



Future Trailblazers

A Fencing Ireland

Youth Development Initiative

Future Trailblazers

Executive Summary

Fencing Ireland understands that it is difficult for fencers and parents who are relatively new to the sport to be able to access dependable and sound advice about the best pathway to achieve success.

Fencing Ireland wants young fencers to maximise their potential, have positive experiences and stay in the sport, so that they will continue to develop to become successful senior fencers. It is expected that the best of them will seek international representation and win medals at World Cup events.

The objective of Fencing Ireland is to:

- provide young people with the best possible sporting experience
- encourage life long and active participation in fencing
- foster supportive environments for enjoyable participation in a variety of physical activities, through the development of skills and good sporting behaviour
- encourage the allocation of appropriate and safe resources and facilities
- ensure equal opportunities for all young people to participate in fencing
- actively cater for talented young fencers
- Demonstrate a consistent and coordinated approach to junior fencing in Ireland

Participation in Fencing is characterised by:

- a safe, healthy and challenging sporting environment
- a level of competition commensurate with age, maturity and ability
- a broad development program preceding specialisation in any particular skill
- the recognition of participation, development and improvement
- the influence of role models who are good ambassadors for fencing and who practise appropriate behaviour in the view of junior fencers
- an emphasis on enjoyment of the sport

Future Trailblazers is the name of Fencing Ireland's junior, cadet and minor development group, created in 2016 as part of the Fencing Ireland's Youth Programme.

Future Trailblazers has been established to both develop the sport but also to create a future pipeline of fencers. It seeks to develop the skills and talents of young Irish fencers, with the aim of achieving international representation and success.

The objective of the Future Trailblazers is to:

- Complement club training and further enhance fencers that show commitment and talent with the long term goal of representing Ireland in competitions appropriate to their age and skillset
- Provide training in fencing skills, blade management, fitness, nutrition and competition psychology

To represent one's country should be seen as a privilege, rather than an automatic right. Earning that privilege requires considerable hard work and commitment on the part of the athlete as well as from those supporting the athlete. Fencers representing Ireland will be proposed to the Fencing Ireland selectors by the Fencing Ireland Junior Development committee only.

Future Trailblazer Selection

Entry to Future Trailblazers is by invitation only following an assessment based on nomination by the prospective candidate's coach; any fencer between the ages of 8 and 20 can be selected based on prerequisite training outcomes and competition results within the 32 counties. Future Trailblazers will be selected on an annual basis and membership reviewed mid-season.

Assessments will take place twice yearly, in September and January. No canvassing on behalf of any applicant is permitted.

Selection criteria include:-

- Completion of Fencing Certifications
- Competition results within the 32 counties
- Written and signed nomination by club coach with reasoning behind nomination and open to query by the Fencing Ireland selection committee
- Candidates can only be nominated twice for assessment in the fencing year (Sept and Jan)
- Fencing assessment is by the coach selection team (not including in the fencer's own club coach)
- Fencers must have an Irish Fencing Licence

Future Trailblazer Selectors/Coaches

Future Trailblazers is an all-Ireland initiative to identify and develop Irish Fencing. The following are the coaches/selectors for 2016:

- Olga Velma Pembroke Club
- Patrick Dight Munster Blades
- Katie Arup FLO
- Radu Andrei Brian Boru Fencing Club

Head Coach will rotate on an annual basis

The decision of the selectors is final and will be based on a fencer's skill, dedication and age, meeting the aforementioned selection criteria and the outcome of assessment by the selection committee.

Future Trailblazer Training

Most clubs are not fortunate enough to have the strength in depth that a national training session can provide. By bringing together many of the best young fencers in the country, the Future Trailblazers offers a unique opportunity to train with your peer group.

Training sessions cover all aspects of fencing, including warm-up, fitness, footwork, and blade work. Future Trailblazers sessions are not suitable for beginners, and the fencers who will benefit most are:

- those who have been fencing for a year or more
- have competed successfully in a number of competitions and finished high in the final rankings of those competitions
- aspire to compete at national and international standard

Training sessions may also include talks on sports nutrition, equipment maintenance and more.

It is expected that Training Sessions will take place approximately every 8 weeks during the fencing season. All training sessions will be age and skill appropriate.

General Remarks about a Fencer's Development Programme

Fencing Ireland and Future Trailblazers encourage a staged development programme, in line with a fencer’s skill set and age. It is important that a fencer develops along a continuous path, beginning at the easier end of that continuum, gradually developing skill and experiencing a measure of success along the way until reaching the élite level.

As all athletes are individuals, it is recognised that skill development and maturity can vary from individual to individual; the stages below are the general guideline for development.

A high level of fitness is required in order to achieve success in fencing. Fencers should aim to build and maintain a high level of aerobic and anaerobic fitness at all developmental stages. In addition to this, individual fencing lessons, footwork drills, bouts and competitions will build specific ‘fencing fitness’.

Fencers should carefully map out their weekly, monthly and annual training and competition program in consultation with their coach.

Frequency of Training

There are three suggested stages of development that have been identified for the different age groups.

Fencing Ireland recommends the following number of sessions and hours of training for the different stages of development for minor, cadet and junior fencers who aspire to compete successfully up to international level. Note: this is a guide and may be changed due to the talent shown by any single individual fencer.

Future Trailblazers is designed to complement club training, not to replace it. It is therefore expected that any fencer wishing to be considered for the Future Trailblazer programme, already follows the training guidelines outlined below.

Minors Under 12s – Stage 1

Stage 1 - 6 to 7 hours/week

- General fitness (including school sport, other sporting activities, cross training)
Sessions per week: 2 x 30 minutes
- Fencing
Sessions per week: 2 x 1 hour = 2 hours
This includes individual lesson(s), bouts – fencing for a total of 60 mins each session including warm up, simulated competition
- Footwork 1 x 15 minute session.

Example of Weekly Training Schedule

Stage 1

Mon	Tues	Wed	Thurs	Fri	Sat	Sun
						Fencing (60 mins), individual lesson
School sport		School sport				
Footwork (15 min)			Fencing (60 mins)			

Minors Under 14s – Stage 2

Stage 2 - 8 to 10 hours/week

- General fitness (including school sport, other sporting activities, cross training)
Sessions per week: 2 x 30minutes
- Strength & conditioning 1x 30 minutes (specific Fitness)
- Fencing
Sessions per week: 3 x 1 hour = 3 hours
This includes individual lesson(s), bouts – fencing for a total of 60 mins each session warm up, simulated competition
- Footwork 2 x 15 minute sessions.

Example of Weekly Training Schedule
Stage 2

Mon	Tues	Wed	Thurs	Fri	Sat	Sun
				Footwork (15 min)		Fencing (60 mins)
School sport		Sport		School sport		
	individual lesson		individual lesson			Specific fitness
Footwork (15 min)	Fencing (60 mins)		Fencing (60 mins)			

Cadets Under 17 and Juniors Under 20 – Stage 3

Stage 3 - 10 to 12 hours /week

- General fitness (including school sport, other sporting activities, cross training)
 Sessions per week: 2x 30 minutes
- Strength & conditioning 2 x 30 minutes
- Fencing
 Sessions per week: 4 x 1 hour = 4 hours
 This includes individual lesson(s), bouts – fencing for a total of 60 mins each session warm up, simulated competition
- Footwork 4 x 20 minute sessions.

Example of Weekly Training Schedule
Stage 3

Mon	Tues	Wed	Thurs	Fri	Sat	Sun
		Footwork (20 min)		Footwork (20 min)		Fencing (60 mins)
Specific fitness						individual lesson
	individual lesson		individual lesson	Specific fitness		Footwork (20 min)
	Fencing (60 mins)	Fencing (60 mins)	Fencing (60 mins)			

Competition

Fencing Ireland junior participants will be taught that “winning” and “losing” are merely results of all sporting competitions. There should not be an over - emphasis on winning. The emphasis should be on the quality of the experience and its appropriateness to the age and ability of the participant.

All fencing junior participants should be encouraged to achieve, do their best and develop their full sporting potential.

Competition is one element of this developmental process. The level of competition must be appropriate to the age and development of fencers. A progression of competitive experiences in line with the stages has been identified in the Future Trailblazers model. The training programme should be undertaken alongside the recommended competition programme for each stage outlined below. Whilst the stage a fencer is at is predominantly based on performance, indicative ages have been included.

It is suggested that a fencer should remain in the same level of competition for two to three years as they move through the stages. All participation in competitions must be in line with the fencer’s skill set and age. Shorter periods at each level may also be insufficient to learn the skills and enjoy that level of the sport. However, as a general guideline, it may be appropriate for a fencer to compete in an older age-group if they consistently have achieved a result in the top 50% or better, in competitions with 10 or more fencers of their own age-group.

It is expected that all fencers, regardless of stage will participate in at least 5 national competitions within the 32 counties.

A 'successful result' in a competition is defined as the fencer obtaining a ranking in the top 50% of the field, where there are more than 10 fencers. This definition is internationally recognised by other Fencing governing bodies.

Representing Ireland

Fencers will be selected by the Future Trailblazers selection committee/Fencing Ireland Junior Development Committee to represent Ireland at international competitions. This will be based on the stage of a fencer within the development programme and their skill set.

Selection to EFC and FIE competitions will be countersigned by the Fencing Ireland Selectors Committee.

To represent one's country should be seen as a privilege, rather than an automatic right.

The Future Trailblazers Selection Committee/ Fencing Ireland Junior Development Committee will ensure that participation opportunities are coordinated and appropriate for the age and development of the young participant. A coach will accompany only the competitors selected by Future Trailblazers Selection Committee/ Fencing Ireland Junior Development Committee and will only have responsibility for the fencers while they are on piste.

Any parent intending on bringing their child to a competition overseas must first consult the coaches, in order to ensure that the competition is appropriate to the skill set and age of the fencer.

Any fencer who chooses to attend an overseas competition without selection may not represent Ireland at the event, but may do so under their club name.

It is recognised that there is a considerable financial commitment required of parents of young fencers who wish to successfully gain international representation.

Fencing Ireland will look to create initiatives to support fencers selected from the Future Trailblazers development programme. Candidates may only receive support from one fencing body within the 32 counties.

NB. It will generally not be possible to participate in all of the competitions listed for each stage in the same year. Fencers should plan their competition program in consultation with their coach and the Future Trailblazers selection committee, choosing the competitions best suited to their level of development and their short and medium term goals.

Stage 1

Age category: fencer under 12 years of age.

Recommended duration of this stage: 1 to 3 years

Focus on State and national level age-group competitions, including:

- All appropriate age-group and school competitions within the 32 counties (U10, U12, U14, U17, U20).

Stage 2

Age category: fencer under 14 years of age in the first year of the program.

Recommended duration of this stage: 1 to 3 years

Focus on national competitions, including:

- All appropriate age-group and school competitions within the 32 counties (U14, U17, U20).
- Participate in an Fencing Ireland approved 1-2 week international training/competition tour
- Focus on 'introduction' to international fencing
- 1-2 international competitions (no Junior World Cups) – if selected

Stage 3

Age category: fencer turning at least 15 years of age in the first year of the program.

Recommended duration of this stage: 1 to 5 years

Focus on national & international competitions, including:

- Majority national competitions, including Nationals (senior & age-group)
- All appropriate age-group and school competitions within the 32 counties (U17, U20).
- All Fencing Ireland Senior National Competitions
- Appropriate age-group Cadet/Junior World Championships - if selected
- Participate in at least one Fencing Ireland approved 1-2 week international training/competition tour
- 3-4 international competitions – if selected

The achievement of success on the world stage requires a program of staged competitive success in order to breach this gap. The most advanced and successful junior/cadet fencers may qualify and/or be selected to represent Ireland in senior international events. These fencers would be the exceptions, rather than the rule.

Competition Category	Events
Satellites (Stage 3)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• EFC Cadet Circuit• Euro Cadet Championships• World Cadet Championships• Junior World Cups• Satellites
Category 3 (Stage 2 & 3)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• National Circuit Events – min 2• EFC U14 Circuit• Bratislava• Poznan Fencing Festival• CEP Marathon fleuret Paris
Category 2 (Stage 2)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Marburg• Malmo• Selected UK circuit
Category 1 (Stage 1 & 2)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Lord Killanin Cup• Excalibur Cup• Irish Youth Championships• NI Junior Series