

Competitive Fencing



Southern Region



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● Introduction

Fencing is a great way to keep fit, and many fencers treat it as a fun workout – a way of relieving the stresses of the week. However, it is essentially a combat sport, and at some time in their careers, most fencers want to try their skills against other fencers under competition conditions.

Fencing within a club can be competitive (sometimes fiercely so!). Apart from club bouts there is a wide variety of organised competitions. From as young as 8 yrs old, up to veterans old enough to be their great-grandparents, there are events almost every weekend of the year, at club, county, regional or national level.

Picking the right competitions for your age, ability, chosen weapon and location can be tricky. The first person to ask is your club coach, or other fencers at your club who already have competition experience.

This guide is divided into sections aimed at different types of fencers. Some sections (like the “competition kit checklist”) apply to everyone. Boxes like the one at the bottom right of this page provide useful information.

Fencing Age Groups.

Youth fencing is usually divided up by age bands. The age of a fencer is normally taken as at Jan 1st in the current year, so if a fencer has not reached their 14th birthday on Jan 1st they are considered Under 14 for the whole of that year.

Some schools' competitions use a similar system, but based on September 1st, in keeping with the school calendar.

Fencers under 17 are referred to as **Cadets** and those under 20 are called **Juniors**. Lots of competitions also use other age-groups, like under 11 or under 13, but these don't have specific names.

Fencers over 40 may qualify for **veterans** competitions. Children under the age of 8 are not normally allowed to compete. There is no upper age limit.

● Competition Format (Individuals)

Check In: All competitions start by fencers visiting the check in desk to confirm that they are present. Don't miss this bit out – your entry will be scratched.

When checking in, fencers are required to show their British Fencing card. See the box (right) for details. This carries insurance. Without it, you may not fence.

Fencing usually starts about 30 – 60 minutes after check in closes.

Pools: After check in, competitors are divided into “pools” – groups of 5 – 7 fencers who all fence each other up to 5 hits. (4 hits for some under 9 competitions). Time is limited to 2 or 3 minutes. Sometimes there may be two rounds of pools, particularly in age group competitions.

Direct Elimination: The results of the pools are used to seed the knockout phase of the competition. In some competitions, up to 30% of the fencers who did worst are eliminated, but in most cases all fencers go through to the direct elimination (DE) stage.

The DE rewards fencers who do well in the pool stages, and keeps the strong fencers apart until near the end of the competition. In a competition with 64 entrants, the first round of DEs would see 1st place fence 64th, 2nd place fence 63rd and so on. If the number of

British Fencing Membership

Competition fencers must be members of British Fencing.

Entry forms can be obtained online at www.britishfencing.com

When joining British Fencing, a tick box indicates which of the Home Countries you wish to affiliate to. (England, Scotland, Wales or Northern Ireland). Part of your membership fee is automatically forwarded to your Home Country federation.

At some competitions you may be able to join on the day. Check with the organisers.

entrants is not a power of 2, (ie 8, 16, 32, 64 etc) then those fencers who did best in the pools will get a “bye” through the first DE round. After several DE rounds, there will only be two fencers left – the finalists.

Direct elimination fights are up to 15 hits (adults) 10 hits (under 13s) or 8 hits (under 9s). DE fights are normally 3 x 3 minutes (sometimes less for younger fencers) with a 60 second break between periods.

● Competition Format (Team)

Team competition formats vary depending on the number of teams entered. Teams are normally of 3 fencers. Team bouts can be all-fight-all (3 fencers each fight all of the other 3 fencers up to

5 hits) the result being decided as the best of the 9 fights. Another common system is a relay up to 45 hits, with the fencers at each end changing when one team has scored 5 hits, 10 hits, 15 hits etc.

● County, regional and national competitions for young fencers

County competitions are usually the easiest competitions to get to, and generally include quite a number of novice fencers of various ages. Most counties run web-sites giving details of dates, venues and age-groups. (See centre pages for details.)

Regional youth competitions are usually held in October or November. The top 4 in each age group (or more if the entry is large) qualify for the British Youth Championships in the following Jan or Feb. For this reason, regional youth events use the age based on the **NEXT** Jan 1st. Although the standard can be higher than county competitions, these events are very “beginner friendly”. Details can be obtained from your regional website. (See centre pages for details)

The British Youth Championships are held annually. Entry to the age groups U12, U14, U16 and U18 is limited by regional qualification (see above), but fencers under 10 can enter directly. In order to accommodate the large number of fencers, the BYC foil is held on one weekend, and the Epee and Sabre on another. The under 10 event is held on a separate day. Details from www.britishfencing.com

The England Youth Championships are held annually at U13, U16 and U18. There is no entry qualification. See www.Englandfencing.org.uk for details.

The British Cadet Championships (U17) are held annually. There is no qualification required for this but the competition is mandatory for any fencer wishing to be selected for the national team. As a result, the standard tends to be very high, often stronger than the British Youth Championships.

Counties, Regions & Countries

At the highest level, **British Fencing** handles membership, insurance, and deals with elite fencing, like selecting and training the Olympic team, or organising national competitions.

The Home Countries (like **England Fencing**) deal with grass roots issues, like coach education, club governance and child protection. They have limited international activity between themselves, and within the Commonwealth Fencing Federation.

England Fencing is subdivided into a number of **regions**. Each one helps to manage the sport at a regional level, and they run regional competitions.

County Fencing Unions are sub-divisions of the regions, and run county competitions.

Older children are also entitled to enter adult competitions. They must have reached their 13th birthday before the January 1st of the current season (Sept – July) so if your 13th birthday is on Dec 31st 2005, you are entitled to fight in adult events during the Sept 05 – July 06 season. Many teenage fencers achieve very creditable results in adult competitions, and it is not unknown for 14yr olds to win adult events.

● Leon Paul Junior Series

The Leon Paul Junior Series (LPJS) is a nation-wide series of youth fencing competitions, organised locally but sponsored and co-ordinated by fencing equipment supplier, Leon Paul. There are about 12 Foil and Epee events and slightly fewer sabre competitions, in locations from Falkirk in Scotland to Bude in Cornwall. There are also a small number of team competitions.

In some weapons certain larger LPJS events may also be nominated for inclusion in the national cadet ranking scheme. The chosen events can change each year. LPJS age groups work on odd-numbered years, and almost always have a U11, U13 and U15 age-group. Many also have an U9 section and some include U17.

LPJS individual events are normally two rounds of pools followed by direct elimination. Some U9 events are decided on a single pool, without any elimination rounds.

The standard of fencing at LPJS competitions varies from beginners to national championship standard. However, they are a very beginner-friendly and offer a great entry point to competitive fencing. It is worth letting the organisers know if it is your first event – they will normally be pleased to offer help and advice.

The Leon Paul team competitions are extremely popular, and offer a way for young fencers to participate in competition in the supportive atmosphere of a team. They don't count in the ranking schemes, but this doesn't prevent them from being a friendly battleground for inter-club rivalry!

Full details about the Leon Paul Junior Series can be found at www.leonpaul.com/lpjs/lpjs.htm or by writing to Ben Paul at Leon Paul, Unit 14, Garrick Road Industrial Estate, Hendon, London. NW9 6AQ.

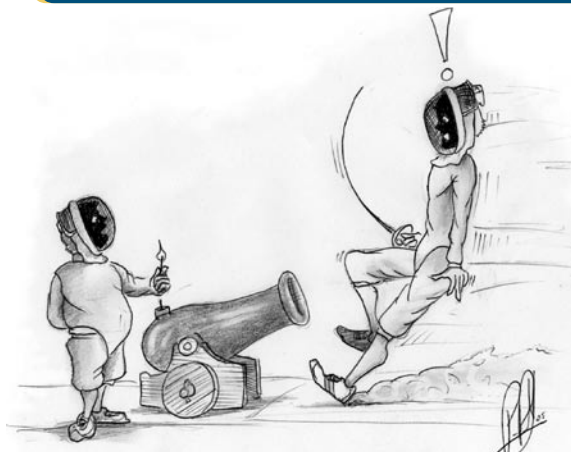
Leon Paul Ranking System

Leon Paul maintain national ranking lists for each weapon and age group, based on the results obtained at LPJS competitions. Each fencer's best 4 results count in these rankings, and Leon Paul offer prizes for the highest ranked fencers at the end of the year.

At the younger age groups, LPJS rankings are a fairly reliable indicator of overall strength, and are the nearest thing that the sport has to a national ranking scheme until U17, where the national cadet schemes take over.

Fencers who finish higher than 24th in any LPJS individual event earn ranking points, and will appear on the ranking lists. See: <http://www.leonpaul.com/lpjs/results.htm> for more details.

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● Contact details and useful information in Southern Region

Southern Region is divided into three county unions – Hampshire, Wiltshire, and the combined counties of Berks, Bucks and Oxon, known as BB&O.

For information regarding fencing in **BB&O**, visit www.bbofencing.org or contact Sarah Roberts on sarah@bbofencing.org

For information regarding fencing competitions in **Hampshire**, visit the Hampshire Fencing website at www.hampshirefencing.org.uk or contact Jenny Morris on 023 8027 1206.

For information regarding fencing competitions in **Wiltshire**, contact Mike Bradbury on Mikebradbury@hotmail.co.uk

The Southern Region also has its own website with lots of useful information, a fixture list and fencing news at www.southernfencing.org.uk

● Outside the region

The world governing body is the FIE, whose website can be found at www.fie.ch

The sport in Britain is governed overall by the **British Fencing Association**, at 1, Baron's Gate, 33-35 Rothschild Road, London, W4 5HT.

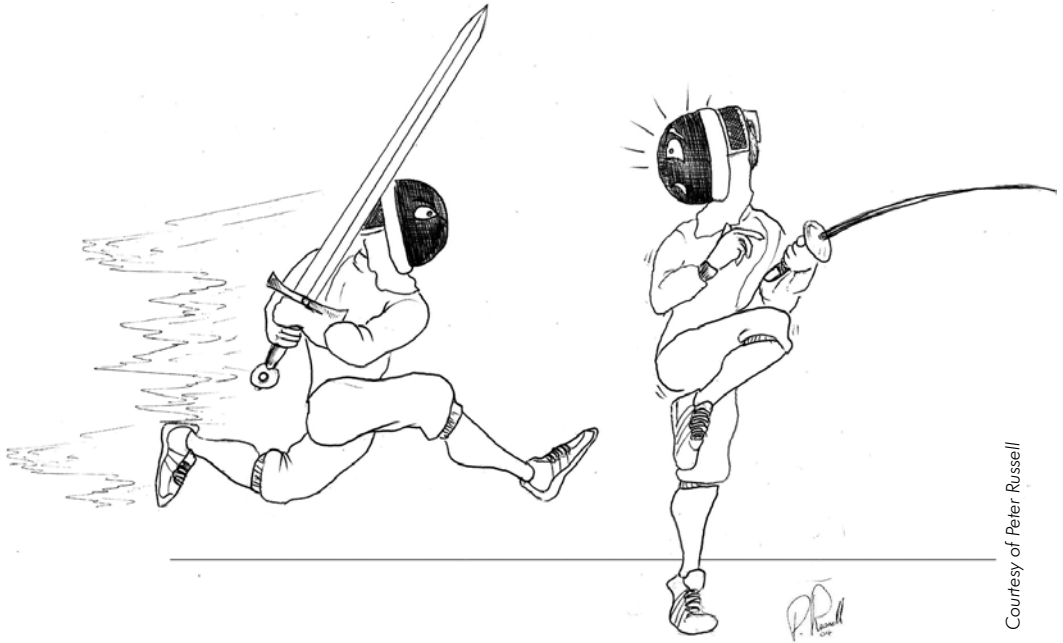
Tel: 020 8742 3032. www.britishfencing.org.uk
England Fencing have their own website at www.Englandfencing.org.uk

● Competition Mentoring

Sometimes, the best way to get information is to chat with people who have experience of your situation. It might be a parent with a fencing child a few years older than yours, or another veteran or disabled fencer, or just a more experienced competitor.

Southern Region maintains a list of mentors and their areas of experience on www.southernfencing.org.uk All mentors who offer help with youth fencing are CRB checked.

● Other Useful Contacts



Courtesy of Peter Russell

National Veterans Fencing Association. The NVFA is open to fencers over the age of 40, and organised a range of competitions, up to and including a vets world championship. www.veterans-fencing.co.uk

British Universities Sports Association. (BUSA) Many fencers who start as students get their first competitive experience at a BUSA event. www.busa.org.uk and follow the links to fencing.

British Disabled Fencing Association. 92, Challinor, Church Langley, Essex. CM17 9XD

The Fencing Forum is an online forum for discussing all matters related to fencing. www.fencingforum.com/forum

Tomorrows Achievers – England Fencing’s youth development group run full day training events and courses on Child Protection, Refereeing and Armoury work. See www.tomorrowsachievers.org.uk

Nahouw is a Europe wide tournament directory listing hundreds of fencing competitions in dozens of countries. It also offers a free email subscription service that will alert you of competitions that fit user defined criteria. www.nahouw.net

Mending equipment can be a pain, but basic maintenance is easy when you know how. This website offers step by step instruction on testing, maintaining and mending electric weapons and bodywires and some other equipment. www.leonpaul.com/armoury/armoury.htm

Each of the armed services has a website for services fencing:

www.army.mod.uk/sportandadventure/clubs/fencing/index.htm

www.royal-navy.mod.uk/server/show/nav.3709

www.raffencing.co.uk

● Premier Foil Series

The Premier Foil Series is based in the south, and consists of 6 or 7 events centred on Surrey, Essex and Bristol, and is sponsored by another equipment Supplier, Allstar-Uhlmann.

Age groups for the PFS are U9, U11 and U14. Competitions are based on a single round of pools followed by direct elimination.

The standard of competition ranges from beginner through to very strong.

More details and entry forms are available from www.fencing.org.uk or by writing to Mark Nelson-Griffiths at Sussex House, 68 Cadogan Square, London SW1X 0EA.

Premier Series Ranking System

The Premier Series also runs a ranking system for young foilists, based on the results at PFS competitions.

Results are weighted in favour of the first and last competitions of the season (Grand Prix events). Because the series is southern based, it tends not to get many entries from Scottish or northern based fencers, and the ranking lists reflect this. Nevertheless, the standard of competition is high, and to finish near the top of the PFS ranking is quite an achievement.

More details at www.fencing.org.uk

● Other competitions

There is a variety of other stand-alone youth competitions throughout the country. The full calendar of national events is published on the England Fencing Website at www.Englandfencing.org.uk

Local events are usually published on county or regional websites – see centre pages for details. It is also common for event organisers to leave entry forms for their competition on the check-in desk of an earlier competition – watch out for these.

● Training opportunities for competition fencers

There are plenty of camps and courses available for young fencers to supplement their club training. See www.britishfencing.com or your local county or regional website for details. For seriously competitive young fencers, there is the England Youth development courses known as “Tomorrow’s Achievers” – see www.tomorrowsachievers.org.uk

● Adult Fencing Competitions

Most counties and regions run annual competitions in each weapon. The difficulty level often depends on the weapon, and whether the local competition clashes with a bigger “open” competition somewhere, which might draw the stronger fencers.

Check your county or regional website (see centre pages) for details.

Open Competitions, as the name implies, are open to everyone. (Although competitors must have reached their 13th birthday by the Jan 1st in the middle of the current season).

Some Opens attract much stronger levels of competition than others. There are so many of them that it is possible to fence competitively almost every weekend of the year (except during August) although you would spend a lot of time travelling!

The size of Opens also varies sharply - At a large Open, Men’s Epee can have 200 or more competitors, but a smaller Open might only

Jargon-Buster

Different weapon categories may be described with two letter acronyms, such as “MF” for Men’s Foil, or “WE” for Women’s Epee.

Competitions offering all 6 combinations of gender and weapon are described as “6W”, meaning “six weapon”.

Novice and Intermediate Events

There is no fixed definition of “novice” or “intermediate” in fencing but there are several competitions held each year aimed at less experienced competitors.

Some of these are listed on the main British Fencing calendar (see centre pages for web address) but many are just advertised on local club or county websites.

Inter-club friendly matches are also a good way to get started.

have a dozen Womens Sabre entrants. One useful guide to the standard of the competition is to look on the British Fencing website results page for last year, and see how many people entered. Then look at the rankings pages, and see how many of the entrants were in the top 50 or 100.

It may not be great for your ego to enter a very large Open for your first competition, but on the other hand, you might have the chance to fence a national champion or even an Olympic fencer in your first fight!

Remember to make sure that you have the right kit before you enter a competition – see checklist at the back of this booklet.

● Student Fencing

Many universities have strong fencing clubs, but they can decline and increase in strength and numbers very rapidly as student year groups arrive and leave.

Some students prefer to enter mainstream adult fencing events, but there is a thriving series of student fencing competitions run by the British Universities Sports Association.

There are also some Junior (U20) events in various weapons, particularly the British Junior Championships held every autumn.

BUSA Competitions

The British Universities Sports Association includes fencing in its participating sports.

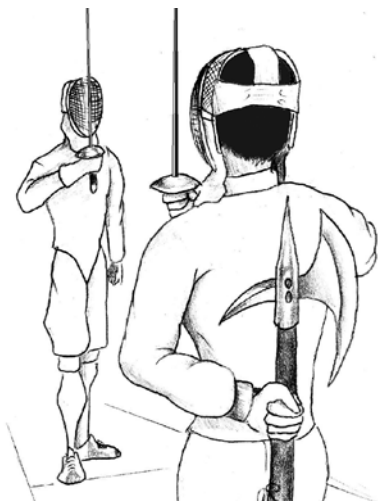
Every year there is a BUSA team and individual competition in each weapon, run with regional leagues and a premier league.

For more info, visit www.busa.org.uk and follow the links to fencing.

● Veteran's Fencing

The National Veterans Association oversees a thriving competitive scene for older fencers. Some Vets still compete in the main open circuit, but others have retired from the bigger events but still keep their hand in. Some veterans have come to the sport later in life, but still attain excellent results.

There are veteran competitions at county, regional and national level, as well as a European and World Vets championship. Visit www.veterans-fencing.co.uk for more details, or write to: John Mason, 18 Sandringham Road, Trowbridge, BA14 OJU.



Courtesy of Peter Russell

Veteran Age Categories

Veteran fencing is divided into 4 age categories. Category 1 is for fencers aged 40-49, Category 2 is 50-59, Category 3 is 60-69 and Category 4 is for fencers over the age of 70.

Many open competitions offer a prize for the best Veteran – this is usually limited to NVA members.

● Competition Checklist

Before the competition

- Complete entry form and send off **with cheque**
- Confirm entry has been received (some competitions list entries received on their website, if in doubt send an SAE with entry to get confirmation)
- Check to make sure you have your **BFA card** and it doesn't expire before the competition

The night before the competition

- Confirm check in time
- Check that all your kit works
- Check route to venue

On the day

- Don't forget to check in
- Make sure you understand the format of the competition. Is it one round of pools or two?
- Warm up properly. The vast majority of injuries at fencing competitions are caused by inadequate warm-up
- Keep listening out for announcements.
- Watch for lists going up on the wall. Make sure that your name is on the list of fencers present.
- After each fight, make sure that you have heard your score correctly.
- At the end of the pools, check the pool sheet to make certain your fights have been recorded correctly.
- There is sometimes a long wait between pools and direct elimination. Keep listening for announcements.
- Don't forget to have fun!

Food, Drink and Shoes!

Some competitions serve great food at reasonable prices, often provided by local club volunteers who rely on the income from food sales to subsidise the competition. Other events may rely on the indifferent and over-priced café attached to the venue, or have no eating facilities at all. It's worth trying to find out what is available in advance.

Make sure that you take plenty to drink – several litres may be necessary, particularly in the summer. Sports drinks are good for replacing minerals, with water or weak squash for replacing bulk fluids.

Some fencers find that they can't eat when competing, others need to stuff themselves between every fight. Food intake is a matter of personal choice, but fluid intake must be kept up. By the time you feel thirsty, you are already dehydrated.

Some venues won't allow any drink except water in the sports halls, and most won't allow out-door shoes. Parents and partners of fencers should avoid high heels or shoes with soles that may mark the floor.



Courtesy of Peter Russell

Equipment requirements

British Fencing lays down certain standards for protective clothing that must be worn while fencing. Some clubs may permit fencing with equipment below that standard, but competition organisers insist that the British Fencing standards are met.

The minimum standard for U14 fencers is lower than that for older competitors, but some organisers require some elements of the higher

standard regardless of age – particularly in regard to breeches. There is a higher standard for FIE (International) competitions. The table below shows the minimum requirements for each section. Note that the lower U14 standard only applies for a competition where all competitors are U14 and using size 3 weapons or smaller.

U14 fencers competing in a higher age group must have equipment of the higher standard.

	Jacket	Plastron	Breeches	Mask
U14	350N Jacket	350N Plastron	Trousers with pockets	Mask with 350N bib
	or integrated 350N Jacket/plastron		sewn shut -no shorts	
FIE	800N Jacket	800N Plastron	800N Breeches	Mask with 1600N bib
Others	350N Jacket	800N Plastron	350N Breeches	Mask with 350N bib

Standard rules for competitions require all competitors to have a minimum of two working weapons and two bodywires at the side of the piste at the beginning of each fight. This is because malfunctioning equipment delays the competition.

The penalty for not meeting this is a yellow card (warning) for the first offence and a red card (one hit to opponent) for each subsequent offence.

Most clubs will lend spare weapons and wires to members attending their first few competitions, but regular competitors are advised to acquire their own spare equipment.

Jargon-Buster

The “N” in 350N or 800N stands for Newtons – the amount of force that the material will resist without being penetrated. All modern fencing clothing is labelled in Newtons

Checklist

- Fencing shoes/trainers
- Socks long enough to meet breeches
- Breeches
- Plastron
- Jacket
- Chest Protector (girls/ladies)
- Lamé (Foil & Sabre Only)
- Glove
- Mask
- 2 working weapons
- 2 working bodywires
- BFA Card
- Drinks