

# Canadian Fencing Federation



## Refereeing Committee

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## INTRODUCTION

It is a well accepted fact that, within sport, competitive performance is closely linked to officiating. To perform well competitors must be confident that the officiating is of a high standard. This is particularly true in fencing: referees stand right up close to the action; they must make immediate judgements on the actions with which they are confronted, and this using a highly technical set of (ever changing) rules. It is for this reason that the development of officials must be seen as stringent; much as the development of an athlete is so.

The Refereeing Committee, of the Canadian Fencing Federation, has prepared this handbook to explain some of its policies and practices. We will attempt to shed some light on: how one progresses through the different levels of refereeing; help give direction in the development of a referee; and provide a technical discussion of some refereeing questions. We will try to maintain the currency of this document, so suggestions will be welcome and encouraged. If you have any recommendations for the inclusion of any other relevant material please feel free to contact them to us through the office of the Technical Director.

We hope that this handbook will assist in having the rules uniformly applied. The Committee expects all referees, and coaches (working through the CFF instructional program) to follow these guidelines.

## HOW TO BECOME A FENCING REFEREE

The refereeing committee would like to encourage participants to become qualified referees. Following are some guidelines in this regard:

- Becoming a good referee depends on establishing confidence. This confidence must be **in** one's self and **from** others: that the judgements you make are sound. This takes time, effort, and exposure. You must take advantage of opportunities to referee at higher level competitions.
- As a referee you must not only know the rules, you must apply them. These must be applied in all situations (irregardless of level of competition).
- Rules must be applied in a positive manner. There is no room for negative, or "punitive", applications.
- Referees must train their skills. Just as competitors train to hone their skills, so must a referee. A top referee must officiate often.
- Referees must **study** the rules, reading them is insufficient. One needs to apply the rules, but to have command of them gives confidence and helps convince others of your competence.
- You should attend approved referees' seminars. These will help in your development (throughout your career).
- Our sport is one which is in a constant state of change. A good referee must stay current. You may have refereed a World Cup Final a few years back, but that is no guarantee of your present competence.

- Whenever possible referee at as many competitions as possible. Arrive early; the early rounds are the time at which the Directoire is in the greatest need of referees. By arriving early, you will be able to “grow” along with the competition.
- Develop routines to help remember what you should do: ex. When inspecting fencers’ equipment at the start of a round, always do it in the same order. This routine will make it far less likely that you will miss something.
- Volunteer to keep score, keep time, check score sheets, help a referee with a larger pool, etc.
- Watch fencing: this will allow you to “referee” without any pressure and give you a sounding board (through comparison) for your judgements.
- Talk to more experienced referees, compare judgements with them. If you don’t agree, ask questions and discuss things. This will help in your development.
- Offer to referee whenever you see two people fencing. Coaches will appreciate this as an understanding of refereeing is crucial to the tactical development of athletes.

We learn by doing and by example....what better place to do this than at a competition.

### **REFEREE CODE OF ETHICS<sup>1</sup>**

From the *Code Duello* - which held that only the just cause would triumph – to the codification of rules covering the emergence of competitive fencing in the nineteenth century, it is clear that two concepts have been linked with the sport; that of honour and right.

Combined, they constitute Fencing’s essential spirit, a sense that justice will be done for the combatants.

This code of ethics seeks to establish a guide to the exercise of honour and right for fencing referees. It considers four areas: Integrity, Competence, Responsibility, and Dignity.

#### **Integrity**

- The Rules of Fencing assign sweeping powers to the referee and important ones to ancillary officials. It would be impossible to fulfill the letter of these laws in the absence of the sense of incorruptibility that the idea of integrity implies.
- Rule t.34 states: “By accepting a position as referee or judge, the person so designated pledges his honour to respect the rules and to cause them to be respected, and to carry out his duties with the strictest impartiality and absolute concentration.”
- For this reason alone referees must maintain and promote complete neutrality.
- Referees should accept assignments only when no conflict of interest exists.
- Even in those instances that may suggest a conflict of interest, the Referee must make it known immediately to the assignors, e.g. pupil or former pupil, same club, et cetera.

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<sup>1</sup> Copied and adapted from USFA Referee’s Code of Ethics

- Referees are representative of the body conducting the competition and, therefore, must not consider themselves associated with any country, club, or individual during the competition.
- Referees are present at the competition solely to officiate; it is inappropriate to coach or assist athletes during the competition.
- Referees are to respect other Referees to the utmost. It is improper to publicly indicate disapproval of the actions of other referees.

### **Competence**

- Referees must know the rules.
- Referees must apply the rules.
- Referees must stay current on interpretations of the rules.
- Referees must attend scheduled seminars on the rules.
- Referees must offer their judgements to the refereeing committee concerning rules that do not accomplish their intended goal.

### **Responsibility**

- Referees must be available for assignments from the time they are required to report until released by the assignors.
- Referees must do nothing that would interfere with their mental and physical abilities to perform.
- Referees must check with the assignors for reporting times and be present a minimum of one-half hour prior to the starting time of the round.
- Referees must be within earshot of all announcements affecting referees unless properly excused from the competition area.
- The Fencing Rules and carry them out scrupulously.
- Referees must insure that score sheets are accurate, are signed by the athletes, and that they are turned in to the Directoire immediately upon completion of a bout, round, or match.

### **Dignity**

- Referees must be properly attired at all times.
- Referees should refrain from joining in horseplay or other exhibitionism that sometimes arises during breaks.
- Referees should exercise authority but avoid inciting contestants to misbehave.
- Referees should strive to conduct themselves in such a way that they earn a high regard from others. Referees are to be completely familiar with the duties assigned by article t.35 of regard from others.
- Referees should volunteer for withdrawal if unable to continue to perform.

This Code is intended to provide the general principles by which Referees will guide themselves and by which they will be measured by the Refereeing Committee.

## REFEREEING LEVELS

The CFF recognizes two national (non international) refereeing levels: Provincial and National. This does not limit the Provincial branches from recognizing others; to get information on these please contact the appropriate provincial branch.

### Provincial Level:

This is the entry level. The lowest level recognized to referee at Selection Circuit events. To attain this level, a candidate must score 80% on the written exam as well as in a practical evaluation. Evaluations for the “P” level can be done at anytime, and is the responsibility of the provincial branch. If a branch wishes it, the CFF can offer a course with a certified course conductor.

**You must be an active Provincial Level Referee for at least one year to challenge the National Level pre-exam.**

### National Level:

This is the level at which the referee can judge the finals at Selection Circuit events. To attain this level, a candidate must score 90% on the written exam as well as in the practical evaluation. Evaluations for the “N” level will be held at the Nationals only. After successfully passing the exam a candidate must serve a 1 year mentorship: they must referee at the next season’s Selection Circuit (while being watched by a certified course conductor). After this time the candidate must pass his final practical evaluation.

When either the candidate, or the refereeing committee, feels that a candidate is ready for the International exam, application can be made and a personalized program will be designed for this person.

If you are interested in becoming a referee, we would suggest that you start by learning the rules. We would suggest that you download a copy of the study guide from the CFF webpage ([www.fencing.ca](http://www.fencing.ca)). The questions presented in the guide are organized in the order of the rules in the Rules Book. You should find the answers to each question using the Rule Book.

You must then attend a Referee Seminar, appropriate to the refereeing level you are seeking. No one is allowed to take either the written or practical exams without first attending a refereeing seminar.

The actual written exam will be culled from the very same questions in the Study Guide. You must attain the minimum score (80% for “P”, 90% for “N”) on both the General Section and the Weapon section in which you wish to be tested.

The CFF maintains a list of certified referee learning facilitators. These individuals are the only ones authorized to conduct National Level referee seminars. They are also

available to the provincial branches to facilitate Provincial Level referee seminars. Provincial Branches can contact these individuals to obtain help in running a seminar in your province. To effectuate the practical testing, at the “P” level, an open domestic competition (one whose results will count on the Domestic Ranking) is required. As mentioned previously, “N” level testing is only done at the Nationals. The CFF will offer refereeing seminars, as well as testing, at the Nationals.

In the interest of remaining current, all referees (“P” and “N” level) are required to take a refresher seminar every two years. To maintain your level you must have gone through this process, you must also actively referee in this period, if you have not, your level will be lowered; from “P” to uncertified, from “N” to “P”. It is the responsibility of the individual referee to maintain a log sheet and send this log, on a yearly basis, to the Technical Director. The CFF will maintain a list of active referees on their website; this list will indicate the most recent year of activity at the certified level.

### **REFEREE ATTIRE**

The CFF has accepted, as appropriate attire, a modified FIE norm: for men, a suit, or pants and blazer, shirt, and tie; for women, same as above or skirt and blazer with a blouse. This clothing is to be clean and pressed. Referees are requested to wear appropriate, non marking, shoes; athletic shoes are not deemed appropriate.

### **SEMINARS**

The Referee Committee is well aware of the need for local Referee Seminars. As such, the Committee has at the disposal of the provinces certified Referee Learning Facilitators. Any province needing a Learning Facilitator can contact the Technical Director to make arrangements. Seminar fees are to be set locally; a \$10.00 charge will be assessed for any individual taking a seminar to defray the cost of materials. Half the registration fee must go to the CFF.

Clinics are essential to develop standardized officiating practices. Standardized officiating practices are essential to the development of our sport. The CFF is developing more certified Learning Facilitators. At present it is recommended that only certified Referee Learning Facilitators be used to conduct these seminars. Once we have developed enough Learning Facilitators, it will be a requirement that all seminars be conducted by these certified LF’s. Please contact the Technical Director if there is any doubt about an LF’s qualifications.

### **FIE REFEREE’S LICENSES**

All “N” level officials are encouraged to develop towards an FIE license. Qualification to take the FIE test will be based on: the referee demonstrating a superb skill in working

under pressure; a progressive development towards international competition (Selection Circuit finals, NAC finals, international “B” cup competitions and finals, eventually some junior World Cups); as the FIE has set a maximum age for international refereeing, you must meet this requirement.

The Referee Committee is the sole authority for the submission of candidates to the FIE for examination or removal as an International Referee. An “N” level referee who would like to challenge the FIE exam should send this request, in writing, to the CFF Referee Committee. The Committee will notify the candidate if the request is approved; if it is not, the Committee will inform the candidate as to the areas in which s/he must improve.

### **GENERAL RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE REFEREE**

A referee’s specific duties are listed in the Rule Book, but there are several general responsibilities that are only implied. The first of these is that while rendering technical decisions, referees must maintain their dignity and command respect. In addition, the referee must:

- Help maintain the level of fencing and promote its correctness.
- Concentrate on the task (and refrain from officiating when tired or out of form).
- Maintain control of the fencing in a firm, courteous manner.

All referees **must** understand these responsibilities fully and conduct themselves in a manner that brings credit to the sport. If you are assigned to referee a bout in which you feel that you have a conflict of interest, inform the assignor of referees. Don’t hope everything will “work out” and that there won’t be any close calls; let the assignor make this call.

Remember that as a referee, you cannot tell a fencer “what you think of him / her” after the bout, after the competition, or even at a later date. To do so destroys your credibility and objectivity.

Do not “incite” the fencer. When a fencer has just lost a bout, do not make any comments, just request that the fencer sign the bout sheet. Any attempt at instruction or justification of your actions may understandably cause a not too polite reaction from the fencer.



## APPLICATION OF THE RULES

Knowledge of the rules of fencing is a prerequisite to competent officiating, but the referee's job is to **apply** the rules, and this requires far more than knowledge. Of primary importance is that the referee understands conceptually what is to be done. This understanding can be gained by considering three classes of rules: analysis, administration, and penalties.

### Fencing Phrase Analysis

The most important officiating task in foil and sabre (not to be ignored in épée) is correct interpretation of the right of way (the convention). The rules state, in Article t.42: "As soon as the bout has stopped, the Referee reconstructs briefly the movements which composed the last fencing phrase." This "simple" statement requires some discussion for thorough understanding.

First, referees must recognize that they are directed to analyze **fencing actions** – not describe activity. This is a critical distinction. There is much activity in fencing (lunge, feint, step, et cetera), but only a few of these result in **fencing actions** (attack, riposte, et cetera). Since only **actions** have priority in fencing, the referee must consider only **actions** to arrive at decisions.

Second, the referee must understand the identification system for these **actions** in order to clearly communicate to the fencers the referee's concept of the phrase. The system is fairly simple, because these **actions** are few in number and each has a specific name. In order of priority, they are:

1. Point in Line
2. Attack
3. Riposte
4. Counter Attack
5. Remise / reprise / redoublement

These actions, coupled with modifying words, are all that a referee needs to analyze most fencing phrases. For example, the words "from the right (or left)" identify which fencer is being considered; "in the final phrase" limits the actions analyzed; and "in the preparation" recognizes activities that precede the actions to be analyzed.

Once the referee has grasped the concept of actions rather than activity and has learned the identification system, the referee can quickly arrive at decisions by applying the rules of right-of-way in foil and sabre.

As of recently, the referee must also learn the gestures that match the actions (more on these gestures later).

## The Point in Line

The Point in Line exists as the highest level of priority. If it is established correctly, the opponent must avoid it, remove it, or have the fencer with the point in line to no longer have the point in line.

A Point in Line exists when the fencer has the following conditions met prior to an opponent's attack:

- Weapon arm fully extended
- A straight line from the point of the weapon to the shoulder
- Point aimed at valid target
- No movement of the blade except to dérobe the opponent's attempt to find the blade

Note: The fencer who has established the point in line can be standing still, moving backward, moving forward, or lunging.

## The Attack

What makes an action an attack is something that has been discussed for a long time. There seems to be two schools regarding this question. One states that the arm must be fully extended in order to be attacking; the other school is just as adamant in stating that whoever starts moving forward with even the intent to hit is the attacker. The truth is actually somewhere in the middle.

Look at the Rules Book, Article t.7, this defines the attack:

“The attack is the initial offensive action made by extending the arm and continuously threatening the opponent's target, preceding the launch of the lunge or fleche.”

Does this tell the whole story? Not likely. To find out what an attack is, there are two important things one needs to understand.

1. You'll never find the answer only by looking in the Rules Book. The Rules Book does not have a glossary so there are no definitions as to what an “offensive action” is or what “threatening” means. The definition as to what is an attack is derived from both the Rules Book and from convention – what is called an attack by the world's best referees.
2. It isn't what **one** person does that makes an action an attack. The attack is defined by what **both** fencers do in relationship to each other. Here is an example in foil: M and S are fencing, M lunges while extending the arm; the arm is fully extended just before the forward foot hits the ground; what fencing action has M done?
  - i. If S is immobile, at lunge distance, and in the on-guard position: M made an attack
  - ii. If, just before M started, S lunged while extending the arm, M made a counter attack
  - iii. If S was immobile, beyond lunge distance, and in the on-guard position, M established a point in line

In this example, the same “movement” by “M” resulted in three different “actions”.

You will often see this sort of a movement: the fencer on the left goes after his opponent with his guard next to his hip and then finally starts extending just before the opponent, who had been desperately trying to parry, ultimately extends his arm. You will hear referees correctly calling this action as follows: “Halt. Attack from the left. Point for the left.” You may then overhear some people say: “We should let everybody know that “they” are calling any aggressive movement an attack”, or something similar. It is important to realize that the referee is supposed to analyze **actions**. In this example, even though there was much “movement”, the end result was an attack: the attempt at “parrying” from the fencer on the right is “nothing” as it did not change what was happening from the left. What makes one’s action an attack is one’s movement in relationship to what the opponent is doing. Knowing this, take another look at Article t.7 paying particular attention to some key words:

“The attack is the **initial offensive** action made by **extending** the arm and **continuously threatening** the valid surface of the opponent’s target.”

**Initial:** you must start your action **before** your opponent. This does not mean who started moving first.

**Offensive:** you must be going toward your opponent. Attempting a parry (by definition) is not offensive.

**Extending:** The arm **never** has to be extended to have a correctly executed attack. To have an **extending** arm, your hand must be going away from your body.

**Continuously:** non-stop. You must keep attacking. If you “break” your attack, you are no longer attacking and, if your opponent starts an attack of her own, your continuation may become a counter attack. Your attack ends when it misses, is parried, or falls short. In sabre, the attack also ends when the front foot lands in the lunge.

**Threatening:** you must present a danger to your opponent. This word really has two parts to its definition:

1. The relationship of distance between the fencers in determining whether one is threatening: if your opponent is within step lunge distance, you can start an attack. If your opponent is beyond step lunge distance, you cannot start an attack; even if your opponent were to remain immobile, your attack would not start until you were at least at step lunge distance.
2. The point (for foil) or the blade (for sabre) is going toward the opponent’s valid target. It is a very common misconception that, for example, a foil attack requires the point to be “aimed” at the valid target before an attack starts.

What actually happens in competition is the combination of the technical and tactical execution of an action. The tactical execution takes all of the above mentioned aspects of an attack and puts them into the correct framework for any particular bout environment.

There are two more comments one frequently hears about a referee’s decision:

- “That was too close to call! You shouldn’t make a call like that on the final touch.”
- “That was really simultaneous. Neither fencer really started before the other.”

The first comment is one that is just wrong; it is based on a totally false premise. There is no such thing as an action that “just isn’t good enough for the final touch.” The referee is required to make the last call of a bout just as she is required to make the first call. If an action was done correctly enough to get the first touch, it is done correctly enough for the final touch. A fencer should not be required to make a “one light” touch to win a bout.

The “simultaneous” call is made far too often. Is it possible that both fencers started at exactly the same time? Theoretically, yes; in reality this hardly ever happens unless, as most often happens in sabre, both fencers make the tactical decision to attack simultaneously. Some of the best referees will sometimes analyze an action as simultaneous to indicate that they just could not tell who started or that both fencers did not execute their actions correctly. Many less qualified referees will use “simultaneous” as a means of avoiding actually making a call.

It is the referee’s job to determine who the attacker is. The referee must simply translate, into word and gesture, the perception of what actions the fencer made. An attack is an attack because a fencer, in relationship to another fencer, executed the action correctly.

### **The Beat versus the Parry**

In foil and sabre, it is very important for the referee to differentiate between the beat and the parry. Whenever there is a meeting of the blades, the referee must decide which fencer is then able to have the right of way.

It is equally true in foil as it is in sabre that the parts of the blades that meet are critical in deciding whether the meeting is a beat or a parry. If one fencer’s foible meets the forte of the opponent’s blade (not a mere grazing of the blades), it is a parry by the opponent. If it is forte to foible, it is a beat.

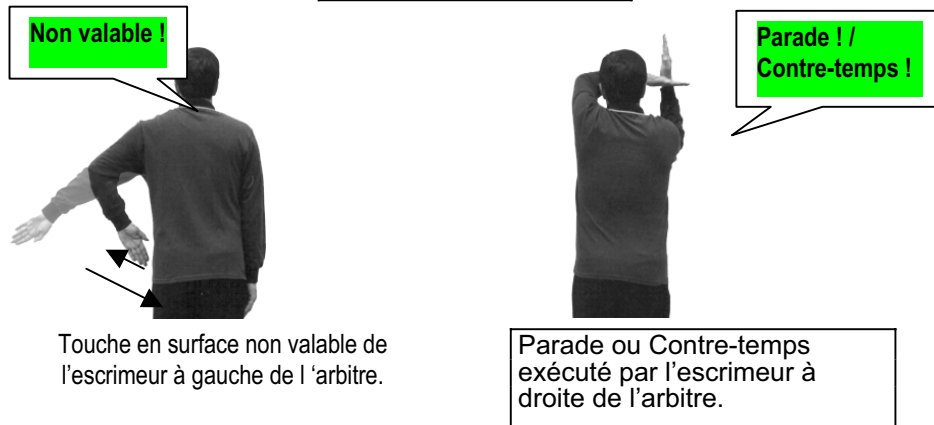
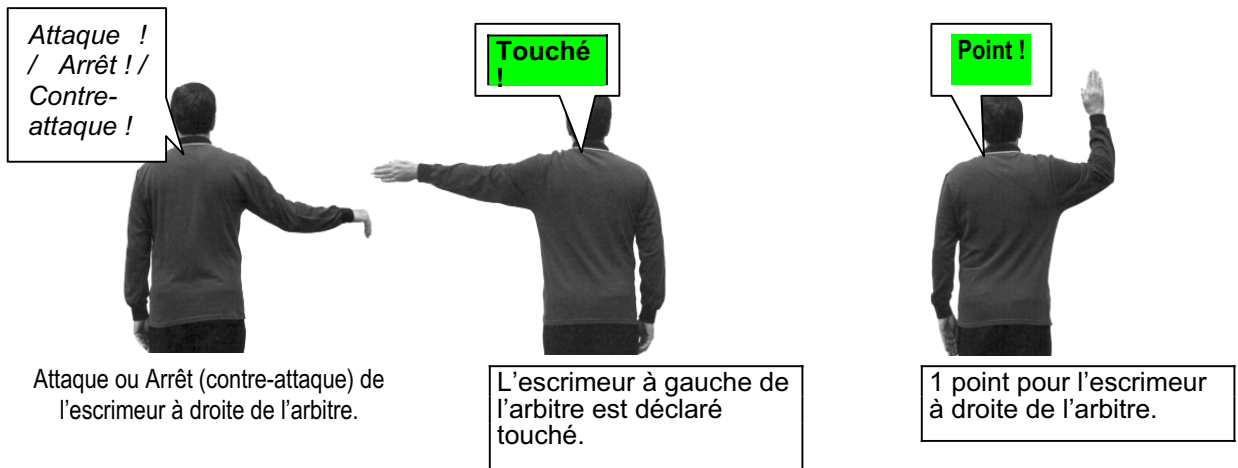
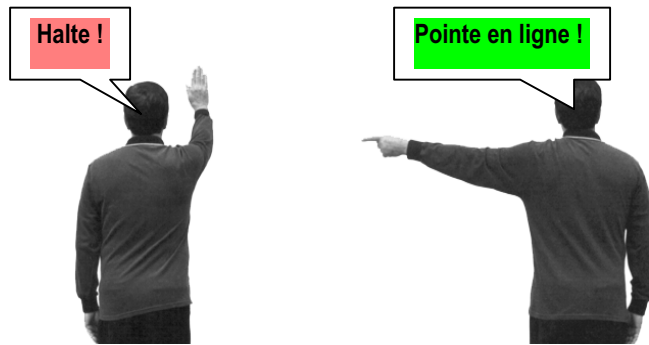
This determination is not as easy as it sounds. The referee requires extensive experience to make this judgement. This is especially true as all meetings of blades are not always a foible on forte meeting. The referee should generally give priority to the offensive fencer, the fencer who initiates the contact, where it cannot be distinguished if the action is a beat.

## **Words and Gestures**

The fencers, coaches, and the audience have to know what the referee is calling. The use of correct words and gestures, that the referee uses, will allow for easy understanding of the referee's analysis of actions.

The words that are to be used in analyzing actions, along with brief descriptions such as:

- Preparation
- Point in Line
- Attack
- Attack on the blade (e.g. beat)
- Prise de fer (e.g. bind)
- Parry
- Riposte
- Counter Attack
- Remise
- Reprise
- Redoublement





**Touchés !**

Touches aux 2 tireurs.



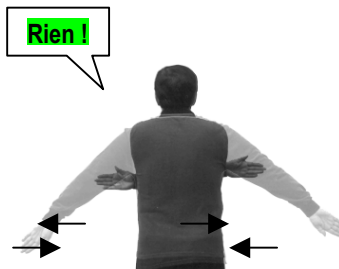
**Points !**

Un point à chaque tireur.



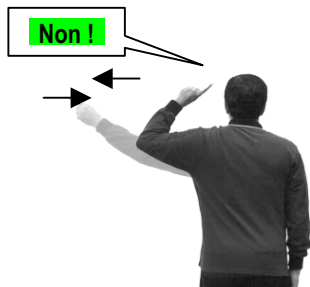
**Simultanées !**

Attaques simultanées.



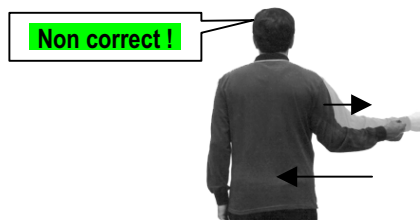
**Rien !**

Aucun point ou avertissement.



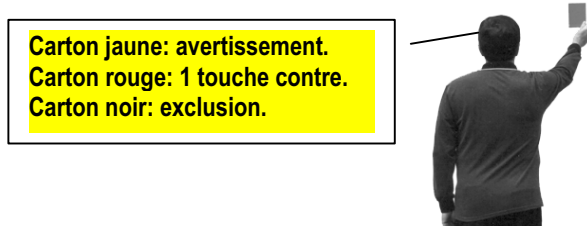
**Non !**

Offensive de l'escrimeur à droite de l'arbitre : trop courte et qui ne touche pas.



**Non correct !**

Attaque ou riposte incorrecte de l'escrimeur à droite de l'arbitre.



**Carton jaune: avertissement.  
Carton rouge: 1 touche contre.  
Carton noir: exclusion.**

**Par mimétisme, l'arbitre indique la Faute de l'escrimeur à droite et il présente le Carton correspondant à la Sanction concernée**

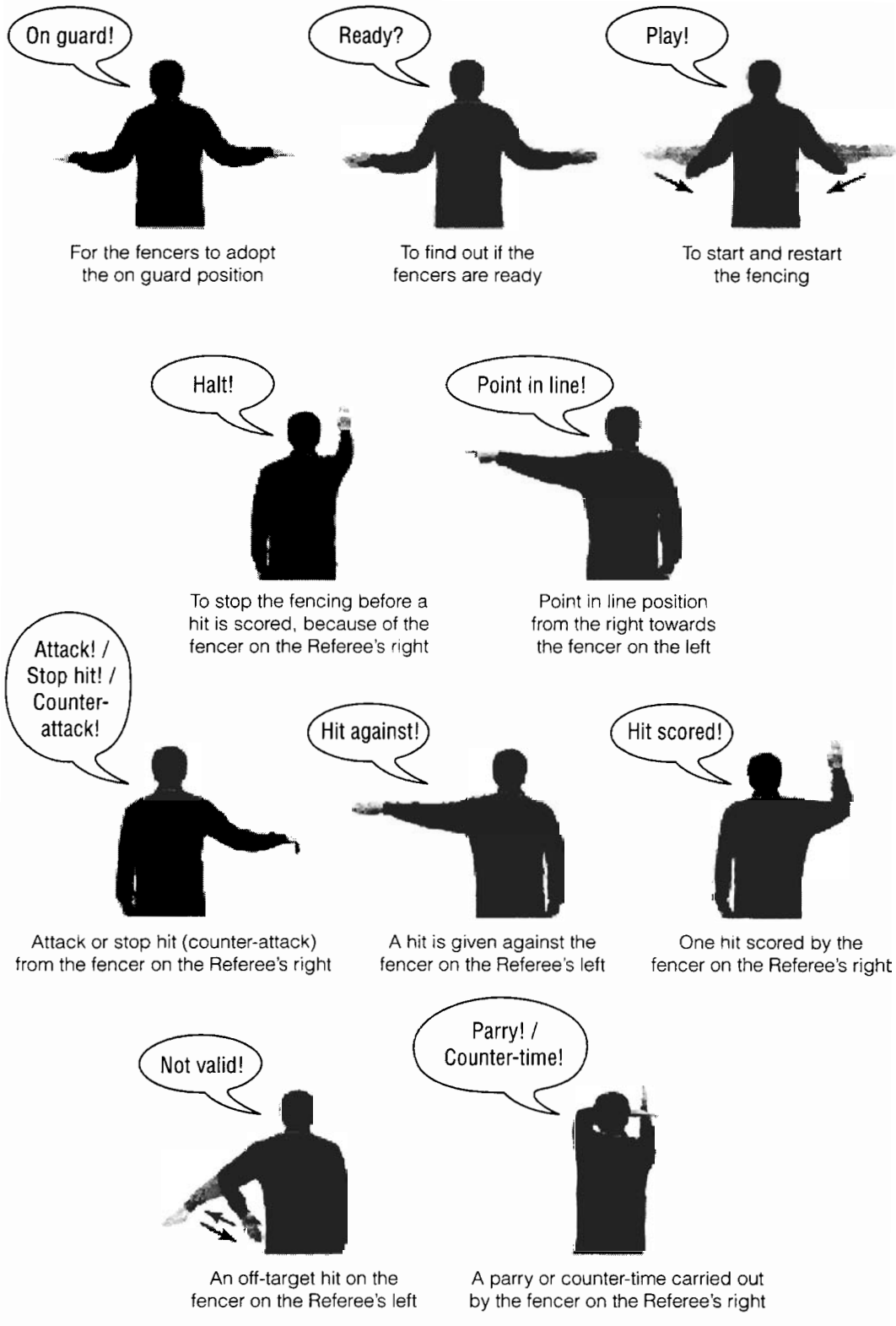
**Remarques:**

1<sup>ère</sup>) L'arbitre analyse et annonce ses décisions par les **mots et les gestes** ci-dessus.

2<sup>ème</sup>) Suivant la phrase d'armes, l'arbitre emploiera encore les mots suivants sans faire de geste : **"Riposte !"**, **"Contre-riposte !"**, **"Remise !"**, "Reprise !" ou **"Redoublement !"**.

3<sup>ème</sup>) Les tireurs peuvent demander à l'arbitre, courtoisement, une analyse plus complète d'une phrase d'armes.

4<sup>ème</sup>) Chaque geste doit avoir une **durée (1 à 2 secondes)**, être expressif et correctement exécuté. Ici ils sont exécutés pour l'escrimeur à droite de l'arbitre.



**Referee signals and commands**





Double hit!

Both fencers are hit



Hit for each!

Each fencer scores a hit



Simultaneous!

Simultaneous attacks



Nothing!

No hit or warning



No!

Offensive action from the fencer on the Referee's right; too short and does not hit



Incorrect!

Incorrect attack or riposte from the fencer on the Referee's right

Yellow Card: warning  
Red Card: one hit against  
Black Card: exclusion



By mimicry, the Referee demonstrates the offence of the fencer on the right and shows the card corresponding to the offence concerned

**NOTES**

1. The Referee analyses the fencing and announces his decisions by means of the signals and words above.
2. In following the fencing phrase the Referee uses the following words without making the signals: "Riposte!", "Counter-riposte!", "Remise!", "Reprise!", "Redouble!"
3. The fencers may politely ask the Referee for a more complete analysis of the fencing phrase.
4. Each signal must last 1–2 seconds, be expressive and be correctly made. Above they refer to the fencer on the Referee's right.

**Referee signals and commands (contd.)**

## Administrative Duties of the Referee

The referee must not overlook administrative and organizational duties because they are important to establish control and for the smooth running of the competition. Timing and scoring errors can negate the best refereeing. Protests can delay a match and cause criticism of the referee.

The following are strongly recommended:

- Respect the scorer and timer. These officials are the referees' allies and will return concern for their welfare with proper attention to their duties. Before the pool or match, the referee must determine the experience of each and instruct them in order to be confident in their work. Make sure that the timer knows to very loudly say "Halt!" when time expires. Ask the scorekeeper to announce the score clearly after every touch. Also ask the scorekeeper for pool score sheets to write in the number of touches for a defeat (instead of "D") and a "V" with the number of touches scored for a victory. Note that there is a possibility of less than five being scored and a fencer having a victory in a pool bout. In the example below; the upper left box indicates a victory in which five touches were scored; the upper right box indicates a victory in which three touches were scored (where the time expired in the bout); the lower left box indicates a defeat in which the loser scored two touches; the lower right box indicates a victory where time expired with no touch being scored (this fencer was awarded priority and no touch was awarded in the extra minute).

V5	V3
2	V0

Remember that the score must also be kept in the appropriate spot at the bottom of the pool sheet. Remember to use the bottom of the scoresheet.

- In Direct elimination bouts, the scorekeeper should register all hits, on the provide sheet, as they happen.
- Call the roll and check the equipment in a businesslike manner. The equipment check should serve notice that the referee knows the rules and is prepared to apply them.
- Confiscate any equipment that does not work. If it is non-regulation at the time of inspection, confiscate it and issue the appropriate card. If equipment breaks during the bout, also confiscate it. Confiscating equipment is not only required by the rules, it is for the fencer's protection: they cannot get a card for presenting a known non-functioning piece of equipment to the referee at a subsequent time in the bout.
- Make sure to write down on the score sheet any yellow, red (along with group), or black cards that are given out.

- After each bout, review the score sheet for correctness. Early checks will avoid disputes later on and also catch errors before they become critical for promotion to the next round.
- Be sure to check the accuracy of any score sheet, total, have all fencers sign the score sheet, pool and direct elimination, and finally you sign the score sheet as well.
- Thank all other officials at your strip after each round. They have contributed and should receive recognition.
- Make sure that all score sheets are promptly returned to the Directoire Technique.

## Penalties

Proper application of the penalties is second only to correct analysis of the fencing phrase. Proper handling of penalty situations is a critical test of the referee's judgement. The referees' responsibilities are as follows:

- Issue yellow, red, and black cards immediately when faults occur. Do not wait until another occurrence. Delay conditions fencers to improper fencing, favours the offender, places the offender's opponent at a disadvantage, and may result in accidents or injuries. Hold the single card up toward the offending fencer for a few seconds so that all fencers, coaches, and audience know that a card has been issued.
- Apply penalties uniformly with both experienced and inexperienced fencers. Resist the tendency to give the experienced fencer more leeway or to overlook faults caused by inexperience. Ignorance of the rule may be widespread, but it is not an excuse for improper fencing or bad behaviour.
- Learn the rules thoroughly. Penalty rules are complex, and referees often hesitate to apply them when they are unsure. In particular, rules for corps a corps, covering target, the use of the unarmed hand, and violent or disorderly fencing must be mastered. The PENALTY CHART (found in the Rules Book) will help. It is imperative that you realize that this chart is only a reference chart. It will not replace a thorough knowledge of the penalty rules.
- Apply penalties and warnings in a courteous, firm and unemotional manner that precludes emotional response from the fencers. Penalties should not disrupt the match. Be sure to record on the score sheet the type of card issued.
- Be philosophic. Understand that a student, upon finding out a grade for a class, will say, "**I** got an A." Or the student will say, "**The teacher** gave me an F." Remember that the fencers' incorrect fencing **requires** the penalty; **you** do not penalize the fencer.

Here are some common situations that require the referee to issue cards:

- **Covering Target:** Not applicable in épée; rarely occurs in sabre; but it is a frequent occurrence in foil. Covering can be done with the back arm (including the hand), the head, and hair. As to the back arm and hand, it is important to remember that the covering must deny access to the target by the opponent. That means that even though a fencer's hand and arm are in front of her or his metallic

vest during an adjustment of the fencer's mask when the two fencers are far apart, no card should be issued. Covering with the head in foil is to be called when the fencer places the head down so that the back of the head and the spine are parallel to the strip; it should not be called when a fencer makes a long-low lunge. Covering in all its forms does not allow for the annulling of a valid touch scored by the fencer who covered.

- **Corps a Corps:** Halt must always be called whenever corps a corps takes place. (YES, EVEN IN ÉPÉE!) In foil and sabre, a card must be issued to the fencer who caused even the slightest contact. And if the contact jostles the opponent, or the fencer caused a corps a corps to avoid a hit, a card must be given in all weapons, even épée. If both fencers caused the illegal contact, then both fencers are to be given cards. It is important to realize that in situations with attack and counter-attack, the counter-attack most often causes contact. If a fencer attacks by fleche or a fast step lunge and the opponent causes illegal contact by stepping into the path of the attacker, the opponent must be given a card. If the fencer who caused the illegal contact landed a touch, the touch is annulled.
- **Reversing Shoulders:** This is now covered by covering the target.
- **Turning the Back:** In all weapons, it is illegal to turn one's back toward the opponent. (This is **not** turning the head. Do not give fencers cards if they turn their heads so that they look behind themselves.) This warning should be given when the fencer turns her or his back toward the opponent; it is not judged by the angle of the strip. The warning is not given when a fencer goes past an opponent, as "Halt" should be called at the passing. Any touch scored with an action with the turning of the back is annulled.

## Starting and Stopping the Bout

Problems can arise from such apparently simple situations as starting or stopping the bout. Some situations may even lead to controversy. Much of this controversy can be avoided.

The basic rules for stopping and starting the bout are found in Article t.18 of the Rules Book. The first paragraph refers to starting the bout and states:

"As soon as the word "Fence" ("Allez") has been pronounced, the competitors may assume the offensive. No movement (action) made or initiated before the word "Fence" ("Allez") is counted."

This is straightforward, and most referees experience little difficulty here. However, referees must be alert for premature starts, which can be avoided if the rules of t.17, "Coming On Guard," are applied. The pertinent section states"

"Competitors come on guard when the referee gives the order "On Guard" after which the referee asks: "Ready?" on receiving an affirmative reply, or in the absence of a negative reply, he gives the signal for the assault to commence with the word "Allez". The fencers must come on guard correctly and remain completely still until "Allez" is given by the referee."

The question of a “correct” on guard position is no longer open to interpretation. Referees are to have the fencers take a position indicated by the drawings in the Rules Book that show the targets of each weapon. Also remember: “at foil and sabre no fencer may come on guard with his point in line.” The key to the proper starting of the bout is to make sure that the fencers are **completely still**. A fencer may not argue with a referee on what a correct on guard position is nor about remaining immobile until the command “Allez” is given.

Stopping of a bout is much more complex than starting, and, therefore, more questions can arise from improper handling. Paragraph 2 of article t.18 states in part:

“As soon as the order “Halt” has been given, a competitor may not start a new action; only the movement which has been begun before the order was given remains valid. Everything which takes place afterwards is entirely non-valid”

To properly interpret this instruction, a referee must understand what constitutes an action and that the halt occurs when the referee says s/he said “Halt”. Example: épée fencers come together causing a corps a corps without a touch landing; there is then an immediate remise from one side which arrives. Here the referee calls “Halt” at the corps a corps and does not allow the remise. The fencer who landed the touch may say to the referee: “but you didn’t say halt until after I started the remise - I even heard the buzzer on the machine before I heard your halt.” In this case, the referee must simply state: “I called halt at the corps a corps; the remise is after the halt and therefore not allowed. No touch.” **Nothing** more should be said.

Thus, in all cases, the referee must decide whether or not the critical action started before or after the halt and should announce the decision quickly. Avoid using the phrase “with the halt” as this can be confusing. An action is either started “before” or “after” the halt. This decision cannot be appealed, and, therefore, attempts to justify it by superfluous description, which can lead to argument, must be avoided. **Do not attempt to support your decision further.**

In the light of foregoing discussion, referees should realize that **hesitation in announcing the halt must be avoided** to prevent misunderstandings.

The stopping of the bout when fencers leave either the end or the side of the strip also provides situations that can lead to controversy. The referee’s attention is split between the action and the position of the fencers on the strip. Since the primary duty of the referee is to the action, it is not surprising that referees have to interpret strip position liberally.

It is difficult (if not impossible) to determine precisely the instant a fencer’s feet cross the boundaries. A judgement must be made as much by instinct as by “eyeball” when an action occurs. Referees are advised to make this decision without attempting to describe the precise position, attitude, or movements of the fencers.

This advice is not always easy to follow with actions that occur as a fencer leaves the strip. For example, one often hears heated arguments when a fencer near the edge of the strip jumps into the air during the action. Again, the referee must judge whether one (or both) of the fencers was on or off the strip and avoid describing the precise position of the fencer at any specific time. If a touch lands, this decision will affect the awarding or annulment of that touch. If no touch lands, this decision may affect where the fencers are replaced on guard. In these situations the referee's judgement is paramount. Arguments about whether the fencer was off the strip while in the air during the action are completely superfluous. The strip is a volume, and not just a surface. If a fencer jumps in the air over the physical strip, the fencer is still "on" the strip.

It is important to remember that when a fencer leaves the side of the strip with both feet, the opponent **advances** one meter from where the referee replaces them on guard. And, when the fencer who left the strip is placed by application of this rule behind the rear limit of the strip, that fencer is considered as having been touched. The correct distance between the fencers when they come on guard, other than when on their on guard lines, is established by having both fencers in the on guard position with their weapon arm extended and the points not overlapping.

Referees are advised to be strict with fencers who tend to fence near the side of the strip, and to discourage such tactics by annulling touches that are made by the fencer who is off the strip with both feet and by penalizing that fencer, whether or not that fencer has landed a touch. On the other hand it is important to remember that fencers are permitted to use the whole strip surface, and should not be penalized for doing so.

Judgements about stopping a bout are important to the tempo of fencing. A referee must allow the fencers to continue fencing, especially when in-fighting. On the other hand, the referee must be prepared to call an immediate halt when a blade cannot be wielded correctly, a fencer leaves the strip, a penalty situation occurs, or there is possibility of injury. It is especially important to call a halt whenever corps a corps occurs, especially in épée where a fencer could register a touch by hitting himself. Just as it is incorrect to call "Halt" too late, it is also incorrect to call it too early.

In addition, referees must be consistent in the calling of halt, so that fencers do not stop prematurely expecting the command that is not given and perhaps receive a touch as a result. The feeling for "timing" a command of halt is developed with experience and by thoughtful observation of experienced referees.

In all of these situations, the referee's judgement is called into play. Competitors, coaches, spectators, other officials, et cetera may not agree with a referee's decision on the strip position or timing of the call to halt, but as long as the referee refrains from describing positions, foot placements, et cetera and reasons why the fencer was off or on the strip at a particular time, that judgement must prevail – and cannot be appealed.

- Fencers are advised to accept such judgements because, in most cases, they are secondary to the analysis of the action, which must be the referee's first priority.

- Referees are advised that almost all protests are caused by the referee hesitating or simply saying too much. Remember to describe the actions precisely using only fencing terminology. Do not “get caught” describing activity.

### **Referee Position**

After you have inspected the strip for holes and checked to see that there is sufficient space around the strip, you have to know where to stand. Where you place yourself is very important in allowing you to make correct calls.

Referees should always place themselves between the fencers so that they may see both fencers equally. Standing to one side of the competitors will frequently incorrectly influence one’s decision as to right of way.

It is also important for the referee to be able to see the scoring apparatus. A referee must devote most of her/his attention to actions, but at the same time it is critical that the referee is able to see when the lights come on. In a fencing phrase consisting of attack, riposte, and remise, the referee has to know if it was the attack that landed or the remise if lights on both sides are on. This is impossible unless the referee can see the scoring apparatus. This is impossible if the referee does not move with the fencers.

Referees should also allow themselves enough room to work. One should stand, at a minimum, approximately 3 meters from the edge of the strip in order to have sufficient vision to observe everything one has to observe.