



IRISH FENCING REFEREE EDUCATION

Level 1 Preliminary Reading

Dear Referee,

Congratulations for taking the first steps to becoming an Irish Fencing Referee. Refereeing allows you to be involved to the highest level of our sport. We hope to see Irish Referees becoming involved in international competitions up to World Championships and Olympic Games. Whether you have experience refereeing at your club, local competitions, or you have little to no experience, this preliminary reading will provide you with an initiation to the basic safety and technical responsibilities you have as a referee.

We will break down the reading and the short exam that will follow into nine sections:

1. Checks before the bout
2. The field of play
3. Timing the bout
4. Calling Halt!
5. Hand Signals
6. Paperwork
7. Penalties
8. Ending the bout
9. Sample Test

All the answers will be found in the preliminary reading. However, reading and familiarising yourself with the rulebook (especially the technical and material sections) will give you the best chance of success.

It is also worth noting this is not a guide to refereeing – especially regarding right-of-way in foil or sabre. You cannot learn this from a book. This is best learnt by primarily by practice, and also by being mentored by experienced referees.

You will also have the opportunity to attend a seminar run by a senior Irish Fencing referee. Tutors have significant domestic and often international experience. Take advantage of the time you have with them and use the opportunity to ask as many questions as you can.

Following the seminar there will be a practical assessment. This will allow you to apply the theory you have learned from both the preliminary reading and the work carried out in the seminar.

We wish you every success for your upcoming course.

Irish Fencing Referee Sub-Committee

1. Checks before the bout

Clothing checks

- All clothing, including the glove, must be in good condition without holes or tears.
- Minimum safety standards are determined by the type of competition -
 - Protection levels are either Level 1 (350N) or Level 2 (800N clothes, 1600N masks) – you should check the requirements at the beginning of any competition.
 - Pay particular attention to the under-plastron by checking the stamp on the front and that it is worn correctly.

Wearing the kit

- Jacket and breeches must overlap by at least 10cm when on guard and the shoulder braces should be worn correctly.
- All female fencers must wear a chest protector.
- At foil, all chest protectors must be underneath the under-plastron.
- At foil and sabre, the lamé jacket must cover the target area. In simple terms, it should cover at least until the top of the hips in sabre and foil and the entire shoulder in foil. The wire should be clipped on the sword arm side of the lame to prevent tampering.
 - Masks must be free of dents and soft spots, all seams must be intact, and a back strap fitted. Body wires and mask clips must be clipped on correctly and have no large loops of wire hanging loose.
 - Visor masks are a special case. : visors allowed only at sabre and must be less than 2 years old, indicated by date engraving.

Blade and Point Checks

- **Epée**
 - Blade must be bent no more than than 1cm, in the vertical plane (either up or down).
 - Check that the barrel is fixed and doesn't unscrew.
 - Check that the tip has both grub screws. Screwless or plastic tips are currently not allowed.
 - Make sure the 1.5mm gauge fits between the tip and the barrel.
 - Insert a 0.5mm gauge between the tip and the barrel and then depress the tip to test the travel (it should not register a hit).
 - Point spring must push up a 750g weight.
 - A security device for the body wire must be inside the guard and at the spool end. You can use tape if this is missing.
- **Foil**
 - Blade must be bent no more than than 1cm, in the vertical plane (up or down).

- The top 15cm of the blade from the bottom of the tip must be insulated (usually with tape).
- Point spring must push up a 500g weight.
- **Sabre**
- Blade must be bent less than 4cm, in the horizontal plane (left or right).

2. The field of play

Size of the piste

- A piste is 14m long and between 1.5m to 2m wide.
- The piste must have a run-off at each end of 1.5 to 2m.
- If any part of a fencer's foot is on a line then the foot is on the piste.
- The entire foot must completely leave the piste.
- It helps to consider the piste to be a volume:
- The boundaries extend vertically upwards.
- A fencer can be on the piste even if a foot is raised.

Crossing the boundaries

- **When a fencer crosses a boundary with one or both feet you must call 'Halt!'**
- Any hit made by an action that started after a fencer has left the piste is annulled.
- Any hit made by a single action that started before a fencer has left the piste with one foot is valid.
- Any hit that lands after a fencer has left the piste with both feet, even where the action started before the fencer left the piste, is annulled.
- An immediate action made by the fencer who has not left the piste (even if it is made after their opponent has left the piste) is valid.
- If a fencer leaves the piste, and no hits are scored, the fencer is penalised by their opponent gaining a metre of ground from where they were when the fencer left the piste.
- The fencer penalised must then retire to the correct on-guard distance.
- Correct on-guard distance is when, if both arms are extended, there is no overlap of the weapons.
- As a result this means the actual distance penalised is much more than one metre (it is one metre - plus the on-guard distance).
- This may result in a fencer being pushed over the back line.
- If a fencer crosses the rear limit of the piste with both feet, either from the imposition of the above penalty or in the course of a fencing phrase, a hit is scored against them.
- Despite a hit being scored against them, it is not a cardable offence.

- It is the award of a penalty hit for crossing the rear limit of the piste.
- If a fencer leaves the piste through no fault of their own, e.g. being pushed due to corps-à-corps, then there is no penalty.

Your tutor will demonstrate these situations.

3. Timing the fight

Keeping time may seem easy...

- ...but it is absolutely vital to get it right every single time.
- Even if you have time-keepers, YOU are ultimately responsible.
- Especially using a box without a remote control, this can require you to make very close calls as time expires, as many fights are won or lost in the closing seconds or as a result of time expiring.
- If the clock fails, you have to estimate how much time is left and tell the fencers.

The basic rules

- A hit may not be scored after time has expired, even if the action started before.
- If the scores are tied at the end of normal time the fencers fence for a deciding hit, with a maximum time limit of one minute.
- Before extra time starts the referee draws lots (coin toss / box random lights) to decide who will win if no hit is scored in the extra minute.
- **A fencer may not stop the bout to ask how much time is left, but they can ask when the bout is interrupted for some other reason.**

4. Calling "Halt!"

- The Referee calls "Halt!" at:
 - The end of time.
 - If a fencer leaves the piste (as covered in the previous section).
 - If there are any safety issues, hits or penalties that need awarding.
 - One common reason for calling halt is corps-à-corps.
 - Corps-à-corps is any body contact between the two fencers.
 - **If a fencer is subject to corps-à-corps then the referee calls halt in all three weapons, and cards the fencer(s) at fault in foil and sabre.**
- The fencer then holds their ground, the offending fencer must give distance.
- However, this situation cannot force a fencer beyond their back line.
- *Only a distance penalty for leaving the piste can result in a penalty hit.*

6. Paperwork

- It may seem obvious, but it is absolutely crucial that you record the outcome of a bout correctly on the score sheet.
- You must follow the bout sequence, record the final score and any penalties awarded.

Bout sequence

- A pool sheet will have the order of bouts show on it in two or three columns of figures such as **1v2, 4v5, 2v3**. These are read vertically so that you complete the first column before starting the second. An example is on the next page.
- The bout scores are written in the part of a pool sheet in the grid with the fencers' names, two series of numbers, and a set of blank squares.
- For example, the pool sheet on the next page shows the following results:
 - Murphy beat O'Brien 5 hits to 3.
 - Twomey beat Chambers 4 hits to 3 at the expiration of time.
 - O'Brien beat Flynn 2 hits each at time on priority.
 - In the boat between Twomey and Chambers, Chambers received a group 1 yellow card followed by a group 1 red card.

Recording penalties:

- On each score sheet there should be a blank area below the results grid and the order of bouts. It is in this area that you record the details of every penalty that you award.
- For each penalty you must record the bout in which it occurred, the name of the fencer penalised and the group of the offence (the colour of the card awarded).
- You do not need to record the precise offence, although you can if you wish.
 - It is important that you do note penalties on the score sheet.
- **If you don't write it down - it never happened.**
 - For example, if (in foil) you penalise a fencer for covering and award a yellow card, but fail to write this on the score sheet, and later in the bout the fencer again covers and you award a red card; the fencer could appeal against the imposition of a red card because this was his first Group 1 offence. By failing to write the first penalty down on the sheet you will have denied the fencer's opponent a hit.
 - To save time, this can be recorded in a form of shorthand (see next page).

Black card protocol

- If you award a black card you must make a more detailed note on the sheet. Write down the full name of the person penalised and a brief description of what happened.
- When you get a break in the fencing you must prepare a full report of the incident, together with any ensuing aftermath, for the competition organisers to forward to Irish Fencing's Disciplinary Committee.

8. Ending the bout

- The fencers must:
 - Return to the on guard lines.
 - Salute their opponent, the referee and the audience.
- Referee must indicate the winner of the fight (see hand signals).
- Fencers then shake hands with each other.

The match is not complete until this is all done.

9. Sample Test

Question 1

Which card would you award if the following occur? (take each in isolation)

- i) A fencer causes corps-a-corps to avoid being hit (Yellow / Red / Black)
- ii) A fencer's bodywire is not working at the start of a fight (Yellow / Red / Black)
- iii) A fencer deliberately strikes his opponent with his guard (Yellow / Red / Black)

Question 2

How long is the run-off at the end of the piste required to be? (*Hint: it is the same as the required width*)

- a) 1 metre
- b) Between 1.5 and 2 metres
- c) 2 metres

Question 3

What phrases are used with the following hand signals:

i)



ii)



Question 4

Fencer Murphy arrives to the piste for his first match at the Irish Open with a hole in his glove. After replacing it, when doing the initial test it is found that his weapon is not working. Furthermore, on checking his underplastron it is found to be 350N. Before the match begins you notice his socks are not pulled up.

i) What cards do you give him?

ii) What is the score when the match begins?

