



Fencing for Parents

Introduction

The sport of fencing is a uniquely classic sport. It has a history, drama, romance, style, art, plus all of the advantages of an active physically demanding sport. Mentally it is mind consuming, allowing not a moment's break.

The Youth Program

The youth program of USA Fencing is designed to provide an introduction for your child to one of the most fascinating, exciting and safest sports. Fencing develops discipline, balance, coordination, and sportsmanship. Fencing helps youth develop quicker reflexes and the ability to make lightning fast analyses of tactical situations.

Since the first national youth tournament held in 1985, the youth of America have changed the face of American Fencing. College coaches are now recruiting American fencers with years of experience as opposed to scouting the freshman class during registration for tall, athletic looking prospects.

Benefits of Fencing

There are many benefits to participating in youth fencing. Children learn good sportsmanship and self-discipline. They learn to compete independently as well as for a team; they learn to enjoy winning and profit from defeats, while becoming physically fit and healthy; and, most importantly, they learn to make complex decisions, analyze problems, and think fast. These ideals help children reach their potential in many areas other than fencing.

Bill of Rights for Young Athletes

We believe youth have the right to:

Be treated with dignity by all involved.

Fence as a child and not as an adult.

Fence regardless of skill level.

Fence at a level that is commensurate with each child's development.

Fence in a safe and healthy environment.

Have the proper preparation for fencing.

Have a qualified leadership for the sport of fencing.

Have an equal opportunity to strive for success.

Have fun fencing.

Your Role as a Parent

As a parent, your primary purpose is to support and encourage your child. Parents greatly contribute to the success experienced by their children as well as other children in the youth program. Parent's attitudes are often adopted by their children, who consult from their advice and approval. Parents, be

aware of this and strive to become positive role models. Most importantly, this includes showing good sportsmanship at all times and respecting coaches, officials, and opponents.

Get your child to the club to train regularly. School obligations come first, so utilize school holidays for maximizing training opportunities. Training two months a year at a camp will yield very limited results. A consistent training curriculum is strongly encouraged.

It is important to let your child establish his own goals and play the game for himself. Help your child establish and achieve the goals he sets for himself. Avoid imposing your own goals or the coach's goals on your child. "Success," sometimes interpreted as "winning," comes at different ages for each fencer. Success in youth fencing is achieved if the program helps the child love fencing. Great achievement will occur when the child loves the sport.



The best way to help your child achieve his goals and reduce his fear of failure is through positive reinforcement. No one likes to make mistakes. When your child makes one, remember that he is still learning. Encourage his efforts and highlight the successes and the things your child did well. Your child will have good days and bad ones. Help him through the bad days and celebrate the good days he is fortunate to have. Fencing is a continuous struggle to improve from first-day beginner to Olympic Champion.

At fencing tournaments, take time to meet new people, visit different cities and see what they have to offer. Many lasting friendships have been formed between fierce competitors. Enjoy the full experience of competition by taking advantage of all the opportunities for growth.

Fencing – the Game

Fencing is played on a metal strip, or piste, which measures approximately 2 meters wide and 14 meters long. Points (or touches) scored in a bout are registered on an electronic scoring machine. The machine receives an electrical impulse when the spring tip of the foil or epee is depressed or, in Saber when there adequate contact with the opponent by the blade. The strip is grounded to prevent touches being accidentally scored on the playing surface.

In the preliminary rounds, each fencing bout is fenced for five touches, with a time limit of 3 minutes. In the later rounds, for all events except the Youth events, each bout is fencing to a maximum of 15 touches. The bout is separated into three rounds of three minutes, with a one-minute rest period between rounds. In the event that the score is tied when time has elapsed, the referee will randomly determine priority (with a coin toss or equivalent) for one fencer. Fencing will continue for one additional minute. The first touch to score ends the bout. If the score remains tied at the end of the additional minute, the fencer with priority will win.

In Youth events, the later rounds are fenced best two out of three 5-touch bouts, of three minutes each, with a one minute rest period between bouts. In the event of a tie score at the end of time, the bout will proceed as outlined above.

After the preliminary rounds, the fencers who are promoted will be seeded into a direct elimination table. In some formats, the winner advances, and the loser is out. In other formats, it requires two losses to be eliminated. In the format that is most common in National competition, the direct elimination continues until 32 fencers remain, and then, two losses are required to be eliminated.

The Tournament

At an individual event, all of the entries are seeded based on past performance in USA Fencing and international (Federation Internationale d'Escrime or FIE) competitions. They are divided into pools of five to seven fencers, which are balanced for strength and club separation based on the seed. Each fencer in the pool will fence a bout against each of the other members in the pool. After completion of the pool, a predetermined number of its members will be elevated to the next round.

After the pools are concluded, the promoted fencers will be organized from best record to worst into an elimination table of 16, 32, 64, or 128 fencers. This may be fenced in a single or double elimination tableau. In a single elimination, a fencer losing against an opponent is eliminated from the tournament. In double elimination, a fencer is eliminated after two losses. The finals of an event are fenced as a single elimination table of eight fencers.

Penalties

Penalties are divided into four categories.

Category One

All Category One penalties are interdependent. Upon the first occurrence of an offense during a bout, the fencer is warned and receives a yellow card. Committing any additional offense during the bout will result in the offender receiving a red card and the opponent receiving a penalty touch.

Category Two

All Category Two penalties are also interdependent. A fencer is given a red card upon first and any subsequent infraction during a bout.

Both Category One and Two infractions result in the annulment of a touch made by the offending fencer while committing the offense.

Category Three

Category Three penalties may be assessed for infractions against safety or the order of the competition. Such infractions can result in penalty touches (red card) or expulsion (black card) from the competition.

Category Four

The Category Four penalties involve unsportsmanlike conduct, using fraudulently modified equipment, collusion or brutality. The infractions result in automatic expulsion (black card) from the competition.

A complete listing of infraction and penalties is found in the USFA Rulebook.

Be Prepared to Wait!

Fencing events generally take all day. Unless your child does not move up from the initial rounds (pools), you can expect to spend a great deal of time in the venue. Be patient. The Bout Committee (BC) is working to get your child's event moving as fast as they can. Bring something that will help you pass the time – a book, knitting, a personal computer, etc. Of course, comfortable shoes are a must since you will be “on alert” during the entire competition (or at least until you learn more about the tempo of the competitive day at which point you will read, knit, or doze).

What to Bring to a Tournament

Fencing equipment listed below. Other items to consider: Medical Insurance Card and emergency contacts (especially if child is traveling without parent); small bills, checkbook and/or credit card/ATM debit card; books or other hobby/activity to pass the time while you are waiting; Band-Aids; mineral ice; batteries; sharpie/permanent marker; ice packs; water bottle; hair ties; camera with high-speed film, power cord; cell phone, and any other items you feel essential to your child's well being.

Regional Youth Circuit, Super Youth Circuit

The Regional Youth Circuit (RYC) gives fencers the opportunity to gain more experience before moving on to higher-level tournaments. The RYC & Super Youth Circuit Events are an excellent opportunity to compete against fencers from varying regions. RYC's are a qualifying path to participate in the North Cup Tournament and Summer Nationals. The Super Youth Circuit events are an opportunity for youth fencers to earn points and be placed on the National Rolling Point Standings (NRPS). Points can also be earned at a North American Cup event, Junior Olympics, and Summer Nationals. For more information on the Super Youth Circuit and the Regional Youth Program please visit www.usfencing.org.

National Tournaments

Once your child is performing locally at a consistent level and improvements are solid, your athlete may be ready to consider competing at a national tournament. USA Fencing runs several national tournaments: North American Cup (NAC), Junior Olympics, and Summer Nationals. National tournaments have entry rules/qualification paths that must be met before entering the tournament. These entry rules/qualifying paths are listed in chapter one and chapter two of the Athletic Handbook.

Your child's first start at a national tournament should be in his/her age category. This might mean trying to qualify for the summer nationals. (See qualifying paths in the Athlete Handbook). Don't push your child to compete in every age event for which he/she qualifies; the same guidelines should apply as for local events. You and the coach should discuss what events would fit best in the overall training scheme.

Send the entry forms for National tournaments in a timely manner. Late entries require a triple late fee (3x's the total amount due). There are numerous ways to send in an entry. You may fax your entry for to the National Office (request fax back of receipt of your entry) scan and email, register on line or mail (enclose a self-addressed postcard). If you send via mail, we recommend using any service with a tracking number. Note, that sending anything return receipt requested tends to take longer to get to the recipient. Priority mail allows one to track the status of the packet and know when it arrives to the USA Fencing office.

Tournament materials and confirmed entrant lists will be posted on the website (www.usfencing.org) by USA Fencing and includes important information such as date, time of your event and directions to the venue and host hotel. Host hotels fill up quickly so make your hotel reservations as early as possible.

Hotel and transportation information can be found on the US fencing website. Plan to arrive at least one full day prior to the start of your child's event and leave the day after your child's last event. Taking the last flight of the day before an event is ill advised (due to possible flight cancellations). Never make travel arrangements on the same day as an event. Events may run longer than expected and the added stress of catching a flight is likely to affect your child's performance. Leaving an event before the athlete has been eliminated results in a black card. This means your child's name will not appear on the results list that is posted on the web, having been replaced by the words FENCER EXCLUDED.

International Tournaments

Once your child has earned national points and reaches a certain level in the national points standing, he/she may be eligible for international competition. Generally the top eight athletes in the junior or senior points standings are able to compete in World Cups. World Cups are tournaments for top-level junior and senior fencers from around the world to meet and compete.

Athletes may not enter themselves in World Cups. All entries must come from the fencing federation of each country. In addition, athletes must apply for an FIE license which is obtainable from USA Fencing. Applications to be considered for a world cup must be submitted to USA Fencing. The athlete is responsible for expenses to and from World Cups. The Junior and Senior world cup schedule for each season is posted on the USA Fencing web site as well as on the FIE web site (www.fie.ch) by mid summer preceding the start of the new season.

Equipment Fencers Need

Selection of fencing equipment is a key issue among coaches, parents and fencers. When purchasing and fitting fencing equipment, the fencer should be adequately protected and the uniform should allow freedom of movement to properly perform the necessary skills.

A full set of fencing equipment can be purchased for a relatively reasonable cost. You need not buy the most expensive equipment for your child to be protected and enjoy the sport. You may inquire at your local fencing club to see if used equipment is available. Properly maintained equipment can normally be resold. Some clubs may provide basic equipment for their novice classes.

Your child does NOT need to own FIE equipment. FIE equipment is only required for international events.

Following is a list of minimum required equipment. Make sure your child has the necessary equipment. Check weapons to make sure they are working before you leave for the tournament. Don't go to any event with non-working weapons. While it may seem compulsive, your child should check them again upon arrival; equipment can be affected by travel.

- Mask (sewn-in bib, must pass 12K punch test)
- Underarm protector
- Breast Protector (mandatory for women)
- Jacket (no holes, must close in back or opposite weapon arm)
- Lamé
- Knickers (no holes, must close in back or opposite weapon arm, must be overlapped by jacket by at least four inches.

- Glove (no holes except for body cord. Must cover approximately half the forearm)
- Long socks (white, must reach bottom of your knickers-soccer socks work well)
- Fencing shoes or sneakers
- Minimum two working weapons (epees must pass weight and shim test)
- Y10 fencers must use weapons with blades that are no longer than 32.5 inches. This includes both genders, and all three weapons.
- Minimum two working body cords
- Fencing bag (to carry your equipment in)
- Water Bottle
- Towel and plastic bag to hold wet equipment
- Tool Kit (screwdrivers for tip and pommel, spare screws, springs, Allen wrenches, small white cloth to use at base, small magnet, flashlight)
- Test Box and weight and shims will help avoid penalties on the strip for nonworking equipment

Put identification on all of your equipment!!!!

Washing Equipment

Wash as you would any other whites – do not use chlorine bleach. Lamés may be hung in the shower and spray rinsed and drip dry; some people use blow dryers. Masks may be washed in dishwashers (make sure to wash by itself). Washable gloves and socks per normal wash.