

Guide to Weapons Check at JWCs

1. Purpose of Document

This document is intended as a simplistic but informative guide for to assist fencers selected for international JWCs to prepare and pass international weapons check independently.

2. What is Weapons Check?

Weapon Check (formerly Weapon Control) is where some or all of your fencing kit is inspected and tested before fencing starts. It's done to make sure it's safe, fits the rules, and works (in that order).

Weapon Check is done at A-Grades, World Cup, World and European Championships and some other events (like the School Games). It is done by qualified armourers (in the UK, these will be members of the BFA Armourers' Guild), who are practised in accurate and rapid testing of large amounts of equipment.

3. Why is there Weapons Check?

Weapons Check helps to ensure that when you present yourself to fence:

- Your kit is safe to fence with
- Your kit works
- No (or at least fewer) cards

Weapons Check is also the way that competition organisers ensure that there is a level playing field by preventing deliberate attempts by athletes to modify their kit to gain competitive advantage.

What you need to understand is that **Weapon Check is there to help you.**

It's not trying to "catch you out", it just lets you know where equipment isn't safe or up to scratch. So that when you get to the piste, you can be confident your kit will work to its best, that it won't cause you penalties, and that you can fence in safety.

From a competitions organisers perspective, failing kit can be a significant cause of competition delay.

4. When does Weapon Check happen?

The Weapon Check will always happen before the event starts. At JWCs this will usually be the night before the competition. If it's a team event, you will normally be required to put all the team kit in one or two labelled bags. The details of when and where you hand in and collect your kit will be given to the Performance Team Manager, and will also be available from the competition reglements (which can be found on <http://fie.org/competitions>)

5. What kit is checked?

This can vary from competition to competition but the minimum you can expect will be masks, weapons, body-wires and lames. Competition organisers will typically publish a list and there are often limits to the numbers of items that any one athlete can submit at one time. (eg 3 wires, 2 masks, 4 weapons etc.)

6. How do I know if my kit has passed/failed?

If your kit has passed it will now have an official date stamp or label attached to it (typically referred to as a 'control mark', there may also be a piece of paper included in the bag showing what passed, what failed and why it failed.

You must ensure that you know where all the control marks are as you will be expected to show the referee when you present on the piste.

7. Why you should never argue with the Weapons Check officials

Weapons Check officials typically spend hours in small rooms doing a thankless task. They will be supervised by an experienced qualified individual who will probably know a lot more about the rules than the fencers.

The BF Code of Conduct expects all BF members to be respectful toward officials and this includes officials of international tournaments.

Remember

- You aren't the first person to argue today, and won't be the last.
- There are no favourites, but once you start to argue you can guarantee that your kit will be subject to greater scrutiny and you may find that your kit takes longer to get through control.
- If your kit hasn't passed, there will be a reason.

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- Treated nicely and with respect most armourers will explain how you can fix your kit.
- If there is time (often there is not), they may even fix it themselves. But you should never expect or rely on this and remember to politely thank them if they do!

**In the end, the armourers can refer the query to the FIE representative at the event.
Be very sure of your ground before going this far.**

8. How to prepare for Weapon Check and avoid problems

A. Check your own kit regularly

You should check your own equipment (clothing, wires and weapons) before every event, whether there is a Weapon Check there or not.

- Some checks are for safety (mainly clothes)
- Some checks are for rules (mainly weapons)
- Most checks take a matter of seconds
- They should get to be a habit when you are putting your kit away

Think about learning to fix your own kit, or find someone in your club to help you with it.

B. Be honest with yourself about what you see

- A hole in a jacket or a glove is still a hole, no matter how small it is.
- Weapons and wires that *sometimes* don't work still need to be fixed.
- Velcro and zips that don't close need to be replaced.

C. Be nice to the Weapon Checkers

Bear in mind they will often work several hours non-stop doing nothing but equipment checks. Whenever you can save them time, it helps.

- Don't hand in broken or dodgy kit at Weapon Check "just to see if it passes".
- Listen to what they say about your kit.
- Get them to write it down if you don't understand.
- Ask at a quiet time and they may be able to fix it for you.

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Appendix A - Checklist

The following items can be checked with little or no equipment. With practice, a complete check of these will take you no more than a couple of minutes:

Jackets	Plastrons	Breeches
Gloves	Masks	Socks

Lamé jackets, gloves and masks can be checked visually, but you will need a multi-meter for a full check. For weapons, once you've done the visual check, you'll need a weight and gauge, and either a test box or a multi-meter. You can use these to check wires as well.

Thanks to Simon Axon for producing the original document

Useful references

<http://www.fie.ch>

<http://britishfencing.com/governance/rules/>

<http://britishfencing.com/governance/rules/fie-rules/>

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9. Common faults

There are some faults which come up again and again. Learn how to resolve these and the whole process becomes much less nerve-wracking.

Category	Requirements to pass Weapon Check
Breeches, jackets, socks, plastrons	<p>800N (CEN Level 2)</p> <p>Jackets - Country colours are optional but should match each other for team events.</p> <p>No holes or wear (especially under jacket arms)</p> <p>You can't fit a biro under the sewing on your country colours, badges or logos.</p> <p>For epee, the name is printed on the back, in dark blue, and not peeling off.</p> <p>Breeches - have country colours</p> <p>Elastic or other fastenings round the knees must be in good condition.</p> <p>Where there are fastenings, e.g. Velcro and zips, they should be working</p> <p>Socks - Should have no holes in the leg.</p> <p>Long enough to overlap under the breeches</p>
Masks	<p>1600N for FIE events and the manufacturer and date are on the FIE Homologation list</p> <p>No dents, broken wires or sharp edges</p> <p>No holes in the bib, inside and out</p> <p>Foil / epee - mesh is insulated and the rubber band is secure all the way around</p> <p>The elasticated band across the back is there and works</p> <p>There are two means of fixing the mask in place</p> <p>Bib is in good condition, inside and out. For damage inside, tape or fabric can be used to mend it. Damage outside requires the mask to be re-bibbed.</p>
Weapons (All)	<p>FIE events, epee and foil blades are maraging only.</p> <p>No sharp edges or oxidation or rust on the guard.</p> <p>Any reinforcing washer at the base of the blade, this must be flush with the guard, so that a blade or point could not get caught in between</p> <p>All weapons should have a "security device" on the inside guard socket.</p>

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	<p>The handle is completely insulated, including the pommel</p> <p>Blade length and stiffness will be checked</p>
Foil	<p>The top 15cm of the blade is insulated.</p> <p>Weapon passes the foil weight test.</p> <p>Blade can bend up or down by up to 1cm, but must not bend sideways or have a "S-shape" bend</p> <p>Foils may now need to go to Weapon Check with the tip tape taken off. Always check the Weapons Check requirement</p>
Epee	<p>Leon Paul FIE Epee blades manufactured between 2013-15 are banned by the FIE, as recorded here</p> <p>Weapon passes the epee weight and gauge tests.</p> <p>No tape, leather or other covering on pistol/orthopaedic grips.</p> <p>There is no tape over the wires inside the guard.</p> <p>Blade can bend up or down by up to 1cm but no sideways or "S-shape" bends</p> <p>The wires should enter the socket on its outside (between the socket and the guard).</p>
Sabre	<p>The pommel is insulated, as is the first 7-8cm of the outside of the guard, and the entire inside of the guard.</p> <p>Blade can sideways by up to 4cm, but must not bend up or down</p> <p>Weapon passes the sabre gauge tests. There are currently some sabre blades which are too thin near the tip, or whose tip is too small. Both of these faults can be dangerous</p> <p>Blades must be S2000 or later</p>
Body-wires & Mask-wires	<p>Bayonet body-wires are banned at all FIE competitions</p> <p>Foil and sabre body-wires have the target wire separated from the other two for at least 40cm.</p> <p>When pulled slightly, faulty wires may show a break near the plug, inside their insulation</p> <p>All crocodile clips are soldered to the wire</p> <p>The croc clip is a minimum of 8mm wide</p> <p>Foil mask wires must be white or clear</p> <p>Curly mask wires are not allowed</p>
Gloves	<p>No holes or loose stitching. This is important even at sabre.</p> <p>Especially check between fingers.</p> <p>Velcro and elasticated cuffs must stay fastened.</p>
Lamé	<p>All lamé material should be in good condition, with no bare patches.</p>

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	<p>The name on the back should be printed in dark blue, and clearly visible.</p> <p>Electrical resistance between any two points should be less than 5 ohms.</p>
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10. Electrical resistance

- A foil has a maximum resistance of 2 ohms. It is possible that a resistance of up to about 5 ohms will be allowed.
- Resistance for epee is the same as for foil.
- Body-wire and Mask-wire should have a resistance of less than 1 ohm. It is possible that a resistance of up to 5 ohms will pass the tests.
- The Lamé resistance between any two points should be less than 5 ohms.

Version History (this table can be moved to end of document if required)

Version Number	Date Updated	Updated by	Comments
v0.1	25/07/2016	LR/NB	First draft
v1.1	04/08/2016	NB/GU	amended
V1.2	15.05.2017	NB	Rebranded