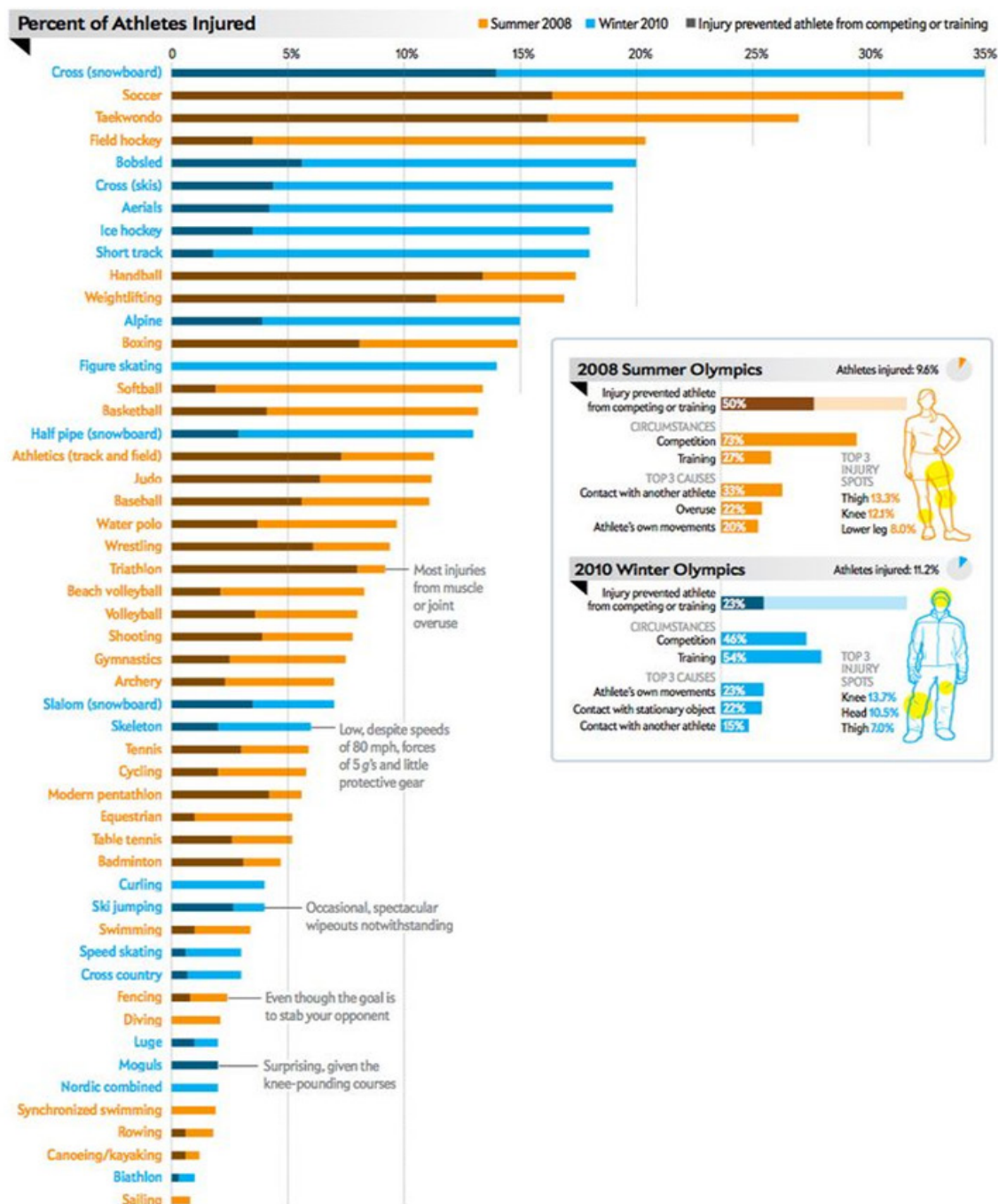
Fencing has **one of the lowest injury ratings** among all sports. Imagine teaching your children combat skills, discipline, and competition, without having to worry about concussions or sprained ankles, or worse injuries that could affect them the rest of their lives. As I said before, fencing does not require contact with other competitors or objects, which are the two biggest causes of sports-related injuries. On top of that, fencers move only forward and backward along one plane, limiting injuries to knees and ankles which are common in sports where the athletes continually change direction.



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Here is the promised a graph, that is quite famous in fencing circles and shows fencing very close to the bottom on a list of what percentage of athletes are injured in each sport.



Reference: Olympic sports injuries statistics (Source: Lars Engebretsen, University of Oslo)



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As you can see from the graph, fencing is truly less dangerous than almost all other options for competitive sport. However, that's not the only benefit to enlisting your child in fencing. Here are several more reasons to consider...

## Why Fencing?

Fencing is truly a unique sport and can be a great activity for any child. In many ways fencing can appeal to children who may not be attracted to other sports for a variety of reasons.

With its rapid footwork and thrusting, your child will get a high-impact **aerobic workout**. He or she will build stamina, strength, and coordination. I like to think of fencing as a type of dance, because we use the same type of skill set—understanding timing, tempo, measure, and velocity.

### Did You Know Ballet Originated from Fencing?

"Ballet originated in 15th century Italy, as a dance interpretation of fencing. By the 17th century, ballet had spread to France where it became a staple in the court of Louis XIV. By the mid-19th century, ballet had spread to Denmark and Russia, where it was further refined. By the 20th century, ballet continued to develop and influence other forms of dance. Multiple styles such as contemporary ballet and post-structural ballet also developed."

**Source:** <http://findsportsnow.com/learn/ballet-dancing>

**Bonus:** This YouTube video illustrates the similarity in movements between fencing and

**Ballet:** <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WBrC9xgitjg>





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In fencing, **physical attributes such as height, weight, and build are much less important** than in many traditional sports in the U.S. In fact, fencing is the only combat sport without weight categories. Success is much more dependent on the amount of training, discipline, and focus exhibited by your child.

Another benefit to the sport's lack of emphasis on the competitor's size and strength is that **13-year-olds can compete against adults**. If your child is committed with a competitive nature, he or she can earn a rating that allows him or her to compete at the Division 1 level at age 13 (more on divisions and age categories as we move along!). Also, the lack of emphasis on size and strength means that **genders can compete against each other** on a level playing field. Genders are typically separated at the national level, but often compete against each other at the local and regional levels, across all age groups. Male and female fencers train together at most fencing clubs across the country.

Also, fencing is a sport that **a fencer can continue to an old age**. We all know that high-contact sports are tough on the body and become increasingly difficult and dangerous as we get older. Sports like golf and tennis are often encouraged so that people can continue to compete and stay active as they grow older. Fencing is another sport that provides longevity for its competitors! As we'll discuss later in this book, some competitions have age groups specifically for fencers 70 and older. A 92-year-old fencer that lived in Hawaii passed away just a few days after his last competition. Introducing your child to fencing today could give them a lifelong passion and a way to stay active for years to come.



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Lastly, and as a parent I know you're going to like this benefit, **fencing looks great on college applications!** Fencing is sometimes referred to as "physical chess," and colleges see a fencer as someone who is not only athletic, but also mentally tough and a strategic thinker. And again, it's unique! How many children have basketball or football listed on their resumes? Okay, now how many list fencing? Not to mention, most colleges and universities have fencing teams that are continually working to fill their ranks. If your child excels in the sport, that's just one more possible avenue into a great school.

## Fencing in College

To learn more about college advantages, such as which universities have fencing teams and offer fencing scholarships, read our blog:

<http://academyoffencingmasters.com/blog/fencing-and-the-college-advantage>





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## The Basics

This section will cover the introductory information needed to understand the objective of the sport, the different types of fencing, and some basic terminology.

### The Objective

As mentioned in the introduction, the Olympic sport of fencing (i.e., “competitive fencing”) means to fight with one of three weapons: **foil**, **epee**, or **sabre**. These different types of weapons are explained more in a bit. Both competitors always use the same type of weapon.

Two fencers compete in a **bout**. The fencers score points by hitting an opponent’s target **area**: another word for the hit is a **touch**. The objective is to either score a certain number of points before your opponent, or to have more points than your opponent when the time limit expires. The number of points and the time limits can vary and are explained more fully in the Competitions section. The referee will stop play anytime a hit is made to assess points. Fencers then return to their starting positions. The fight starts again after the referee says: “En garde” (“On guard”) then “Êtes-vous prêts?” (“Are you ready?”), to which the fencers have to answer “yes”, and then “Allez” (“Go”). However, many referees in the U.S. simply say, “On guard!”, “Ready?”, “Fence!”

**USFA provides a great overview on *The Basics of Competition* here:**

[http://assets.ngin.com/attachments/document/0033/8434/Basics\\_of\\_Competition.pdf](http://assets.ngin.com/attachments/document/0033/8434/Basics_of_Competition.pdf)

That’s really it as far as the basic object of the sport. Now we need to talk about the three types of weapons because some rules differ based on the type of weapon.



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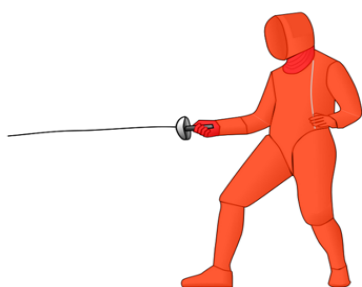


## Weapons

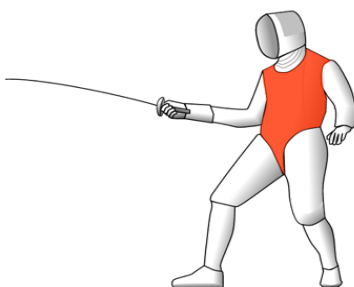
The three different weapons can also be thought of as three different types of fencing because the rules are different for each. The following table explains the differences in the type of weapon, what part of the weapon can be used for a touch, and what parts of the body count as the target area.

I will explain the last column after the table, which indicates the approach for handling simultaneous touches.

Weapon	Appearance	Touches	Target Area	Right-of-Way
Foil	A light, thrusting sword with a small, circular hand guard and a flexible, rectangular blade	Scored only with the tip	Torso (including back), neck, groin	Yes
Epee	A thrusting sword similar in length to a foil but heavier, with a larger guard and a much stiffer blade	Scored only with the tip	Entire body	No
Sabre	A light cutting and thrusting weapon	Scored with tip or blade	Entire body above waist	Yes



épée



foil



sabre



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Okay, so what is “Right-of-Way”? In fencing, this term refers to a rule about simultaneous touches. Foil and sabre fencing use the right-of-way rule to state that if two fencers touch simultaneously, the point is awarded to the fencer who acquired priority of the action, or in other words, the fencer who was the last to make a clear action, being it offense or defense. If the referee cannot determine who had priority of the action, no points are awarded. For epee, both fencers are awarded a point for simultaneous touches. If you want to learn more on this topic, read the box below.

## More on Right-of-Way

Frankly, right-of-way can be difficult to assess even for some renowned referees or coaches due to the speed of the action, at such high-level tournaments as the Olympic Games. In addition to the speed of the action, sometimes the movements are obstructed by a fencer’s body. The untrained eye is often unable to discern what happened and in what order, and it will take time for you to understand the referee’s calls. Don’t get discouraged! The best way to learn over time is to ask the coach (without disturbing the flow of the event, being it training or competition) why a point was awarded or not. With time you will begin to understand.

Some competitions have video replay so that questionable decisions can be reviewed in real time. Fencers have a right to request a review if they disagree with the referee’s call. It is also worth noting that the fencers often understand what happened and frequently “self-referee”: this is common and typically the calls are accurate.

Another factor is that in foil, a white light indicates that the fencer touched off-target (e.g., arm, leg), but this off-target touch can still be considered the last clear action. So, if one fencer touches off-target and the other fencer touches on-target, but the first fencer had right-of-way, no points are awarded because the first fencer had priority, but did not score.

Okay, let’s get a few other terms out of the way...



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## Miscellaneous Terminology

- Blade: The hitting part of a sword from the guard to the point.
- Grip: The handle of a sword.
- Guard: The part of a sword between the blade and handle that protects the dueling hand.
- Point: The end of the blade, which must touch the opponent's target area to score a point (in foil and epee).
- Strip: The field of play where a fencing bout occurs.
- Attack: Extending the sword arm out toward the opponent in an attempt to touch the opponent in the target area, also called a "thrust."
- Parry: A motion to deflect the opponent's blade.
- Riposte: An answering attack after a parry.
- Touche: An acknowledgment of a hit by one's opponent.
- Bout: Refers to a match between two fencers in a competition.





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## Major Fencing Organizations

Now that we've got the basic terminology down, let's look at the major fencing organizations and how they are related to one another. Most fencing clubs in the U.S. are members of the United States Fencing Association (USFA). The USFA ties into international and Olympic organizations.

### Let's look at how this works:

- Fédération Internationale d'Escrime (FIE) (International Fencing Federation)
  - Governing body of international fencing
  - Provides input and guidance for the International Olympic Committee (IOC) for fencing
  - [www.fie.ch](http://www.fie.ch)
- United States Fencing Association (USFA)
  - Governing body of national fencing
  - Governed by FIE and provides input and guidance for the U.S. Olympic Committee (USOC) for fencing
  - [www.usfencing.org](http://www.usfencing.org)



Within your area, USFA members are broken down into regions (multi-state) and divisions (one or more for each state). See the following example for California.

California is part of the Pacific Coast region, which includes other states. California is broken down into four divisions:

- Southern CA: South of San Luis Obispo
- Central CA: From San Luis Obispo to Palo Alto
- Northern CA: From Palo Alto (south) to Sonoma/Napa (north) and Livermore (east)
- Mountain Valley: The rest



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## USFA Membership Requirements

Most, if not all, fencing clubs require mandatory USFA membership for all fencers. The main reason is that the clubs purchase group insurance from USFA and USFA requires all fencers, even beginners, to have at least a non-competitive membership for any fencing-related classes and activities. For individuals, USFA membership includes secondary insurance for the fencer.

Membership is yearly, with the USFA year going from August 1 to July 31. USFA provides different levels of membership based on your competition level. I've listed the current prices, but they are subject to change (as of May 2014):

- Non-competitive: Minimum requirement for most clubs
  - \$5/year
- Competitive: Required to compete in any USFA sanctioned event
  - Yearly: \$70/year
  - Single event: \$25/day
- Upgrade from non-competitive to competitive at anytime by paying the difference

Note that it's very important to specify the correct division when registering with USFA. Divisions use USFA information to check the validity to fence at different qualifying events.



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## USFA Safe Sport Policy

Like the majority of sports organizations in the U.S. that work with children, USFA enforces a very important safety policy designed to protect your children and help you rest easy that your children are in good hands while participating in fencing activities. The policy works to ensure your children are with safe adults, but also protects against other forms of abuse such as bullying and hazing. The policy includes background checks, education, awareness, and strict guidelines.

One important aspect of the policy is that all USFA member clubs can only employ USFA professional members as coaches, administrators, referees, or any adult that works with children. These professional members are required to undergo a background check.

**For all details on this policy, you can visit this section of the USFA website:**

*<http://www.usfencing.org/page/show/892379-safe-sport>*





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## Ratings, Points, Age Brackets & Divisions

### Fencer Ratings

You may have heard in conversations with other parents, coaches, or even on the Facebook pages of fencing clubs that a child earned a “new rating.” You may be wondering what these ratings are and what they mean for your child. Let me explain fencing ratings in an easy way.

First, every fencer registered with USFA is either marked as “unrated” or has a rating meant to indicate the fencer’s quality and consistency in the sport. The rating consists of a letter that designates quality and a year that designates how recently the rating was earned. The letters go from U for “Unrated” and then from A to E with “A” being the highest and “E” being the lowest official rating. The letter is followed by the year that the fencer earned or “re-earned” that rating. For example, a rating of A2014 means that the fencer has the highest letter rating and most recently earned that rating in 2014.

All fencers that have never earned a rating in the U.S. will start with a rating of “U.” Even if a national champion from another country moves here, he or she will be given a “U” rating until a higher rating is earned! Once a rating is earned, it is valid for four years and cannot go down during that time. After four years, it goes down one level if not re-earned. A rating can go up in one day!

These ratings are also referred to as “classifications.” If a fencer chooses to compete with multiple weapons, the fencer has a specific rating for each weapon.

Fencers earn a rating by competing in USFA-sanctioned competitions. Depending on the size of the competition and the quality of participants (according to the ratings of each fencer), fencers can earn a rating by placing at a certain level within the



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competition. The table on the following page clarifies how ratings are awarded at tournaments. For the latest table, **visit the following link on the USFA website:** <http://www.usfencing.org/page/show/698401-classification-chart>

As mentioned earlier, young fencers are often quite skilled and can compete toe-to-toe with older fencers. If a young fencer has a C rating, for example, the fencer can most likely compete with other C-rated fencers, on more or less the same level, regardless of age. Youth competitions must meet the criteria for C1 or higher in order to award ratings (see the table for the definition of a C1 competition), but this is not uncommon, especially in large competitions. Youth competitors as young as 10 years old often do well competing in higher brackets, thus earning a rating, and then creating a pool of young fencers rated high enough for large youth competitions to have the C1 designation.





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Event	Minimum # of Fencers	Rated Fencers Required	Rated Finishes Required	Classifications Awarded (Place – Rating)
Group E1	6	NONE	N/A	1 – E
Group D1	15	4 Es (or higher)	2 Es (or higher) in top 8	1 – D 2-4 – E
Group C1	15	2 Cs & 2 Ds & 2 Es (or higher)	2 Cs & 2 Ds (or higher) in top 8	1 – C 2-4 – D 4-8 – E
Group C2	25	4 Ds & 4 Es (or higher)	4 Ds (or higher) in top 8	1 – C 2-4 – D 4-8 – E
Group C3	64	24 Ds & 12 Es (or higher)	4 Ds (or higher) in top 8 & 4 Es (or higher) in top 12	1-4 – C 5-8 – D 9-16 – E
Group B1	15	2 Bs & 2 Cs & 2 Ds (or higher)	2 Bs & 2 Cs (or higher) in top 8	1 – B 2-4 – C 5-6 – D 7-8 – E
Group B2	25	2 Bs & 2 Cs & 2 Ds (or higher)	2 Bs & 2 Cs (or higher) in top 8	1 – B 2-4 – C 5-8 – D 9-12 – E
Group B3	64	24 Cs & 12 Ds (or higher)	4 Cs (or higher) in top 8 & 4 Ds (or higher) in top 12	1-4 – B 5-8 – C 9-16 – D 17-32 – E
Group A1	15	2 As & 2 Bs & 2 Cs (or higher)	2 As & 2 Bs (or higher) in top 8	1 – A 2 – B 3-4 – C 5-6 – D 7-8 – E
Group A2	25	2 As & 2 Bs & 2 Cs (or higher)	2 As & 2 Bs (or higher) in top 8	1 – A 2-4 – B 5-8 – C 9-10 – D 11-12 – E
Group A3	64	24 Bs & 12 Cs (or higher)	4 Bs in top 8 & 4Cs (or higher) in top 12	1-4 – A 5-8 – B 9-16 – C 17-24 – D 25-32 – E
Group A4	64	12 As & 12 Bs & 12 Cs (or higher)	4 As in top 8 & 4Bs (or higher) in top 12	1-8 – A 9-16 – B 17-24 – C 25-32 – D 33-48 – E





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## National & Regional Points

In addition to the ratings USFA also awards points to fencers at specific tournaments. These points are then used for seeding in competitions, qualification for national championships, and to assemble teams for international events, such as world cups or world championships. Most national events are “points events” and if your child places at a certain level, he or she will be awarded points to add to his or her running total.

National points standings are maintained on the USFA website. Here is a link with Frequently Asked Questions that also contains a link to the standings:

<http://www.usfencing.org/page/show/698462-point-standings-faq>

Regions also maintain a separate point total for regional points.

I will revisit national and regional points as well as when and how they are earned after explaining the types of tournaments later in this book.



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## Age Brackets & Divisions

Okay, so we've talked about youth fencers vs. older fencers, but what exactly is a "youth fencer"? Fencers are grouped into categories based on age, but again, a young fencer can often compete with the older fencers, as I will explain in this section.



***The age brackets can be a bit confusing at first glance. Here are some main points:***

- Most ages are eligible to fence in more than one bracket depending on the child's skill and comfort levels.
  - For example, an 11-year-old may choose to compete in the 12-and-under bracket, but also has the option to compete in the 14-and-under bracket for more challenging competition.



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- “Age” is determined by birth year and the year in which the current fencing season begins.
  - The fencing season is from Aug 1 through July 31, but age is still based on birth year.
  - For example, in the 2013-2014 season, a child that turned 13 on January 1, 2014 or after will be considered “12” for the entire season because the fencer was 12 when the season started. Therefore, the child can compete in the 12-and-under and 14-and-under brackets for the entire season.
- Once a child is 13, the child can compete in any non-Youth age bracket (as well as Y14).
  - Note that here we mean “13” by birth year according to the above rules. Again, if the child turned 13 after January 1<sup>st</sup> of the current season, the child would be considered “12” for the entire season and could compete in Y12 and Y14.
  - Another note, the rules get a bit more complex specifically for Division 1 and when you add in national points (more on this later). However, we won’t get into all of the details since once your child achieves this level of fencing, you will be able to write a book of your own!
- Seniors is the major age category, which is reached at age 13. This bracket is further split into divisions based on level of competition. The Division 1 Senior fencers compose the U.S. National team.

I’ll explain this further by using two tables.



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The first table shows all categories of competition with the code and eligible ages for each. For Senior-level competition (the first three rows), the table also outlines the class rating required to compete in a particular division. This class rating and how it is earned is explained further into this section.

The second table provides guidance on determining age eligibility based on birth year for the next several competition seasons.

Note that most clubs are more flexible in training and allow mixed ability levels.

While this information isn't expected to change frequently, for the latest information, **visit the following link on USFA's website:**

<http://www.usfencing.org/page/show/698393-age-and-classification-eligibility>





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## Age Class Eligibility

Category	Code	Ages	Class
Youth 10	Y10	7-10	N/A
Youth 12	Y12	9-12	N/A
Youth 14	Y14	11-14	N/A
Cadet	CDT or U17	13-17	N/A
Junior / Junior Team	JR / JTM or U19	13-19	N/A
Division I	DV1	13 & Up	A, B, or C
Division IA	DIA	13 & Up	N/A (via specific qualifiers)
Division II	DV2	13 & Up	C, D, E, or U
Division III	DV3	13 & Up	D, E, or U
Wheelchair	CHR	13 & Up	N/A

## Eligible Birth Years by Age Bracket and Fencing Season

Age Bracket	Fencing Season					
	2013-2014	2014-2015	2015-2016	2016-2017	2017-2018	2018-2019
Y10	2003-2006	2004-2007	2005-2008	2006-2009	2007-2010	2008-2011
Y12	2001-2004	2002-2005	2003-2006	2004-2007	2005-2008	2006-2009
Y14	1999-2002	2000-2003	2001-2004	2002-2005	2003-2006	2004-2007
Cadets: U17	1996-2000	1997-2001	1998-2002	1999-2003	2000-2004	2001-2005
Juniors: U19	1994-2000	1995-2001	1996-2002	1997-2003	1998-2004	1999-2005
Seniors	2000 and earlier	2001 and earlier	2002 and earlier	2003 and earlier	2004 and earlier	2005 and earlier



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## Event Abbreviations

When you search for tournaments and events online, such as on *askFRED.net* (more on this later under Competitions), you will notice certain abbreviations that explain the types of events at the tournament. Now that we've covered age brackets, classifications, and divisions, we can address how events are abbreviated using these pieces of information.

Events are abbreviated in the following format:

**[Age Bracket][Rating][Gender][Weapon]**

Gender is abbreviated using the first letter, or an X for co-ed (mixed):

- **M**ens
- **W**omens
- **MiX**ed

If age is not specified, Senior is the default age bracket. Rating is also often left out because the event does not require a specific rating. Here are some example event abbreviations:

- Y10MF: Y10 Men's Foil
- Y10XF: Y10 Mixed Foil
- Y12WE: Y12 Women's Epee
- VXE: Veterans, Mixed, Epee (any aged Veteran, any gender, any rating)
- UMF: (Seniors) Unrated Men's Foil
- JCHWS: Juniors, C and Higher Rating, Women's Sabre



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## Competitions

So far in this book we've mentioned both training and competition. Let's go further into this topic and discuss the difference between the two and the reasons to participate in competitions. I also want to share information about how competitions are organized, what to expect, what to bring, and how to prepare.

### Why Compete?

When your child joins a fencing club, he or she will join training sessions or classes and will be taught to fence. Your child will practice skills, technique, and also spend time "competing" against classmates in a training environment. Training alone provides many of the benefits to joining a sport and fencing in particular.

Participating in competitions means that you are attending tournaments and competing against fencers outside of your club. The main factors to consider when deciding whether to compete are **desire, budget, and time commitment**. Competing does create additional costs and requires much more time, including traveling to tournaments. Local competitions are not that expensive, both in registration and travel costs. National competitions typically require airfare and accommodations and have more expensive registration.

Okay, so that's the necessary business about the commitments involved in competing. More importantly, I want to let's discuss the many benefits to your child from participating in fencing competitions.

First of all, it's fun! Traveling to competitions, preparing for bouts, going to dinner with the club after the day is done, even the stench of the day's equipment in the backseat of the van on the way home: these are memories that your child will hold onto forever.



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Second, competing teaches invaluable life lessons. We have a strong belief that all children should compete in a sport. This belief is part of what drives us to educate parents on the sport that we know and love. Some of the life lessons your child will learn from fencing competitions:

- Discipline
- Mental preparation
- Self-esteem
- Focus
- Strategy
- How to set goals and make plans to meet them
- How to handle success with graciousness and overcome failure with poise
- How to deal with fear of failure



I believe one of the biggest benefits in the above list is focus. Competing in a sport, and particularly fencing, forces your child to be focused and ready for a very short moment. Fencing bouts can be over quickly and you either win or you lose. If you're not focused, your opponent may overtake you before you get your head in the game.

We are very passionate about the benefits to children of competing in athletic sports. For more on our philosophy, read this blog:

<http://academyoffencingmasters.com/blog/importance-of-competing/>





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## What is a Tournament?

Okay, so what do I mean by “tournament” or “event”?

First, a tournament is composed of one or more events. An event is for a specific category or categories of fencers that are competing against each other and can be split by age, division, classification, weapon, or gender. A tournament can span across many age groups and levels of competition, or can be for just one category with one event.

Here's an example to clarify:

One RYC tournament can cover all 3 weapons, both genders, and 3 age categories: in this case, that tournament would have 18 events.

**3 Weapons \* 2 Genders \* 3 Ages = 18 Events**

Organizers try to plan such that fencers can participate in multiple events throughout the day without conflicts, but at times you may have to decide between two events. For example, a 10-year-old male foil fencer may sign up for both the Y10MF and Y12MF events. The organizers will expect children to participate in both of these events and schedule accordingly. However, if your child chooses to compete in foil and epee (e.g., Y10MF and Y10ME), these events may overlap and your child may have to choose one or the other.

Typical event fees are \$50-80 per National event and less for other events. Event fees will vary greatly depending on location, size of the event, level of the event, and other factors.

As an example, the San Francisco Bay Cups are typically \$40/event with \$15 going to the Bay Cup organization and \$25 going to the hosting club.



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## Types of Competitions

Fencing competitions vary in size, location, type, qualification process, and more. Let's talk through the basic types of competitions you can expect to encounter as your child begins to compete in fencing.

Note that the USFA is continuously improving the way competitions are run and the respective qualification paths. Therefore, keep in mind that the information presented in this section is current at the time of writing, but the latest information is always available in the official USFA documentation ([www.usfencing.org](http://www.usfencing.org))

## National Championships

National championships are held once a year at three different levels: Division I, Junior Olympics (Juniors and Cadets), and Summer Nationals (all other divisions and age categories). They are only open to U.S. citizens and permanent residents.

The Division I National Championship is typically in April and is the final National-level event where fencers can qualify for the National Team to go to the World Championship: it is the final chance to earn national points. This event is invitation only and typically includes the top 64 fencers in each weapon category.

The Junior Olympic Championship is Presidents Day Weekend (the 3rd weekend in February) and is the final National-level event for this age group where fencers can qualify for the World Championship team for Juniors and Cadets: it is the final chance to earn national points. Fencers must qualify via Divisional Juniors qualifiers or auto-qualify by national points.



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Summer Nationals are typically the end of June through the beginning of July and last for two weeks. Fencers qualify differently based on the age category:

- Y10 qualifies by being on either the national or regional Y10 point standings (must have earned either national or regional points through previous competitions).
- Y12 qualifies by either (1) being in the top 50% for Y12 regional points, (2) being on the Y12 national point standings, (3) being in the top eight of the Y10 national point standings, or (4) being in the top four of the Y10 regional point standings.
- Y14 qualifies by either (1) being on the Y14 national point standings, (2) being in the top 25% for Y14 regional points, (3) being in the top 16 of the Y12 national point standings, (4) being in the top eight of the Y12 regional point standings, or (5) placing in the top 25% in the Y14 Division qualifying competition for the current season.

## North American Cups

North American Cups (NACs) are held seven times a year during fencing season (October, November, December, January, March, April, July). They cover all divisions and ages and each NAC focuses on a subset of categories. No qualification or U.S. citizenship is required, only eligibility by age and division.

## Regional Open Circuit

The Regional Open Circuit (ROC) consists of open Senior and Veteran regional competitions throughout the country. The ROC is the qualifying path for Division II, III, IA, and Veteran championships. The top eight finishers qualify for Division IA and the top 10% qualify for Division II.



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## Super Youth Circuit

The Super Youth Circuit (SYC) consists of national events for all Youth fencers (Y10, Y12, and Y14). These events are held about once every month throughout the country. The SYC is one of the qualifying paths for the youth Summer Nationals.

## Regional Youth Circuit

The Regional Youth Circuit (RYC) consists of national events for all Youth fencers (Y10, Y12, and Y14). The frequency of these events depends on your region (e.g., the San Francisco Bay Area had three events in the 2013-2014 season). The RYC is one of the qualifying paths for the youth Summer Nationals.

## Open Competitions

You can also find open competitions in your area in addition to the circuits and championships. Open competitions are held by divisional/regional committees or local clubs and can be sanctioned by USFA (meaning rankings can be earned with particular finishes).

## Internal Competitions

Clubs often hold internal competitions so that fencers can get more practice. These events are held at the hosting club and typically include only fencers from the club. Your region may have other organizations that sponsor tournaments outside of the circuits, NACs, and national championships. Your club should be able to provide plenty of information on other tournaments in your area.

Forexample, in our area, we have The Bay Cup sponsored by a local cooperative organized by several area clubs. These are the most popular and most attended competitions in our area for all ages, genders, and weapons. In the 2013-2014 season, The Bay Cup conducted 79 tournaments with 176 total events. As an example of how popular Bay Cup tournaments are, one of the tournaments that we hosted at AFM as part of the Bay Cup had about 100 fencers in attendance.





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## National Points

Okay, let's revisit national points as promised earlier now that you understand the different types of tournaments and divisions. All events at NACs, JO Championships, and National Championships are points events except for Division IA, II, and III and team events. For details on how points are awarded based on placement, review USFA's FAQ **here**:

<http://www.usfencing.org/page/show/698462-point-standings-faq>

When certain tournaments in this section mention auto-qualifying based on national points, that qualification is based on an accumulation of points throughout the fencing season. USFA maintains the current points standing list **here**: <http://www.usfencing.org/page/show/695476-current-point-standings>

Note that some local organizations also maintain and award local points to the local fencers. For example, The Bay Cup maintains the local points standings for all events that are hosted as part of The Bay Cup. However, these points are typically not used for seeding, but mostly for motivation. The Bay Cup awards top finishers in every category a nice and practical present at the end of every season: a gift card to the local Bay Area fencing shop, Victory Fencing, with the amount based on the placement. Who said you cannot make money in fencing?



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## How to Find Competitions

The fencing community in general is very organized and well informed. As a parent, you know this is great news! You can generally find details on tournaments in one of two places.

First, askFRED.net has information on all local and regional tournaments (all local, RYCs SYCs, and ROCs). In this case, FRED stands for Fencing Results and Events Database. Yes, results are also posted online after tournaments for easy viewing! This site also has a database of other fencing events, such as clinics and camps.

### ***The official site of USFA has information on all national tournaments***

Here is a table listing the national competitions for Y10 through Juniors for the next several years. This information was sourced from [www.usfencing.org](http://www.usfencing.org) under **Events > National Events**, where you can always find a full and current listing.





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Dates	Event	Y10	Y12	Y14	J	C	S	V	W	Location
Oct 10-13, 2014	October NAC					X	DVI, DVII, Senior Team			Portland, OR
Nov 7-10, 2014	November NAC			X	X	X				Louisville, KY
Dec 5 - 8, 2014	December NAC						DVI, DVII	X		Dallas, TX
Jan 9-12, 2015	January NAC				X		DVI, Senior Team		X	Salt Lake, UT
Feb 13-16, 2015	February JOs				X	X				Richmond, VA
Feb 27-Mar 2, 2015	Feb. /March						DVI, DVIII	X	X	
April 17-20, 2015	April	X	X	X			DVII		X	Milwaukee, WI
Jun 27-Jul 6, 2015	July	X	X	X	X	X	All	X		San Jose, CA
Oct 9-12, 2015	October NAC					X	DVI, DVII, Senior Team			
Nov 13-16, 2015	November NAC			X	X	X				
Dec 4-7, 2015	December NAC						DVI, DVII,	X		
Jan 8-11, 2016	January NAC				X		DVI, Senior Team		X	
Feb 12-15, 2016	February JOs				X	X				
Mar 11-14, 2016	March NAC	X	X	X			DVII		X	
Apr 15-18, 2016	April						DVI, DVIII	X	X	
Jun 29-Jul 8, 2016	July	X	X	X	X	X	All		X	

*Key: J = Junior, C = Cadet, S = Senior, V = Veteran, W = Wheelchair*



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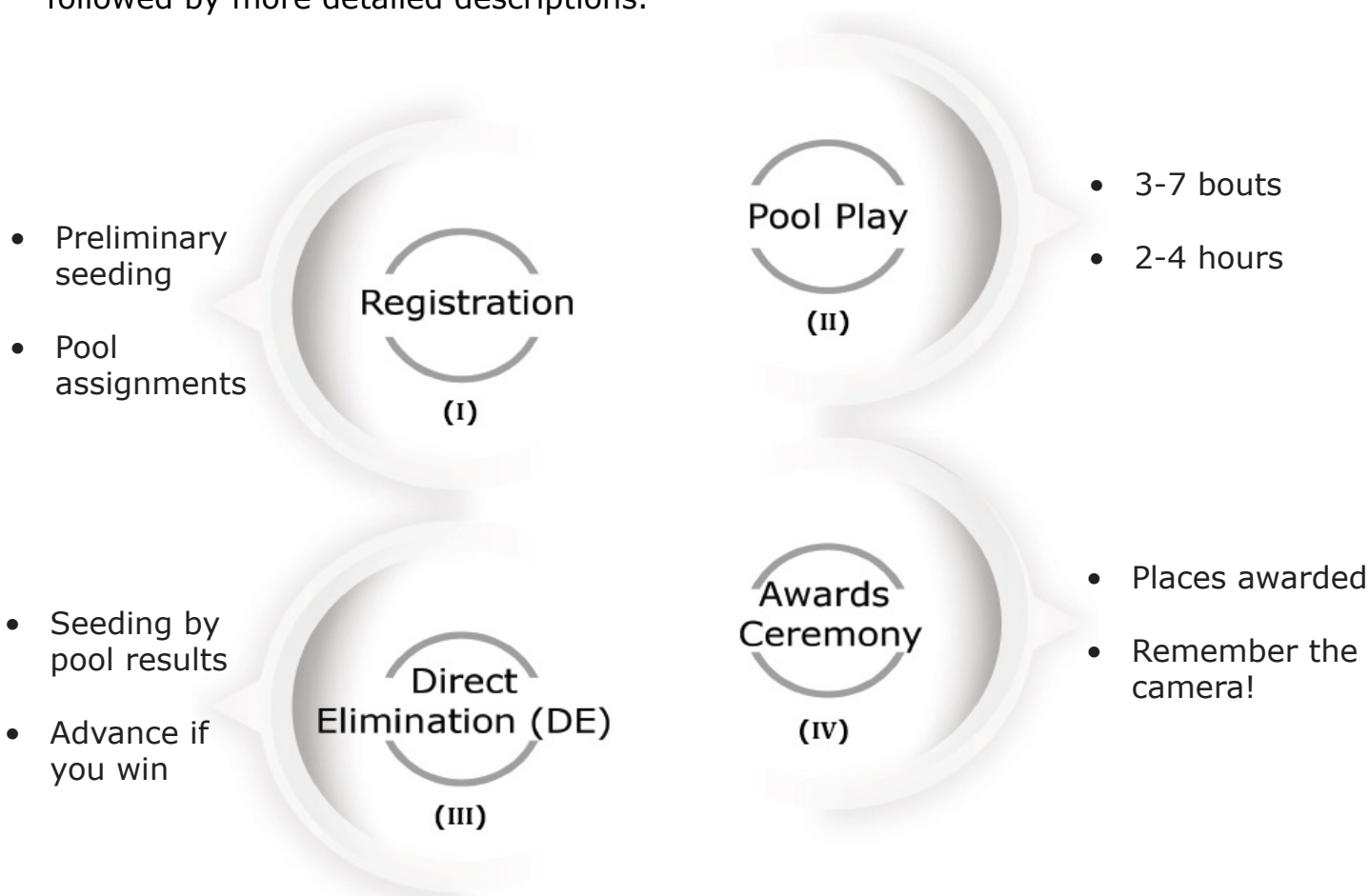
## What to Expect

Okay, so now you're educated on you understand the types of tournaments and how to find them, but what about when you get there? You probably have some ideas in mind about what constitutes a tournament, but let's break down what you can expect throughout the day or days if you're attending.

In addition to the logistics provided here, your child may be nervous before the first time competing. You may find this blog helpful on preparing for that first competition:

<http://academyoffencingmasters.com/blog/your-childs-first-fencing-competition-heres-how-to-prepare>

The following graphic provides an overview for each part of the tournament, and is followed by more detailed descriptions.





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## First, Registration

When you arrive at a tournament, you must check in with your child at the venue or event administration. This group is called the "bout committee." They will check that you have paid fees, that your USFA membership is current and the right type (it must be competitive and valid for the current season) and possibly accept payment (depends on the tournament whether you pay day of or ahead of time). Depending on the size of the tournament, they might check your child's equipment; so always bring all equipment to registration (weapons, gloves, mask, lame, all body cords). The bout committee is also who you should visit if you encounter any issues throughout the day.

Every tournament has a registration close time, at which point no more entries are allowed. Plan to arrive at least 30 minutes prior to registration for local events to allow for parking, registration, gearing up, weapon check (if any), and warming up. The events will start shortly after registration close.

After registration closes and the bout committee confirms the attendees, you will receive your child's pool assignment, which is based on initial seeding. The initial seeding algorithm varies based on the tournament, but the intent is to create even pools for a fair competition. Depending on the tournament, the bout committee may use a combination of rating and national points for seeding. However, it is time-consuming to look up national points for each competitor, so some local tournaments will not use this criterion. At national-level events, a preliminary seeding is used that is based on the same set of criteria as typical tournament initial seeding, but assumes all preregistered fencers will participate. All national-level tournaments use national points for seeding.

The bout committee will have a location to post seeding, pool results, and other competition information. Locate this spot (usually a wall, whiteboard, or TV monitor), as this is where you will need to go after all pools have completed to



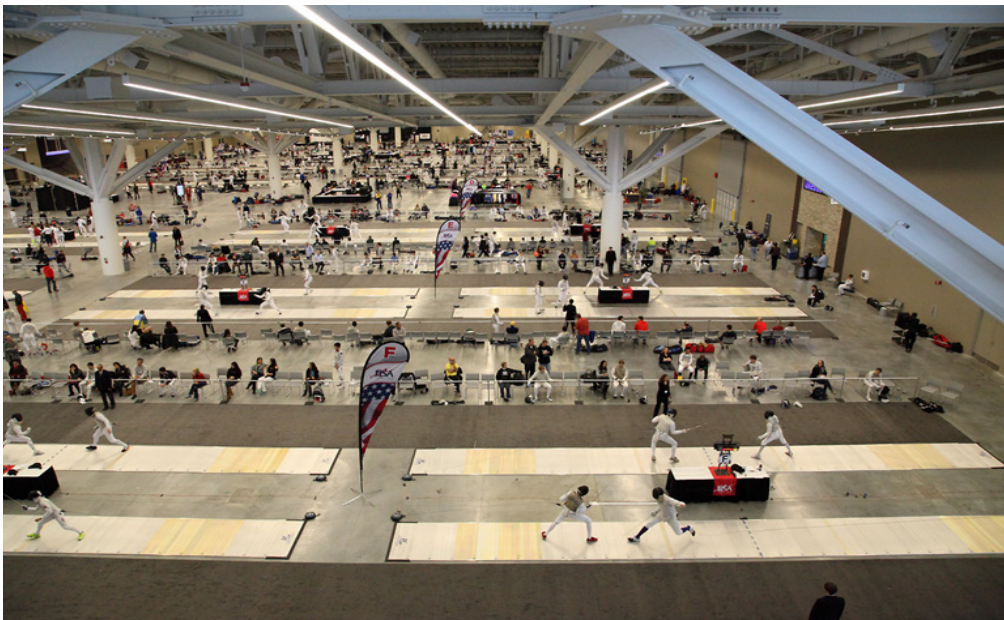
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check pool results and final seeding before Direct Elimination. If you're not sure where the information will be posted, ask fellow competitors, experienced parents, any coach, or the bout committee.

For the time between registering and the start of pool play, your child should be warming up. First, your child should warm up using routines learned at practice that include running, stretching, and footwork exercises. Next, it's important for your child to fence before the start of competition to get a feel for their his or her weapon. Ideally, teammates should gather together on an empty strip and warm up by fencing each other. It's expected and normal for fencers to warm up on empty strips and does not require permission; just ensure that you do not disturb anyone. If it's empty, go for it! If your child is without teammates, encourage him or her to find a warm-up partner by asking someone else. Don't worry about points, save the counting for when it matters.



November 2013: North American Cup at the New Cleveland



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## Second, Pool Play

Your child will be assigned to a pool and will fence each competitor in the pool. Each child will have **3-7 bouts in pool play**, depending on the size of the pool (4-8 fencers). The optimal pool size is 6-7 fencers. Your pool will be assigned a referee. Typically each pool competes on one strip with one referee. However, sometimes, usually to move things along more quickly as the day progresses, the pool may expand to two or even three strips with additional referees. For example, if another pool has already finished and yours has not, that pool's referee may come over to help your pool finish faster.

The referee will call a fencer to the strip or notify the next fencer that he or she is on deck by either name or number, depending on how comfortable the referee is with the name pronunciation (when I competed I was often called by number, and now my children are too—I mean, would you want to try to pronounce our surname?).

When your child arrives at the strip for his or her bout, he or she should come with all equipment to show to the referee. The referee will ensure that women have a chest protector and underarm protector and that men have an underarm protector. The referee will also check foil and epee weapons for holding the appropriate weight, which means that the tip of the weapon can withstand a force of 500g for foil and 750g for epee without registering a touch. For epee, the referee will also perform a "shim test," which checks for an appropriate distance from tip to barrel. Weapons and cords break all the time, so always have a spare near the strip to avoid unnecessary delays and penalties. If a weapon is replaced mid-bout, the checks are repeated.

During pool play, each bout is the first to five touches up to three minutes net time. A good rule of thumb is that the average length of the bout will be twice the net time when the opponents are of similar skill. Of course, you will at times encounter medical breaks or equipment changes that cause a pool to take longer than expected.



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Also note that sometimes the event will have more pools than strips, which means the pools will be “double flight.” This just means that one pool will have to finish before the other can start. Without double flight, pools typically finish in 1-2 hours; with double flights, expect four or more hours. Be prepared to wait! Direct Elimination will not begin until all pools are finished.

When the pool is finished, the referee will ask every fencer to verify the scores and sign near his or her name. Pay close attention and double-check the scores! Referees are human and might make mistakes. If you think you’ve caught a mistake, politely point it out to the referee. Usually the referee will immediately realize the mistake and agree, or call over the other fencer to verify the correct score. If the referee doesn’t remember the mistake and your opponent does not agree to the change, the referee will not change it. After signing the pool sheet, thank the referee and shake hands. A small “thank you” goes a long way!

Pay close attention to the schedule and the competition location; some bouts are quick and the competition will continue as bouts finish. Always be aware of the status of your pool and make sure your child is ready to go when it’s his or her turn to fence. Most importantly, don’t leave the venue when pool play is finished, you’re most likely not done! In most events, 100% of fencers advance to Direct Elimination. Typically it takes 20-40 minutes to start DE after completion of pool play and some pools may take longer to finish than others. After your child’s last bout in pool play is often a good time for:

- A small meal—but make sure to keep it light and healthy! Enough to give your child energy, but not weigh them down for DE (e.g., muffin, energy bar, dry food).
- A t-shirt change—nothing like a fresh, dry t-shirt to revive your child for DE!



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## Third, Direct Elimination (DE)

The fencers will be seeded in one list for all pools based on pool play results. The seeding at this point is based on (1) percentage of wins in pool, and if that is equal then (2) the higher indicator (the difference between the total number of touches scored and total number of touches received in pool play), and if that is equal, then (3) the total number of points scored. If all of these are equal, the assignment will be random. The list will then be used to populate an elimination table of 16, 32, 64, or 128 fencers, going from worst record to best record. The higher seeded fencers might get a "bye" in the first round (i.e., a free trip to the next round) depending on the total number of fencers (e.g., if there are 30 fencers in the event, the top two seeds will get a "bye" to account for the difference from 30 to 32).

Information will be posted in the same place where initial seeding and pool assignments were posted so that you know where your child should be for the first round of DE. As the name implies, DE is single elimination: one loss and you are finished (no check out). If you win, you advance to the next round and have another bout.

Most fencers head home after being eliminated. I realize people have busy schedules and are tired after a long day, but if your situation allows, I encourage you to stay and watch your child's teammates that are still competing. While your child may be down after losing, watching teammates can instill a sense of belonging and help the child value the team's performance as well as individual performance. Maybe your child had a rough day, but that doesn't mean he or she can't cheer as a teammate has a great one, and then still head home with a positive feeling. It can also create a stronger bond between your child and the more experienced fencers in the club.



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For epee and foil, bouts in DE are 15 touches with three periods that are each three minutes long. The fencers have a one-minute break between periods. For sabre, the first period is eight touches and the second period ends when the first fencer gets to 15 points. Note that for Y10 and Veterans, DE is 10 touches over two periods of three minutes each. Also, for Y10, the fencers are given a break after five touches regardless of the amount of time passed.

## Fourth, Awards Ceremony

Lastly, if things go well, it's time for the **awards ceremony!** If your child advances far enough in the DE bracket, he or she will be given an award. At local events, the first four places are awarded. Generally fencers will not compete for 3rd place, so the awards are 1st, 2nd, and two awards for 3rd).. At national events, the first eight are awarded, and even at local events of a reasonable size, it is an accomplishment to place in the top eight.

If the event is USFA-sanctioned, ratings are also awarded at the end of the competition. If it is a national-level event, then respective national points are also earned.





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## What to Bring

First and foremost, you of course want to bring full fencing gear and equipment as discussed later in the book, but I also want to share a short checklist of other things to bring to competitions:

- 3 t-shirts
  - 1 to start
  - 2 to have fresh shirt going into DE
  - 3 to take off wet shirt before departure
- Warm-up jacket
- Water
- Food



As a parent, I must share my personal thoughts on dry t-shirts and warm-up jackets when you enter or leave a facility. Even if it's not cold out, your child will get very warm fencing in full gear.

It's not healthy to go from warm temperatures to cooler temperatures rapidly, and definitely not good for the muscles. At AFM, we require all fencers to leave in a clean t-shirt and to wear their warm-up jackets to and from the facility.

In addition to the basics covered above, you will likely want to keep a kit of additional items that will come in handy:

- Screwdriver (especially important for epee)
- Wrench alley if your child uses a pistol grip
- Tape for foil
- First aid kit
- Band-Aids
- Icepack



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## What to Eat

As an athlete and a coach, I could write an entire book on the proper diet for athletes and particularly for competitions. However, I'd like to just share a few quick notes here and perhaps save my detailed opinions for my next publication.

You're a parent, so you know that it's important what your child puts into his or her body. It's even more important when the child is competing in athletic events. Here are a few quick recommendations:

### Before:

- Avoid new foods for two days prior to competition to avoid/prevent upset stomachs
- Last big meal: at least 6-7 hours before the event (typically dinner the night before)
- Try to avoid meat
- Choose something healthy and balanced: not a good time for pizza night!



### During:

- Goal: to stay light on the feet, yet energized; well-balanced on essential elements; and properly hydrated
- Breakfast: carbs (bagel, toast, cereal); at least 2-3 hours prior to event start
- No meat during the tournament
- Periodically have small snacks throughout the day: carbs (cereal snack, bagel, pretzels, toast)
- Drink frequently (i.e., after every bout), but no more than ½ cup of water at a time to avoid heaviness in the stomach



### After:

- Drink a lot of water, eat a lot of carbs and vitamins/minerals, and celebrate!





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It is especially important to prepare a food sack for your young fencer. Based on my parental experience, my children are extremely picky eaters. When choosing their snacks and breakfasts, I have to find a balance between what they will eat and what is good for them. I'd rather they eat something then refuse to eat at all, even if I have to provide a less healthy choice.





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## Equipment

Like most sports, fencing has specialized equipment that is required to ensure safety and fair play. Some equipment requirements are more specific at competitions vs. in non-competitive arenas. The requirements at a specific club when learning and practicing will depend on the rules at that particular club. However, certain elements of fencing equipment should be used at all clubs and in all venues for the protection of the fencer.

### Do Clubs Provide Equipment?

Yes. Fencing clubs typically provide basic equipment for beginners for an initial period of time. I understand that you may want your child to try fencing without making a large investment in the sport. We all know that children can be hard to predict and often change their minds.

However, after a certain point, it's time to invest in your own equipment. Most clubs will only provide equipment initially and after a certain beginner period, will expect that you purchase your own equipment. For example, at AFM, we recommend that your child work through our first six introductory lessons to determine if fencing and AFM are a good fit for the child. If at that point your child is enthralled with fencing and ready to continue in the sport, it's typically time to go shopping.





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You must own a full set of equipment to compete. However, even if not competing, in most (if not all) clubs fencers are expected to own their own equipment, just like athletes in any other sport. It's simply impractical and too expensive for the club to continue providing equipment beyond the beginner phase. Also, let's discuss some benefits to you in having your own equipment:

## Why buy your own?

(I)	More commitment to the sport
(II)	Pride in ownership
(III)	More hygienic
(IV)	Faster to gear to during training

From my personal experience, I know that children often can't sleep the night before their equipment orders are come in. They are so excited to have their own equipment that they often try it on at home and ask their parents to take pictures. Even adults are prone to excitement when it comes to ordering new equipment.

When the time is right, it's important to make this investment in your child. Let's move on to what you need, how much it will cost, and where you can get it.



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## What Do You Need?

**Here is a list of fencing equipment:**

- Chest protector (or chest guard): required for female, but males may choose not to wear (strongly recommended for younger children regardless of gender)
- Underarm protector
- Jacket
- Lamé (for foil/sabre only): electrical vest
- Mask (weapon-specific)
- Gloves (foil/epee gloves are different from sabre gloves)
- Bag
- Foil, epee, or sabre (2 required at competitions)
- Body cord (or body wire) (2 required at competitions)
- Mask cord (for foil/sabre only) (2 required at competitions)
- Knickers (required for competitions, depends on specific club whether required during training)
- Long socks (required for competitions, depends on specific club whether required during training)
- Fencing shoes (recommended, but not required; however, many clubs require clean, non-street shoes as a protective measure for the fencing floors and you are expected to respect these rules)
- You can also consider buying a cup for a boy if you are concerned with that area. However, from my experience, the vast majority of guys on all levels fence without one.





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Note that for all electrical equipment, fencers are required to bring two pieces of equipment for competition; this is because electrical equipment can malfunction and a backup is necessary. Advanced fencers generally have three or more weapons and body/mask cords.

While knickers and socks are required for competition, some clubs opt not to require them for training. However, most clubs will require that legs be covered (e.g., sweatpants). Knickers do provide the best protection against bruising.

For example, AFM does not require knickers and socks for training, but does require that legs be covered.

## How Much Will it Cost?

Fencing equipment for your child can be anywhere from a \$500–\$800 investment. I recommend that parents not go overboard on buying the best brands or FIE-level equipment for every piece. We all know that children grow quickly and are also prone to losing things. Make a reasonable investment in a decent brand to limit your cost.

### Coming Soon: A book on equipment costs...

We plan to write a book specifically on the topic of equipment costs: the considerations for parents when buying equipment based on our experience as both parents and fencing club owners. Check out our website and blog periodically to know when the book is released and also subscribe to our newsletter and blog to receive notifications and updates.



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## Where Can I Buy It?

You may have noticed that you won't find fencing equipment at your nearest sporting goods store. However, you do have three options for purchasing equipment: physical stores (when available), online, or through your club. The following table breaks down what you need to know in order to decide where to buy:

Location	Pros	Cons
Store	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• No waiting! Take equipment home with you if it's in stock</li><li>• Touch and feel equipment, try on for fit, know what you're getting</li><li>• Consult with sales associate</li><li>• Fencing stores are usually small, so it is an ideal place to pick up fencing-related news and to start developing long-term relationships with the store staff and fellow shoppers if this is your preferable shopping method</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Nearest store may not be convenient</li><li>• Prices may be higher than online due to the cost of running the store</li><li>• Selection limited to only what the store carries</li></ul>
Online	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Largest variety</li><li>• Easier to find a sale</li><li>• Convenience of online ordering</li><li>• Several reputable online stores in US</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Can be confusing for a new fencer</li><li>• Hard to make selections of brand and configuration without guidance</li><li>• Takes a few days to receive order</li></ul>
Through your Club	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Get exactly what you need</li><li>• Convenience of allowing club to handle order</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Wait time from order to receipt if your club does not carry inventory</li><li>• Limited supplier selections because most clubs work with a specific set of brands</li></ul>



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## Physical stores local to the San Francisco Bay Area:

- Victory Fencing, Millbrae ([www.victoryfencinggear.com](http://www.victoryfencinggear.com))
- Alliance Fencing Equipment, San Francisco ([www.alliancefencingequipment.com](http://www.alliancefencingequipment.com))

## Online options:

- Absolute Fencing Gear ([www.absolutefencinggear.com](http://www.absolutefencinggear.com))
- The Fencing Post ([www.thefencingpost.com](http://www.thefencingpost.com))
- Alliance Fencing Equipment ([www.alliancefencingequipment.com](http://www.alliancefencingequipment.com))
- Fencing.net ([www.fencing.net](http://www.fencing.net))

Note that our online recommendations are based on personal experience in our geographic area; every store we mentioned we have used both personally and for AFM. We consider them all to be trusted resources. Many other online stores exist and may have a great reputation, we just haven't personally dealt with them. When ordering online, you may want to consider shipping costs and VAT taxes based on where the company is located. Absolute Fencing Gear is located in NJ; The Fencing Post and Alliance Fencing Equipment are located in California; and Fencing.net is located in Atlanta, GA. Depending on your location, you may want to ask your club for online ordering recommendations to limit shipping costs as they likely have expertise in your geographic area.





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## Parting Words

We hope this book has been informative and helpful! As parents of athletes, we know how confusing it can be to learn a new sport and commit yourself to being supportive of your children as they work through the challenges and triumphs of athletic competition. However, as I stated in this book, the benefits to your child of starting a competitive sport are countless and in our opinion, something that every child should have the opportunity to pursue.

We commend you for taking the time to read this book in support of your child. We hope that your child loves fencing as much as we do and that this book has helped prepare you for the road ahead!

We wish the best to your child and hope that he or she finds a lifetime passion in the distinctive and esteemed sport of fencing: here's to many achievements and much joy. See you on the strip!





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## About AFM

Our fencing program is designed from years of experience, successes and failures, and advanced scientific studies and experiments. It is built upon our track record of taking young children and raising them to become national champions in several categories.

At AFM, while we love the art of fencing, we also know that sports are sold by results. We have Olympic-level coaches and have fostered an environment of both learning and competition. We are very proud of our facility and plan to continue growing our family of fencers as well as helping to spread awareness of the sport of fencing in the San Francisco Bay Area and beyond.

To learn more about AFM, **visit** <http://AcademyOfFencingMasters.com>

We'd love for you to take a look at our blog:



<http://AcademyOfFencingMasters.com/blog/>

or check us out on Facebook at



<https://www.facebook.com/AcademyOfFencingMasters>

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## References

**USFA website:** [www.usfencing.org](http://www.usfencing.org)

- The Basics of Competition: [http://assets.ngin.com/attachments/document/0033/8434/Basics\\_of\\_Competition.pdf](http://assets.ngin.com/attachments/document/0033/8434/Basics_of_Competition.pdf)
- USFA Safe Sport Policy: <http://www.usfencing.org/page/show/892379-safe-sport>
- Classification Chart: <http://www.usfencing.org/page/show/698401-classification-chart>
- USFA Athlete Handbook: <http://www.usfencing.org/page/show/695206-athlete-handbook> (the most comprehensive manual for U.S. fencers, parents, coaches, referees, and club officials)

**The Bay Cup website:** [www.thebaycup.net](http://www.thebaycup.net) (newsletter sign-up available)

**Fencing.net:** blog and forum are great resources, and also a website for fencing equipment

**FIE English site:** [www.fie.ch](http://www.fie.ch) (*world fencing news*)

**askFRED.net:** database of all local and regional tournaments (all local, RYCs SYCs, and ROCs), clinics, and camps; also results from posted tournaments.

### Other good fencing blogs:

- The Fencing Coach: <http://thefencingcoach.com>
- The Fencing Athlete: <http://thefencingathlete.com> (more advanced fencing blog from A-rated top U.S. fencer)
- Race Imboden's blog: <http://fencingxwww.havefoilwilltravel.com> (a fun mix of fashion, travel, and some fencing and sport musings)