British Fencing Referee Education Level 1&2 Preliminary Reading

# The purpose of this document is to provide those wishing to attend a level 1 or 2 referee course with the appropriate background reading in order to provide the initial skills and knowledge to pass both the theoretical and practical aspects of the basic refereeing exams. (Levels 1 and 2 referee courses and exams are managed by the Home Nations).

## Background to preliminary reading

Refereeing allows you to be involved to the highest level of our sport. British Referees have been involved in every modern 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 into the following sections:

1. Duties of the referee

2. Checks before the bout

3. Starting the bout

4. The field of play

5. Timing the bout

6. Calling Halt!

7. Referee hand signals & phrases

8. The right of way/priority - Foil & sabre

9. Epee

10. Paperwork

11. Penalties

12. Ending the bout

13. Sample Test

Many of the answers will be found in the preliminary reading. However, reading and familiarising yourself with the rulebook (especially the technical and material sections) and attending a refereeing course 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 and/ or sabre. You cannot learn this from a book. This is best learnt by primarily practice, attending a refereeing course and being mentored by experienced referees.

We recommend you should attend a seminar run by approved British Fencing referee educator. All the 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.

**1. Duties of the Referee. (t.35)**

* Calls the roll of competitors
* Directs the bout
* Check the weapons, clothing & equipment
* Superintends the proper functioning of the electrical apparatus
* Directs the bout
* Positions him/herself & moves in such a way to be able to follow the bout.
* Penalises faults
* Awards hits
* Maintains order
* Consult the experts concerning electrical apparatus when necessary.

**2. 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 usually[[1]](#footnote-1) either Level 1 (350N) or Level 2 (800N clothes, 1600N masks) - you should check the requirements at the beginning of any competition.
* Pay close attention to the under-plastron by checking the label 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[[2]](#footnote-2). 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 foil, and the entire shoulder.
* For sabre any part of the body above a horizontal line drawn between the tops of the hip bones & and then horizontally round the fencers trunk. See t.47.2 for foil & t.72 for sabre.
* The body wire should be clipped on the back 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 & in good condition.
* Body wires and mask wires must be clipped on correctly and have no large loops of wire hanging loose.
* Visor masks are no longer approved and must not be used

**Blade and Point Checks:**

Epée

* Blade must be bent no more 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 or is of the approved Screw-less types. 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 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).

**3. Starting the bout**

* Call the two fencers on to the piste, check names to ensure you have the correct people on the piste.
* Test Fencers weapons
* Fencers must salute spectators, the referee and each other (t.87.3)
* Satisfy yourself it is safe to proceed
* Call "On guard" fencers should be behind their on-guard lines (t.17.10)
* "Are you Ready" (t.17.10)
* "Play" (t.17.10)

**4. The field of play (t.11 through to t.14)**

**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. [[3]](#footnote-3)
* It helps to consider the piste to be a volume: The boundaries extend vertically upwards. 5.A fencer can be on the piste even if a foot is raised.

4.1 **Crossing the boundaries (t.26 to t.29)**

***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 the loss of a metre of ground from where they were when they left the piste or if the fencer goes of the piste during an attack he must return to the position that he occupied when he started the attack and then step back one metre.
* Correct on-guard distance is when, if both arms are extended, there is no overlap of the weapons.
* If a fencer crosses the rear limit of the piste with both feet, either from the imposition of the above penalty or during a fencing phrase, a hit is scored against them.
* Despite a hit being scored against them, it is not a card able 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.[[4]](#footnote-4)

Your tutor will demonstrate these situations.

**5. Timing the bout (t30 through to t.33)**

**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 because 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 has priority i.e. 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***

**6. 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.
* Fencers pass each other
* fencers cannot wield their weapons
* Non-combativity (DE bouts only) t.87.4

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. Simple Corps-à-corps is no longer a card able offence in foil and sabre.**
* Corps-à-corps is still a penalty offence when carried out to avoid being hit and/or when jostling the opponent, see t.120.1.3 and 1.16. Yellow/red section.
* 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.*

**7. Referees Signals and Phrases**

See associated sheet and t.42.4 figure 3

**8. The right of Way (Priority) Foil and Sabre only.**

* Try to understand the theory of how one gains and regains priority
* The theory of what is an attack
* What is a parry
* what is a riposte
* What are renewals of attack
* What is a counter-attack
* Point in line
* Fencing time

Reading the following sections of the rule book can help but attending a refereeing course where your tutor will explain and demonstrate these situations is the best solution along with plenty of practice.

* t.6 through to t.10
* t.55 through to t.60 for foil
* t.74 through to t.80 for sabre

**9. Epee**

* Try to understand the theory of annulling of hits through weapon & equipment failure.
* Hits on other than the opponent or their equipment.
* When you do not up hold an appeal by a fencer for annulling a hit

Reading the following sections of the rule book can help but attending a refereeing course where your tutor will explain and demonstrate these situations is the best solution along with plenty of practice.

* t.6, through to t.10
* t.64 through to t.t.69

**10. 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.
* Ensure you enter your name as referee on the pool/score sheet.
* Ensure that any penalties given are written on the pool/score sheet.

**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.

**Recording penalties: (t.114.4)**

* 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 (YC, RC, BC)

**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 British Fencing's Disciplinary Committee.

**11. Offences & Penalties, t.120**

See attached sheet

**12. 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.*

**13. Sample questions of written 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 body wire 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**

Fencer Thompson arrives to the piste for his first match at the Bristol 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 under plastron 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?

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**Version History (can be placed at end)**

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| **Version Number** | **Date Updated** | **Updated by** | **Comments** |
| v0.1 | 01.06.2014 |  | First draft |
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1. The British Fencing safety committee allow non- 350N or 800N trousers/breeches on young competitors. See page 10 of the Standards and Safety Guidelines. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. It is recommended that girls wear a chest protector from the age of ten. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. for an infringement to have been committed. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. If during normal fencing, the competitors should be replaced on guard at fencing distance, a competitor cannot be placed behind the rear line. The opponent then must give ground. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)