



# GARETH'S

LITTLE BLACK BOOK  
OF SCA FENCING



Gareth whats your secret? "The Pointy end goes into the other man!"

~Gareth

**GLOSSARY** – I have been told the best way to start is to go over common terms that will be used through out this book.

**Stance** –

1. *the position or bearing of the body while standing; legs spread in a wide stance; the threatening stance of the bull.*

**Enguarde** -

1. *A French warning, “On [your] guard”*
2. *A term in fencing adopted from the French warning*

**Pronate** -

1. *to turn into a prone position; to rotate (the hand or forearm) so that the surface of the palm is downward or toward the back; to turn (the sole of the foot) outward so that the inner edge of the foot bears the weight when standing.*

**Supinate** -

1. *to turn to a supine position; rotate (the hand or foot) so that the palm or sole is upward.*

**Parry** - *A defensive action in which the sword, a companion weapon or the left hand is used to avert an incoming attack.*

1. *to ward off (an attack) by blocking or deflecting, as in fencing*
2. *an act of parrying, esp (in fencing) using a stroke or circular motion of the blade*

**Ward** -

1. *to avert, repel, or turn aside (danger, harm, an attack, an assailant, etc.) (usually followed by off): to ward off a blow; to ward off evil.*
2. *Archaic . to protect; guard.*

**Riposte** -

1. *Fencing . a quick thrust given after parrying a lunge.*

**Thrust** -

2. *Archaic . to stab or pierce, as with a sword: She thrust his back with a dagger.*
3. *to make a thrust, lunge, or stab at something.*
5. *a lunge or stab, as with a sword.*

**Sword Terms**

**Pommel** -

1. *a knob, as on the hilt of a sword.*

**Hilt** -

1. *the handle of a sword or dagger.*
2. *the handle of any weapon or tool.*

**Quillon** -

1. *( often plural ) either half of the extended crosspiece of a sword or dagger*

**True Edge - Filo dritto** -

1. *The true edge of the blade, meaning the edge that is pointed to the ground when the sword is in the scabbard. Its role is both offensive and defensive.*

**False Edge - Filo falso** -

1. *The false edge of the blade, meaning the edge that is pointed upwards when the sword is in the scabbard. Its role is also both offensive and defensive.*

**Forte** -

1. *( often plural ) either half of the extended crosspiece of a sword or dagger*

**Debole** -

1. *( often plural ) either half of the extended crosspiece of a sword or dagger*

**Types of Measure**

**Misura Larga** - “wide measure”. *The distance between you and the opponent from which you can offend him with the point of your sword by lunging with your right foot (keeping the left stationary). Clearly, this measure (as all the others) depends on several factors such as your stature, ability, and on the length of your sword. Measures are therefore relative and not absolute.*

**Misura Stretta** - “narrow measure”. *The distance between you and the opponent from which you can offend him with the point of your sword by just bending your body and knees forward and extending your arm (without moving the feet).*

## GLOSSARY

***Inquartata*** - The *inquartata* called for a displacement of the body from the line of attack by pivoting on the leading heel while simultaneously throwing the rear (left) leg backwards and sideways to the right. The body was removed from danger, while the defending blade was left in center-line to contact and oppose the adversary's sword.

***Intagliata*** - The *intagliata* is a forward offline step done with the forward leg. This side step is performed by stepping across the body with the forward leg.

**HISTORICAL REFERENCE** - I do not teach a single Master. I take parts from those I agree with.

***Giacomo di Grassi*** ~ Italian fencing master who wrote the fencing manual *Ragione di adoprare sicuramente l'Arme, si da offesa come da difesa* in 1570.

The text was later translated into English and published again in 1594, as Di Grassi, ***His True Arte of Defence***. Di Grassi was one of the three premiere fencing masters known from Elizabethan England.

His main teachings were that weapons of the same length are used similarly, the thrust is preferred to all other attacks, as well as specifics on how to thrust and handle specific weapons.

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***George Silver*** ~ was a gentleman of England during the late 16th and early 17th centuries, who is known for his writings on fencing.

George Silver's ***Paradoxes of Defense*** was published in 1599. A companion volume, ***Brief Instructions Upon My Paradoxes of Defence***, was not published until 1898 by Captain Cyril G. R. Matthey, based on a manuscript found in the British Museum.

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***Camillo Agrippa*** ~ a noted fencer, architect, engineer and mathematician of the Renaissance. He is considered to be one of the greatest fencing theorists of all time.

He is most renowned for applying geometric theory to solve problems in armed combat. In his ***Treatise on the Science of Arms with Philosophical Dialogue*** (published in 1553), he proposed dramatic changes in the way swordsmanship was practiced at the time. For instance, he pointed out the effectiveness of holding the sword in front of the body instead of behind it. He also simplified Achille Marozzo's seventeen guards down to four: *prima*, *seconda*, *terza* and *quarta*, which roughly correspond to the hand positions used today in the Italian school. He is also regarded as the man who most contributed to the development of the rapier as a primarily thrusting weapon.



*This book is dedicated to*

**THL ALBRECHT STAMPHER**

*Mentor / Father / Friend*

*I have to say that I have truly been blessed. I remember a cool September evening at University of Toronto. A long lost friend had told me of the SCA and said I should go and check out my local area.*

*I was in luck. I followed the crowd and watched as person after person put on a rattan sword, and took swings at a gentle behind a large heater shield. The thunderous blows rang through the court yard.*

*Just past this large group of people stood a regal looking man poised beside a tree standing alone with a small stand of swords. His garb was well made and he looked every bit an english gentleman (well german as he tells it).*

*He was polite, well spoken and keen. His eyes shone with an inner glow as he began speaking eloquently and knowledgably about his chosen craft. In truth I heard what Charlie Brown hears “Mwahhha wahhha. wahhha... awaaah”. But I was still entranced by his manner and his enthusiasm for the topic.*

*With a warm smile he reached out and placed one of his rapiers in my hand. And from that moment on I was hooked. My hand moved through the air, the sword blade swooshed. My inner child rejoiced.*

*The rest of the night was a blur I remember taking down the fair gentiles name, shaking his hand and thanking him for his time. His smile was genuine when I asked where and when I could learn more. And so the very next week I found myself on a bus after work traveling to his apartment to learn the Arte of Defence.*

*What can I say about this wondrous man.*

*His love of knowledge is contagious he made me want to know more. There was always more, he was a fount of knowledge and he shared with anyone and everyone.*

*Personally he taught me how to move, how to defend and how to dance. He allowed me to learn at my own pace. Through his patience and understanding showed me the way.*

*He let me glimpse what it was to be a true gentleman within the lists and without. I have often watched in awe, and tried in vain to emulate. But I have found that you can not copy a true work of art.*

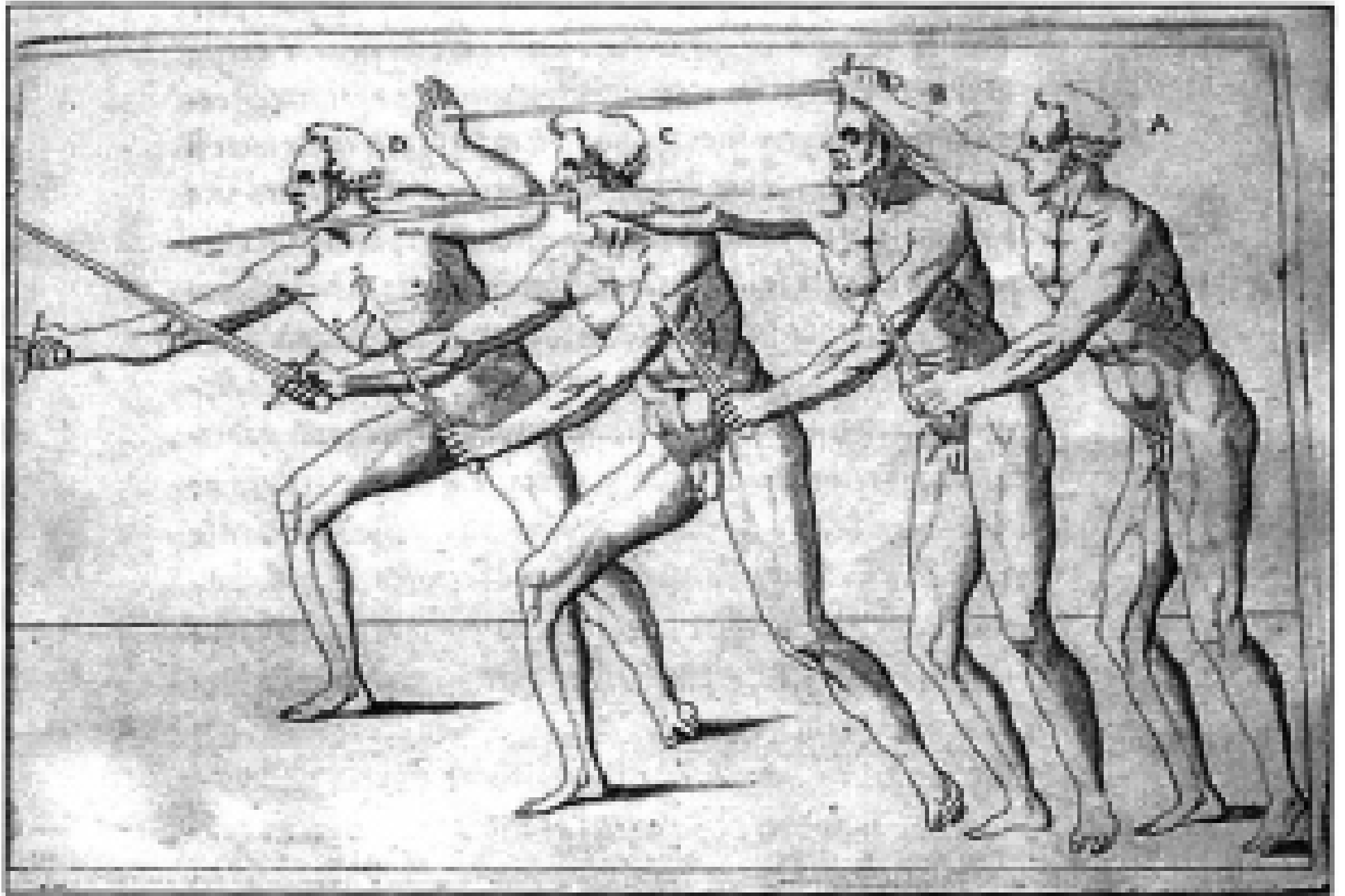
*You taught me all I needed to know, and in doing so made me a better person, man and fencer. Thank you for letting me into your life, your family and your living room.*

***“Gareth the fencer was created by Albrecht,  
my Mentor, my father and my dearest friend.”***

*Thank you for being you and teaching me to be a better me...*

**THL GARETH CABELL**

*Student / Son / Friend*



*Camillo Agrippa*

## GARETH'S PHILOSOPHY

*If you master the principles of sword-fencing, when you freely beat one man, you beat any man in the world. The spirit of defeating a man is the same for ten million men.*  
~Miyamoto Musashi, *The Book of Five Rings ~ Go Rin No Sho*

One has to take this part with a grain of salt as this is simple opinion and works for me but may very well not work for others. I view fencing first as a mindset. It's a fine balance. One must be secure in their skill and enter the list with confidence. But one should never be too confident. One must never underestimate one's opponent, or put them on a pedestal.

Anyone can be lucky and everyone can be killed. Even the dreaded "THEM".

I believe in defence first. As long as you are alive there is time for you to secure victory. Rushing in and forcing the issue will often lead to an opening and you being killed. There are times to push the offence but that is when you have been patient and your opponent has left an opening for you to exploit.

When watching me fence you will very rarely see me move forward. I will retreat or compass pace, keeping my safe measure. If I can't hit you, you will be hard pressed to hit me.

How does my style differ from my thoughts on training? There is not much variance. However I will teach how to rush, how to bind, how to press the advantage in a defensive way. This will not work for everyone.

I will be open and honest from the start. There is no real magical formula. What I do works for me. Aspects of my training and theory are sound and can be easily translated to another's form and style. Other aspects may well be out of reach.

I will tell you now, I was a poor student. And, much to his credit, I am the fencer I am now thanks to Albrecht. His ability to teach and his boundless patience will always be appreciated. And, as always, I am proud to say

*"He made me, blame him"... THL Gareth Cambell*

~ GARETH'S LITTLE BLACK BOOK OF SCA FENCING ~

## DEFENCE

I see defence as the ability to defend oneself using a keen sense of measure, a solid parry, and not running head long onto the blade of one's opponent.

When a person attacks they leave holes in their defence. By not pressing the attack and keeping your defence solid you allow your opponent to open up to you, so you can then react and take advantage.

## MIND SET

Walking into the list I see it as mine. My opponent is already dead, we have just to find the correct moment in time to make it a fact. So yes one has to have a confidence in their abilities that borders on arrogance. This, however, should not translate into being stupid.

The other edge of this mind set is that you have to believe, in your mind, that, should your opponent breach your defence and score a touch, you will truly be dead. This is no game; there is no second chance, no do-overs. This is life and death.

You are invincible but yet must see yourself as fragile. I hope to express this in a more practical way as you work your way through this book.

## FEAR

I fear no one, and everyone. It is easy, in your mind, to place a good fencer on a pedestal. In so doing you have, in your mind, raised them up and left yourself open to attack. Fencing is 90% in the mind and 10% in the motion.

You can be the best fencer on the list but if you see your opponent as "THEM" you will be beaten. It is hard to overcome our admiration for those who we see as our betters. You must look hard into yourself and realize that we are all just flesh and blood. There are no Gods walking among us.

Now also remember that anyone with a sword can kill. So just because they are new does not mean you give them one inch more than any other!

## HAVE FUN, PLAY SAFE

SCA fencing is a touch sport. If you feel it, it's good. Communicate. If you are unsure, ask. Be polite, touch as you want to be touched. And have fun!

STANCE



MY STANCE





*Whatever the Way, the master of strategy does not appear fast. . . .  
Of course, slowness is bad. Really skillful people never get out of time,  
and are always deliberate, and never appear busy.*  
~Miyamoto Musashi, *The Book of Five Rings* ~ Go Rin No Sho

## STANCE

Where does one start? As with any martial activity we start with stance.

**Stance** –noun

1. the position or bearing of the body while standing; legs spread in a wide stance; the threatening stance of the bull.

The fencing stance starts with the location of the feet. This shows that your lead foot is pointed forward. Your trailing foot is behind it and pointed almost 85 degrees to the side, so that your feet make an “L” shape.

This starting foot position changes depending on if you fight right or left handed. Your lead foot is your dominant foot. I am right handed so my right foot is forward pointed straight ahead.

The amount of space between the lead foot and the trailing foot depends on your comfort level and stature.

Straighten your shoulders, so that your posture is erect. Head held high and slightly back (do not lead with your head) rest easy on your hips. Rock slightly back and forth in this stance to get the right feel for you. You do not want to be too rigid or too loose.

Drop your sword arm into the en garde position (*Secunda, Second*)

a) Your wrist position with the sword is with the back of your hand up.

pro·na·tion –noun

1. rotation of the hand or forearm so that the surface of the palm is facing downward or toward the back (opposed to supination).

b) Your sword blade is pointed up, aimed at your opponents head, the blade is tilted to 45 degrees.

c) Your off hand should be up and out to your side with your hand slightly cupped. This helps with balance but also allows your off hand to be used to parry the blade coming in on your off side, for added protection.

My stance is more forward and a block stance. My shoulders are almost completely straight. I happen to give my opponents a full target profile. I often joke that I fence like a brick. My shoulders square, my one leg out front, and my arms roughly the same aspect in front of me.

This of course leaves a great deal of surface area for people to aim at, but it also leaves my arms and hands out front for optimal defence.

**The debate often is:**

*“If I were to fence more sideways and less squared up, leaving a smaller target profile I would not have to defend as much as there is less to hit.”*

I shrug that off as; “Well, it’s how I fence”. I find it more comfortable.

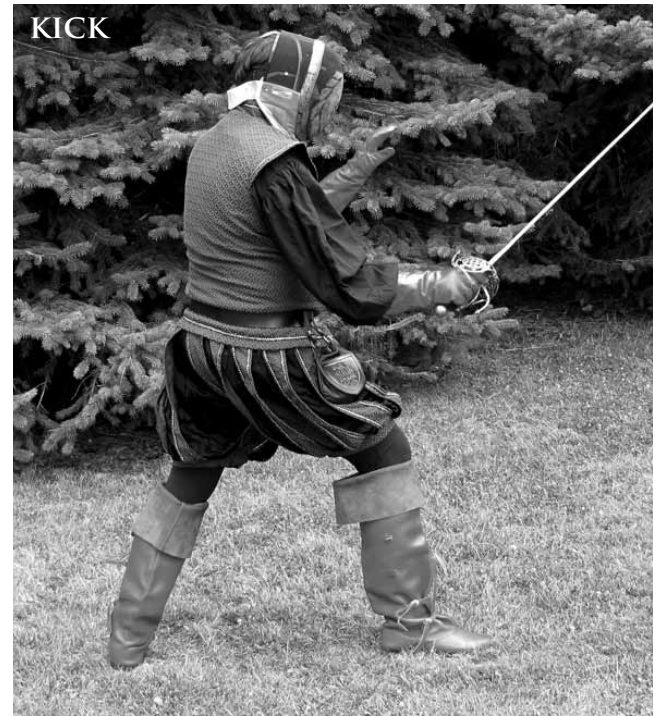
I do teach others to have a more compact stance. It works for some, not others. Again, I think it comes down to comfort level. Standing with my lead shoulder forward, my off-side shoulder back, and my hips at more of an angle is uncomfortable for me.

Now, that being said, it’s good to understand both stances. A person in the more Olympic stance (turned sideways) often is very focused on offence. They feel that their tight body and limited profile allows them to worry less about defence. They will be hard to find holes in and often will use the ability to lunge.

I will start the match off with a tight profile but as I get into the match often I’ll square up and wait. Again, this works for me as I know where my holes are and anticipate others going for those places. Knowing your own faults and limitations is another key.

In my stance I often leave my right upper arm exposed. When I over-parry across my body I’m slow to react and leave my right shoulder open.

My height often affords me greater reach, but it also leaves my midsection and my upper thighs open to attack. I’ll often leave the leg out as bait. I may lose the leg but quite often I’ll take your head!



HALF PACE (*Fencing Step*)

*If you wish to control others you must first control yourself*  
 ~Miyamoto Musashi, *The Book of Five Rings* ~ Go Rin No Sho

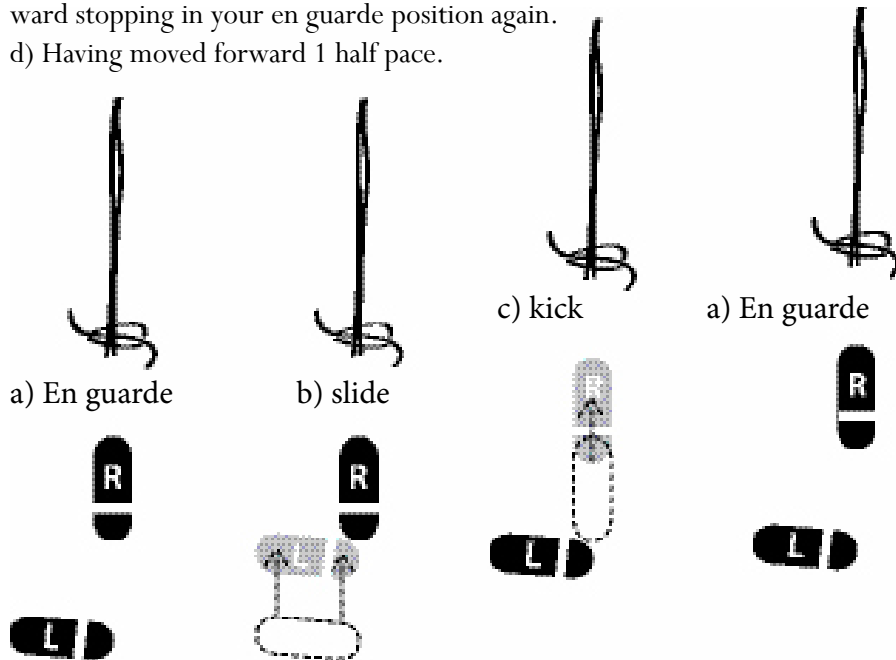
I was trained in footwork based on *Di Grasse - His True Art of Defense*. So I tend to teach and often train in this fashion. There are forward, reverse, and circling movements. It is important to train and practice these movements so that your body retains the information on its own. Everyone complains about drills and will shy away from doing footwork drills. I tell you this as a person with poor footwork. **“You are only hurting yourself.”**

When moving forward it's important to find an easy, comfortable distance. You do not want to over step and find yourself being left flat-footed, or worse, off balance. Never jump or skip. Remain with one foot firmly planted at all times.

## FOOTWORK

### HALF PACE (*Fencing Step*) -

- Start in your en garde stance.
- Slide your trailing foot forward across the ground, kicking the heel of your lead foot.
- When they meet plant your trailing foot and move your leading foot forward stopping in your en garde position again.
- Having moved forward 1 half pace.

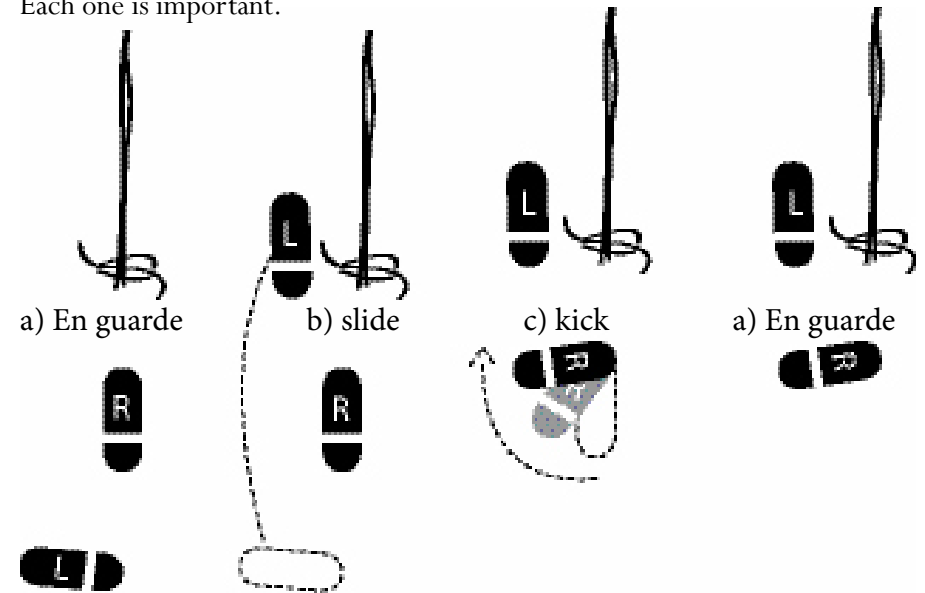


### FULL PACE (*Whole-pace or Pass*) -

The full pace moves you forward a greater distance and moves your stance from en garde to defence. It is used to close measure fast. This range of movement is like walking.

- From the en garde position.
- Your trailing leg slides forward, (not a wide swing out to the side) and the foot lands pointed forward.
- Your lead foot pivots on the ball of your foot as your hips shift. The back foot is now left at 85 degrees. Your shoulders shift as you make this move, pulling your sword arm back and allowing your off hand to be forward. This is all one swift movement with a lot of little changes in stance.

Each one is important.



You have moved ahead and stopped in what I call a defensive stance. When in fact it is like a snake, you are coiled to strike. Either using another full pace and striking your opponent within his measure. Or moving for greater distance by going past the full pace into a lunge.

Often if you see a fencer move into the defensive stance they are getting ready to move quickly and with strength into your measure.



EN GARDE



SLIDE, PIVOT, EN GARDE

FULL PACE (*Whole-pace or Pass*)



EN GARDE



SLIDE



PIVOT, EN GARDE

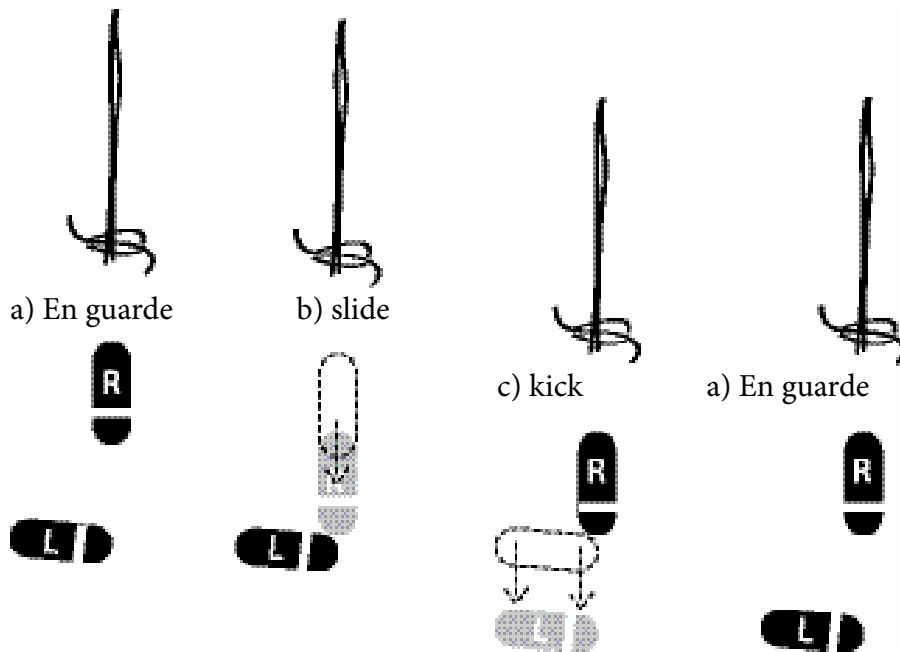
*When you decide to attack, keep calm and dash in quickly, forestalling the enemy...  
 attack with a feeling of constantly crushing the enemy, from first to last.  
 ~Miyamoto Musashi, The Book of Five Rings ~ Go Rin No Sho*

The art of tactical withdrawal. Often people consider moving backwards to be a retreat. I see it as your best defence. A good understanding of your measure and your opponent's reach is key in any match. There will be times when you are pressed or feel the need to gain an even footing. So you use parry 9, you reverse the forward motions I showed you earlier in the book and move back. Gaining valued space and time.

## PARRY 9

### HALF PACE, WITHDRAWAL (*Fencing Step*) -

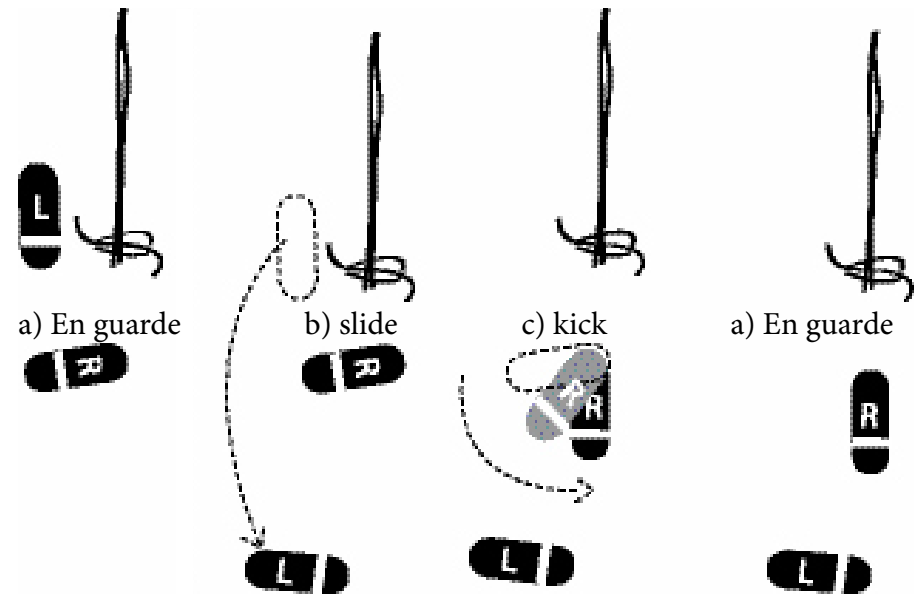
- Starting in your en garde stance.
- Using your lead foot slide it back across the ground kicking the heel of your trailing foot.
- When they meet plant your leading foot and move your trailing foot backwards stopping in your en garde position again.
- Having moved backwards 1 half pace.



### FULL PACE, WITHDRAWAL (*Whole-pace or Pass*) -

So the retreat of a full pace is just like walking backwards.

- From the en garde position.
- Your lead foot slides backwards, (not a wide swing out to the side) and the foot lands at an 85 degree angle.
- Your trailing foot pivots on the ball of your foot as your hips shift. Your shoulders shift as you make this move, pulling your sword arm back and allowing your off hand to be forward. This is all one swift movement with a lot of little changes in stance. Each one is important.



This shows moving back from defensive stance into your en garde.

Quite often this move, be it forward or backward, is used as two quick steps. From en garde, through defensive stance back to en garde.

After awhile, with practice, it will be like two solid strides toward your opponent with the ability to drop to defensive if the measure closes faster than you expected. It is the fastest means of closing measure.

*It is not a charge, or a run!*





THE COMPASS PACE (INQUARTATA)



*In battle, if you you make your opponent flinch, you have already won.*  
~Miyamoto Musashi, *The Book of Five Rings* ~ *Go Rin No Sho*

## THE CIRCLE OF DEATH

The compass pace (Circular-pace or Slip or Quarte). I use this form of movement more than any other. It is one of the simplest looking movements and yet one of your greatest tools. When I am on my game I will find the center of the list and stand there. I will allow my opponent to see me stand there, sword point aimed at the ground, my shoulders rounded forward, my body open and facing them like a brick wall.

And thus starts the Circle of Death. Using a compass pace I rotate my body in a circle allowing my opponent to stalk me. I move slowly and allow them to almost get completely past my forward arc before I compass pace again lining up with them.

I can, while doing this, either inch slightly back or ever so slowly forward, if I drop or extend my en garde position with my sword arm. It will give the illusion that I am in the same spot pivoting in a precise circle. This again comes down to a use of measure. And moving closer or further apart without placing yourself in danger.

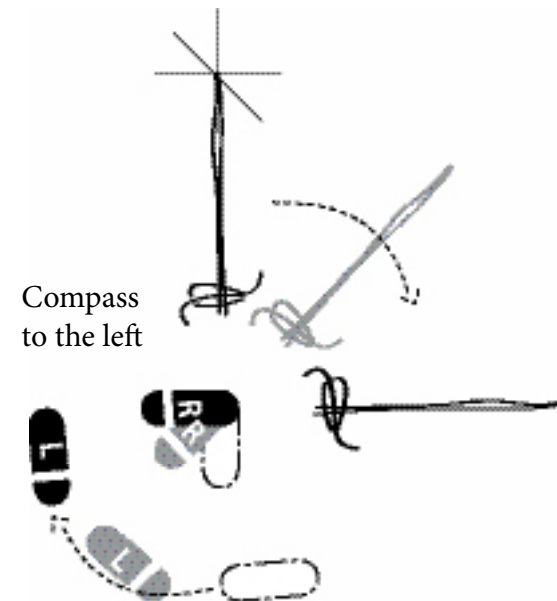
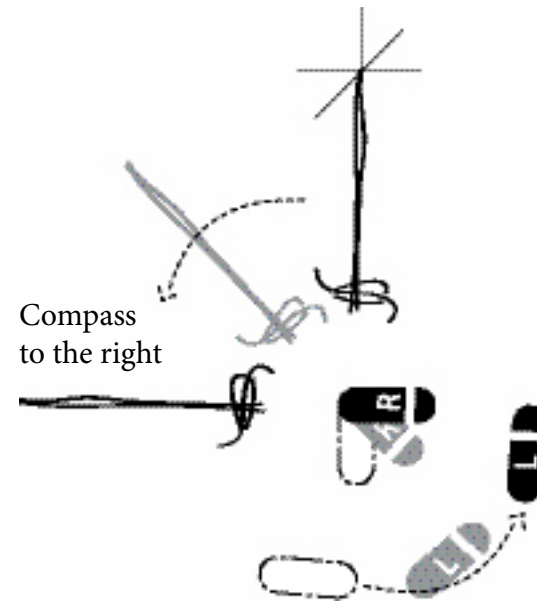
## THE COMPASS PACE (INQUARTATA)

Compass to the right

- Starting in your en garde stance.
  - Pivot on the ball of your lead foot (this is the center of your circular movement), swinging your heel to the right.
  - Your trailing foot swings to the right (on the radius of the circle), as your hips shift, landing again in an en garde position.
- You have shifted your en garde position almost 45 degrees in a circle.

This movement can put you off balance at first but as you practice it becomes very important in movement.

*As your opponent thrusts to your head you can start your pivot as you parry his attack out of line. Finishing your compass pace to the right you can shift your parry to a thrust. You have voided past the attack and now have an opening to your opponent's side.*



EN GARDE



STEP OUT



EN GARDE



EN GARDE



STEP OUT



EN GARDE

THE SLOPE PACE (INTAGLIATA)



*There is nothing outside of yourself that can ever enable you to get better, stronger, richer, quicker, or smarter. Everything is within. Everything exists.*

*Seek nothing outside of yourself.*

*~Miyamoto Musashi, The Book of Five Rings ~ Go Rin No Sho*

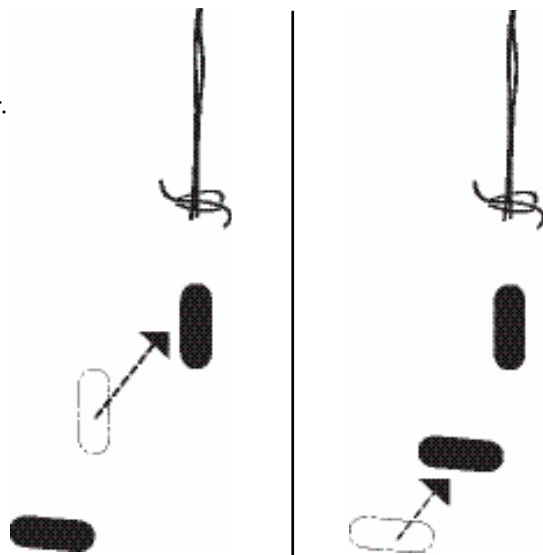
The Slope-pace is used when moving on a 45 degree angle. It's used both forward and backward. This movement is used to take you out of line, often to attack your opponent on their flank, past their forward guard.

This move is also a good defence if your opponent comes forward quickly or in a lunge. Slope-pace past his line, you can parry his sword as you move to his side leaving him open to a strike.

## THE SLOPE PACE (INTAGLIATA)

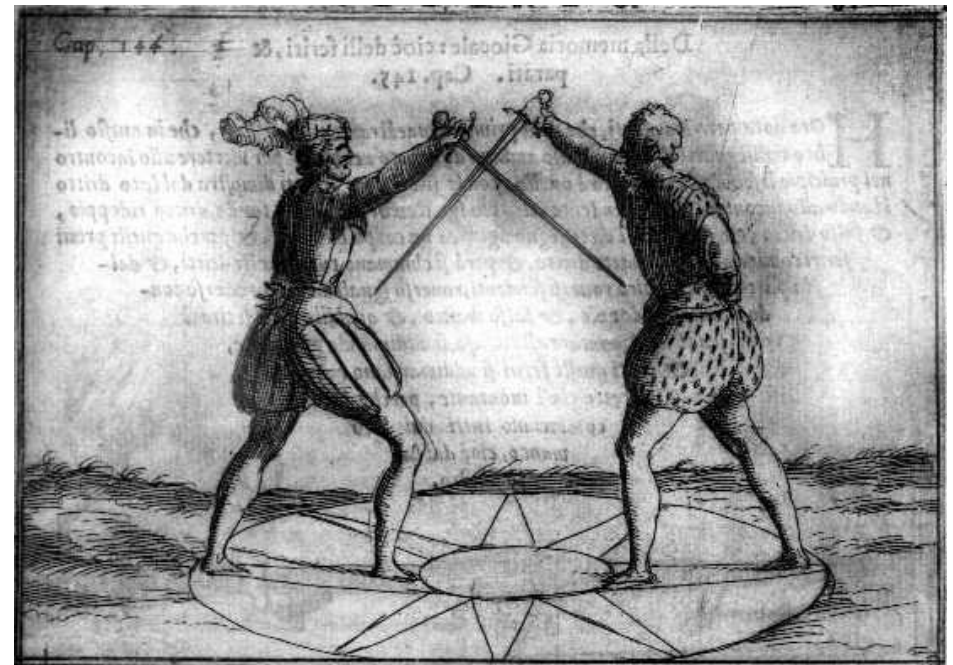
- a) start at your en garde position and step across on an angle. Much like a full pace but on an angle not forward. Your front leg shoots out at 45 degrees.
- b) as your back foot moves to follow.

You have moved on an angle from one en garde to another.

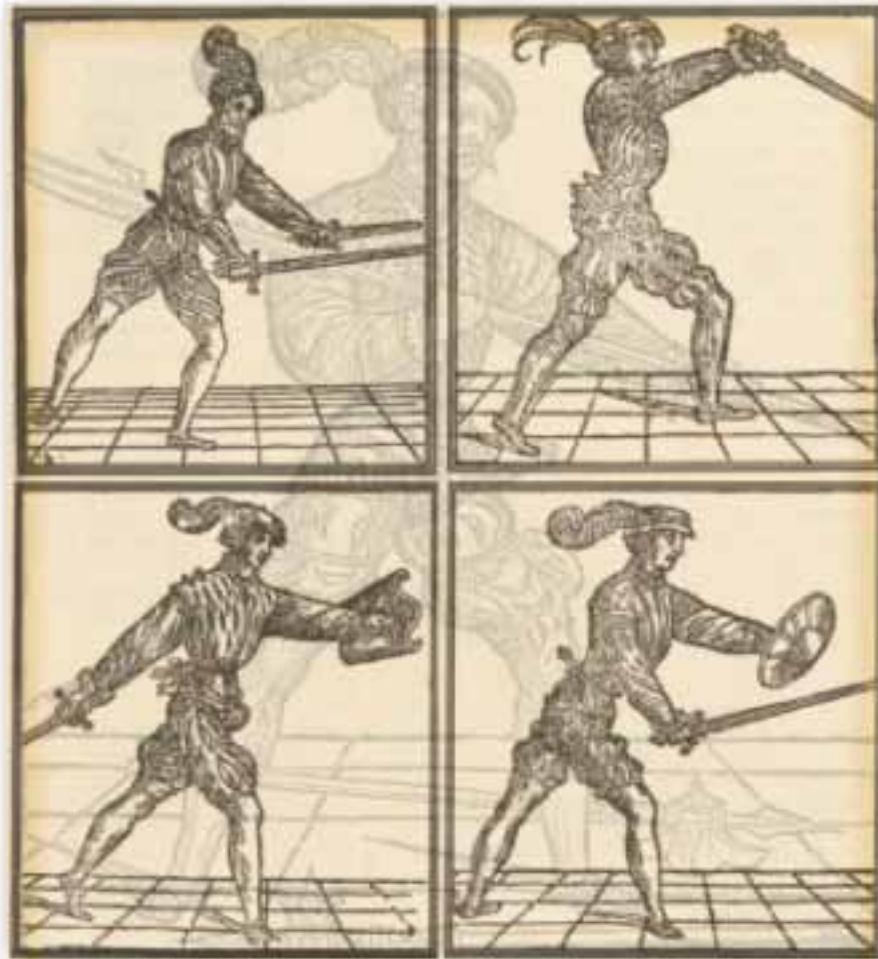


*As your opponent thrusts to your head you can start your pivot as you perry his attack out of line. Finishing your compass pace to the right you can shift your perry to a thrust.*

*You have voided past the attack and now have an opening to your opponents side.*



*Achille Marozzo*



Achille Marozzo - Renaissance Swordplay c. 1536

*Achille Marozzo*

*It is a great question, & especially among the rapier men, who has the advantage, the thruster or the warder? Some hold strongly, that the warder has the advantage.*

*Others say, it is most certain that the thruster has the advantage.*

*~George Silver*

## THE ART OF DEFENSE

There are many schools of thought on fencing in general. Spanning time and language. Italian, Spanish, German & English masters. All taught their version of sword work, often with subtle variations on a common movement.

The area that most often changed was that of their theories on attack and defence. To some it was simple. A good defence is a solid, fast offense.

Or a good offense is a solid defence and striking fast at the hole created.

I will explain my thoughts on defence here.

***“Fencing is not to strike and be struck in return.***

***It is to strike and not be touched.”***

I have been told I take this tenet too seriously. When watching me fence I often keep to a measure beyond my own. I understand and know my measure. If I know I cannot hit my opponent, I am confident they cannot reach me. I use parry 9 as my main source of keeping measure. If an opponent attacks into my measure with a fast movement or lunge, my increased measure allows me greater flexibility to avoid being struck.

Along with parry 9, I also use body voiding (*moving my body out of the sword's path without changing my footwork*). Often this is a split second body response to a threat my mind seemed to miss. One does not see a shot coming for their heart and think ***“hey I'm going to bend backwards out of the way.”*** Your body, after countless hours of practice, just responds. Often to the dismay of both you and your opponent.

There have been several times a great looking body void has saved my life, but left me with back pain and stiffness the next day.

***As with the start of the book all things start with footwork.***

***I cannot stress this enough.***

***And so defence also places emphasis on solid footwork.***

Understand your measure, your movements and use that knowledge to learn to gauge and judge the measure of others. Always watch how others fence and move.

Now after footwork and knowing measure we move forward and start to work on using the sword for defence, the parry.

I will discuss how to defend yourself with the sword as well as your off hand.

The use of the parry (wards, sword positions) is universal to all schools of fencing. There are, of course, many schools of thought. I am of the belief that a strong parry is key to any defence. I teach the importance of the proper form and technique as you flow from one ward to the next. Using the sword and off hand to protect yourself.

I tend to follow ***Camillo Agrippa*** and his four guards: prima, seconda, terza and quarta.



SWORD PARRIES





*Because this is the first that can be made after clearing the sword from the scabbard, it is called first. Lowering the hand a little so that the arm is at the same height as the shoulder is the second. By slightly lowering the sword-hand and moving it to the outside and closer to the knee, you will make the third. Finally, moving the sword-hand inside the knee makes the fourth. These are the primary guards because many others can be made from them depending on the situation.*

~ **Camillo Agrippa**

## SWORD PARRIES

**Parry** - defensive use of weapon to block thrust or cut.

Modern term adopted from the post 1660 French school jargon.

verb (used with object)

1. to ward off (a thrust, stroke, weapon, etc.), as in fencing; avert.

2. to turn aside; evade or dodge: to parry

There are eight parries in the classical systems of epee and foil fencing.

Parries are classified based on three attributes:

- 1) The direction of the blade in relation to the hand: up or down.
- 2) The position of the blade in relation to the fencing line: inside or outside.
- 3) The rotation of the wrist in the hand holding the weapon: supinated' (nails up) or pronated (nails down).

The orientation of the hand and the angle of the blade are important.

I will try to show the proper stance as well as position in the pictures.

## THE FOUR WARDS

There are four wards that we start with. Because we are using the understanding that any gentleman of the time would be armed with his sword at his side. We must use the economy of motion concept. The sword must be drawn up high to get clear of the scabbard So the first ward is High Ward (Prima, First)

### **High Ward (Prima, First)**

a) Start at the waist and pull up till your right hand is by your cheek, the blade slightly down aimed at your opponent's head. So that a swift thrust will strike him there.

If your point is too high your opponent may charge under it and strike. If the point is too low he may sweep it out of the way with his blade. So it has to be just right.

This ward is awkward and heavy. Holding your sword up in this position for any length of time is a strain. So other than being a period nut, you often only see this one as a way to confuse your opponent. Often its, "ummm what's that" and you shift back not sure what they're doing.

An opponent can push you up that high but if they do you might not want to be there for their follow through. They have clearly gotten the upper hand, use footwork and a hand parry and get out of there.

### **Middle Ward (Secunda, Second)**

b) Once you have cleared your scabbard and used High Ward to gain some measure, drop down to Middle Ward (Secunda, Second). Lower your hand leveling out your arm till its shoulder height, elbow slightly bent with sword pointed out at your opponent's head.

Now it's important to note at no time does your point leave its target.

### **Low Ward (Tirce, Third)**

c) From here dropping down into the Low Ward (Tirce, Third) is where you want to be. Quite often this is where you will start. I call this your en garde position. The Low Ward (base ward, lock ward) is a stronger position than any other ward. It is easier to both strike and defend from. It is also the most relaxed and comfortable of the three wards. The hand should be near and outside the knee, and the point should be raised. The blade becomes angled to the left.

### **Inside Ward (Quarta, Fourth)**

d) The Inside Ward (Quarta Guardia) moving to here from Low Ward is your main sword parry. When done well it will protect your upper body and head. This is also the starting position for reverse thrust (punta riversa).

When gardeing your sword arm and the outside of your body you move from Low Ward, shifting your wrist and arm slightly up and out. This slight move-ment cuts the angle and protects your arm and shoulder.



HAND PARRY  
- UP AND AWAY



HAND PARRY  
- DOWN AND AWAY



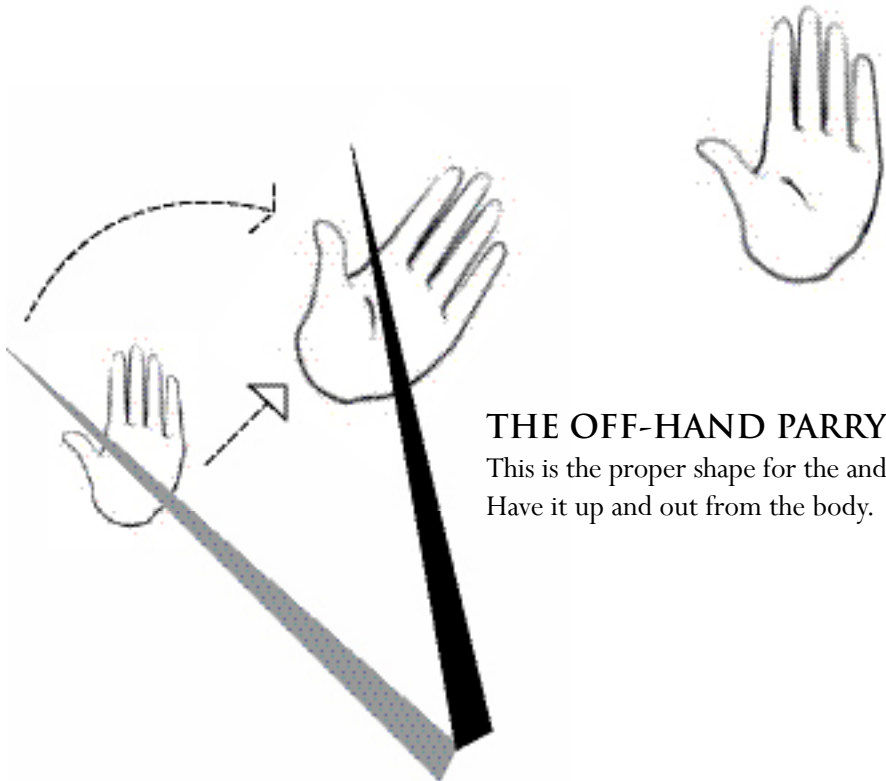
Coming therefore first to this weapon, as unto that on which is grounded the true knowledge of this Art, being of reasonable length, and having edges and point, wherein it seems to resemble every other weapon, It is to be considered, that forasmuch as it has no more than two edges and one point, a man may not strike with any other than with these, neither defend himself with any other than with these. Further all edge blows, be they right or reversed, frame either a circle or part of a circle: of the which the hand is the Center, and the length of the sword, the Diameter.

~Giacomo di Grassi

When standing in your en garde position with your sword at the ready and your head slightly back what should you do with your off hand?

Does it go behind your back? Does it go to your side on your hip? Is it simply there for balance?

I am not known for doing this but I teach it and try to hammer it into my students. “**Get that off hand up there**” it can save your life.



## WHAT CAN A HAND DO?

The first important thing to note is that the hands are a legal target. And quite often having your hand up and out there as a defence will draw attention and more often than not get hit. This should not discourage its use. Be careful, yet watch to see how your opponent reacts to it.

(see diagram)

- 1) The sword falls into the hook made by your thumb and hand.
- 2) Then push the hand up and out turning the hand with the blade till it is well out and past your body.

**Lure**~ If they see it as a target and keep going for it. Watch for it and draw them in. As they attack, pull the hand back and see if they're slow to defend.

**Distraction**~ The hand can distract, wave, wriggle, make small circles, anything that draws attention from the tip of your sword.

**Parry**~ The hand can parry the blade (take your hand and make an “L” leaving all your fingers flat). Using the slight dip between the thumb and forefinger let the blade rest in the recess and push up and away from you.

Any shot coming in on your off side can be taken out of line this way.

**Catch & Release**~ I use this often on instinct. My hand snaps out catches the blade in a fist and redirects the thrust out from the body. I do lose the hand but I've saved my life. It's done in one fast motion. The hand grasps the blade as it comes up and pushes it out of line and then releases it out of line.

*Inigo Montoya: You are using Bonetti's Defense against me, ah?*

*Man in Black: I thought it fitting considering the rocky terrain.*

*Inigo Montoya: Naturally, you must suspect me to attack with Capa Ferro?*

*Man in Black: Naturally... but I find that Thibault cancels out Capa Ferro. Don't you?*

*Inigo Montoya: Unless the enemy has studied his Agrippa... which I have.*

~ *Princess Bride*

## PHILOSOPHIES ON DEFENCE

There are varied philosophies on defence.

Mine is strangely different and yet works for me for the most part. I will let the words of others explain their thoughts. As I believe all philosophies are valid. You must learn what is right and works for you. As stated before, what I do works for me. But most people will tell you that standing in the face of all other rationale, it should not.

### *Di Grasse ~ The Means of defending*

Di Grasse believed there were three ways to defend against all attacks from either point or edge.

1) *The first is the parry* - your weapon opposes the opponent's.

A parry can be made with a sword, dagger, a stick, your hat, your hand

Di Grasse believed that the parry is not always the way. He believed that there were inherent bad habits taught along with the parry. He found the habit of retreating while parrying to be problematic.

Retreating was caused apparently by a lack of confidence in the parry's ability to control the opponent's attack.

By retreating you had a greater likelihood of being hit by (or near) the point, and so take a stronger, more dangerous, blow.

Retreating takes time, to strike you must first take a step back to where you were before. This leaves the risk of a counter attack and gives your opponent an opportunity to defend.

I advise stepping into a cut, with the left foot taking a sloping step forward.

Thereby, the attack's measure will be misjudged, and the cut can be taken close to your opponent's hilt, where it has less power. In addition, by stepping forward, you can strike in the same instant. This manner of defence is so sure and quick, I use it above all others.

The second way to defend is useful primarily against a cut with a great compass (broad arc) - or when the cut is being prepared with a pull back of the hand.

This defence requires a sudden thrust with the point, Most attackers will perceive the danger and back off. If they choose to continue, you will henceforth find that they weaken as opponents, by reason of the blood which goeth from them. \*

The third means of defence is the void, in which the body is taken away from the line of the attack. This is seldom used alone, but rather used with an opposition with the weapon as described in the first means of defence, or as part of a timing attack as described in the second means above. If used alone, the idea is to move enough to let the opponent's weapon slip past, while hitting simultaneously with your weapon.

### *George Silver's Principle Grounds*

*"through Judgment yo kepe yor dystance, through Distance yo take yor Tyme, through Tyme yo safly wyne or gayne the Place of yor adursarie, the Place beinge woon or gayned yo haue tyme safly eyther to srytke, thrust, ward, cloze, grype, slyp or go back, in the wch tyme yor enemye is dyapoynted to hurt yo, or to defend himself, be reason that he hath lost his true Place, the reason yt he hath lost his True place is by the length of Tyme Tyme though the numbg of his feet, to wch he is of necessity Dryven to yt wilbe Agent."*

This theory works for me. I enjoy the opening. Silver places judgment above all other else. First understand yourself, your abilities and your faults. Only by understanding yourself can you then judge these things in others. Our judgment must be accurate, objective and fast. Learn to judge your opponents reach, speed and their strength. Always be observant and learning.



*"You may abandon your own body but you must preserve your honour."  
~Miyamoto Musashi, The Book of Five Rings ~ Go Rin No Sho*

## PHILOSOPHIES ON DEFENCE

*Where to start. I guess firstly is that I believe fencing is the art of defence.*

I believe a good defence will win out over a good offence in most cases. There are some times when you are just out classed skill wise and that's not a negative on your defence. It does not make the philosophy unsound.

Quiet often After being killed by a more skilled opponent I have been told I was hard to kill and to me that's a compliment. If I can stay alive with an opponent that is more skilled than me and force them to think or react differently to kill me. That's still a win for me.

My first question is often what is the closest target of my opponents to me during any given engagement. It sounds too easy but its hands. I have spent hours practicing my point control to try and snipe those small holes and odd angles around a guard in order to take hands.

This of course is 2 fold. If I take both of your hands I win as you are no longer able to defend yourself. But also it allows me to play at my range in relative safety while putting you off your game. Very few people are comfortable in there off hand. So if I only get your one hand it leaves me at a tactical advantage.

I have over the years hammered at others and told them

***"I want to see a parry, they have to show me they can defend themselves...  
I'm sorry an attack is not a parry".***

Yes, if you follow the philosophies of some masters a parry and attack in 1 time is optimal. And to this I agree. But if you read the whole of it. It's a solid effective parry that takes your opponents blade out of alignment and an attack along that line to a kill.

**It's unfortunate that often they forget that it has to start as a parry.**

They do not take the blade out of alignment and they thrust forward. So truthfully it's not 2 items in 1 time... It's really just an attack. And quiet often a double kill.

This leads me to one of my thoughts. Do not force a bad situation. Back up parry gain measure and reset if you find yourself pressed. Pushing a bad situation that you are no longer in control of will get you killed.

This is why I follow Silvers philosophies as close as any.

I personally have little forward movement during a match I use parry 9 to excess. To mean often I am pushed to the edge of the world and the match is reset to the center. I also rely on compass pacing to circle around as my opponent tries to find an angle to attack me at.

I spent over the first year fencing doing only single rapier. It is my belief that until you feel comfortable and are commitment with single rapier in hand. You should not add another weapon or defensive tool to your off hand.

The one constant in almost every fight other than dagger/dagger is that you have single rapier along with other forms. If you are not good with the rapier having something in your other hand will not make you any better.

Play your game, relax, keep your measure, and wait for the whole that your opponent will create when they attack. If they leave a whole you know you can take without danger of being hit in return by all means take it. If you can create a whole safely without fear of retaliation take it.

But always keep to your defence. If you are dead you can kill no one. If you are patient and keep yourself alive. Your opponent will get frustrated and make a mistake.

Another facet of defence I use is the body void. Shifting the body out of the way at the last second is tricky and often leaves you sore the next day. But as a means of defence can be very effective. as you do not retreat and your opponent is closer to you and open to attack.

This should be practiced often as well doing it slow and expecting to be out of the way of a fast moving shot... Hurts when it connects.

“You must understand that there is more than one path to the top of the mountain”

~Miyamoto Musashi, *The Book of Five Rings* ~ Go Rin No Sho

## DEFENCE AND YOU

**Don't lead with your head** ~ I look at the head as the safest target. It has the most protection. It is the least likely to be shrugged off as not a good hit. Head shot takes speed that's often it. I often say any new person can kill you by hitting you in the head But its normally a fast hard shot.

With new people I find the head shot is the safest way kill them. They often lead with their head. What do I mean by this term. The bend slightly at the waist let their shoulders roll forward and there neck and head is forward.

This leading with your head will get you killed. I have been asked over the years over and over.

**“Why did I die so fast”... “What was I doing wrong”...** and I have and will say 9-10 times. If I attacked and you died. It's going to be a head shot and you lead with it. It's simple to fix. But it's a habit you have to break.

Now I will often lead with my head as a taunt or a tease. This leads me into my next thought.

## DO AS I SAY... NOT AS I DO...

**I break every rule I teach and often.**

Does this mean you should do it too... Nope. You need to understand your own limitations and holes. You have to expect that every time you are lazy or indifferent. You will be killed. If it's by choice or by accident lazy, sloppy, fencing can get you killed.

**Know your holes**~ To understand other peoples defence and limitations you have to be brutally honest with yourself. I know my wholes, I know my limitations be it poor footwork and lazy stance. I know what wholes I project. So I know what holes to protect more. So I seem to be faster than I am because I have a good idea where you may be going before you do. I'm the first to say I'm far from perfect, I'm lucky not good.

**Watch and learn**~ Always watch others fight. When standing in the list drink in how they move, how they react. What holes do others find. People are creatures of habit. Often what they do if pushed one way is how they will react when pushed that way again. Quiet often when fighting a new opponent I will do things I do not ordinarily do. To see their reactions and to change how they see me the first time. First impressions stick. If you can vary that impression later on anything you do different will be a surprise

**Hand up**~ I'm lazy... my off hand is often at my side dangling doing nothing or behind my back. But I can tell you that quiet often that hand has saved my life. Instinct is a great thing. And that high fast shot coming for your heart. If you practice and get used to using your hand to redirect shots across your body WILL save your life and often when you don't even expect it. Muscle memory is a wonderful thing. Often I don't register the shot but feel my hand shooting out and making contact. I'm often more surprised than my opponent

**oooooh that looked neat**~ Over the years I have found that other people learn new things. And the best way to learn new things. ASK... That cool pass over technique by Giganti, those very fluid defences with sword and shield by Marosso. I have spent afternoons in the hot sun with other students of the fencing arts just going over that cool combination of movements that I could deconstruct and use myself.

When you get to sword/buckler, sword/dagger **Achille Marozzo**~ **Achille Marozzo's Opera Nova (1536)** will be a great accompaniment as he shows you how to protect, conceal and attack from the safety of a small buckler. I have taken some of his movements and played with them with out the buckler. And they have been fun. **Coda Longa (Long tail)** is a favorite.

There are fencers out there that are just fun to play with and the styles are as various as snowflakes. Everyone could study the same master but no two people move the same. So there are always subtle variations on their style.

Albrecht made me, but we move very differently.

People are often surprised when I say with pride! **“He made me”**

*“Today is victory over yourself of yesterday; tomorrow is your victory over lesser men.”*

*~Miyamoto Musashi, The Book of Five Rings ~ Go Rin No Sho*

## THE GRAY AREA...

**Calibration**~ So to me it comes down to some simple facts.

I fence because I enjoy it, I'm good at it. Fencing is a contact sport. In my mind it is a **“Touch”** contact sport. Meaning if I can hit you with a fast thrust that kisses your chest.

And you stop and realize damn I felt that. That is skill, control and the right way to play.

**I do not live by the code of hit hard and fast to bust through there defence I find the ruling that it is not a hard hit unless it causes you to be unable to continue the match at that moment, HIDEOUS**

I have had 3 fractured ribs, 2 dislocated fingers in 9 years of fencing. I have had countless bruises, skid marks, been chopped at and yes even pummeled to the face. I have had shots that have taken my wind out and left dents in my mask so deep you can lose your thumb in them.

I have people who I think are great text book fencers, these are learned people. Not some common thug. Who take this rule to the very edge and will hit you hard enough to make you cry. And not care because

**“hey if you can continue the fight, I didn't hit you that hard”**

Still waiting for someone to explain to me why you let the extreme outcome dictate the rule. Oh its only a hard shot if it breaks you... Any thing else up to that is OK.

**I DO NOT AGREE...** I teach fencing as a finesse sport of skill and technique. I have shown you can have speed without force. You can hit with a light touch and people will take it. If they do not you can as with all things AMP it up. But I always start light.

I have hit hard, it's impossible to always hit light. Be it movement, miscalculation or just being tired. It happens but for some people it's not the exception is the norm! It's unfortunate that these people hit hard but also take hard hits. They are not hypocrites. They just have a different way of thinking when it comes to the sport. And safety.

## WHAT HAPPENS IN THE LIST...

**The Dark Side**~ Its a sport for fun and we all want to win. And in a sport that is based on everyone being open and honest bad things can happen. We all want to believe that when we fence it's this open honest relationship between two people. And that the outcome is going to be black or white. Unfortunately things often never are. With a varying degree of armour, a multitude of styles and rule interpretations. There is often quiet a sticky gray area.

### What you think vs. what you hear back from your opponent:

*~The hit was good, the blade bent, felt contact. “Nope I didn't feel it”*

*~The hit was good, the blade bent, felt contact. “Cloth, Button, Belt...”*

*~The hit was good, the blade bent, felt contact. “Flat, chop, wasn't point on”*

*~The hit was good, the blade bent, felt contact. “(nothing) fight continues...”*

### **I cannot stress this enough, communication is very important.**

Don't get angry, try not to stoop to their “level”... Stop and ask.

The time to ask and wonder or complain is in the list with your opponent at the time it happened. This often causes less arguments then it starts...

### **Some people will take any question as a mark against their honour.**

I would rather a person ask and talk it out. I do not want resentment to grow. If I say I hit you and you say I didn't I point it out. And then replay it.

Often ill just replay the fight other then let someone walk away angry.

After a while some people will gain a reputation for not taking hits, for hitting hard, and for telling their opponent what was good on them.

And these people seem to not care or change.

## THRUST



## DRAW-CUT & PUSH-CUT



## TIP CUT



*“The ruby is meant to represent a drop of blood.*

*It is the symbolic representation of the way of the primary edict.*

*“It means only one thing, and everything: cut. Once committed to fight, cut. Everything else is secondary. Cut. That is your duty, your purpose, your hunger. There is no rule more important, no commitment that overrides that one. Cut.*

*“The lines are a portrayal of the dance. Cut from the void, not from bewilderment. Cut the enemy as quickly and directly as possible. Cut with certainty. Cut decisively, resolutely. Cut into his strength. Flow through the gaps in his guard.*

*Cut him. Cut him down utterly.*

*Don't allow him a breath. Crush Him. Cut him without mercy to the depths of his spirit.*

*“It is the balance to life: death. It is the dance with death.”*

*~Richard Rahl, Temple of the Winds ~ Terry Goodkind*

## WAIT FOR IT... WAIT FOR IT...

### Types of blows:

We have several types of blows in fencing a thrust, a draw/push cut and tip cuts. These different blows have to do with the area of the blade used to deliver them.

**Thrust**~ The point of the blade touches the opponent

**Draw cut**~ A portion of the blade edge is pulled across your opponent to cause a wound.

**Push Cut**~ A portion of the blade edge is pushed across your opponent to cause a wound.

**Tip Cut** ~ A wound created with the tip of the blade.

### To quote from DiGrassi:

*“Without all doubt, the thrust is to be preferred before the edge-blow, as well because it striketh in less time, as also for that in the said time, it doth more hurt. For which consideration, the Romanes (who were victorious in all enterprises) did accustom their soldiers of the Legions to thrust only: Alleging for their reason, that blows of the edge, though they were great, yet they are very few that are deadly, and that thrusts, though little and weak, when they enter but iii fingers into the body, are wont to kill.”*

*~ GARETH'S LITTLE BLACK BOOK OF SCA FENCING ~*

**Point control**~ Point control is something I practice to excess. Aiming for the smallest ring on a hilt. Looking for that little glint of gloved pinky. Point control has to be learned and practiced constantly. And I cannot stress how important it is in the game I play.

To hit what one aims at is important. And in a game where a fraction of an inch is the difference between victory and defeat. The better control you have the more often you will be one the winning side.

**Closest target**~ With good point control you are able to pick your targets easier. Knowing that you can hit the smallest hole helps.

**Targeting**~ When fencing within the SCA it's important to note where you are and what rules they play by. What is a kill shot. What is considered a good arm or leg shot. We will be using Ealdomere's current rule set as that's where I am now.

Point control only comes with time and practice. I have used a tennis ball hanging from the ceiling by a rope as well as a door knob in a hall way. Something small that I could move a bit around and fire shots at. I have done up to 4 practices a week where I would spend the night just attacking toes and hands. Learning to snipe as it were.

We have spent months at a time doing only bleeding at practice no kills only light touches to the body and the hands. All of this time and effort has paid off for me. I am fairly good with my point control. But like any skill you have to learn it, practice it.

After learning the movements and actions of parry and thrust. In training start slowly sparing going at 1/4 speed. Just playing with each other making sure to follow proper position. And as you grow more comfortable move up to half speed. And then to full speed. During this time practice your touch/calibration. Learn about the speed and feel of a touch. Learn to cock your wrist to take some of the force off a hit. Learn how to pull a shot so as not to hit hard.

All these things are not easy and again take time and care to learn. Practice, practice, practice...





MISURA LARGA



MISURA STRETTA

*Know your enemy, know his sword."*

*~Miyamoto Musashi, The Book of Five Rings ~ Go Rin No Sho*

## CAN YOU HIT ME FROM THERE...

### Measure~

**Misura Larga** - "wide measure". The distance between you and the opponent from which you can offend him with the point of your sword by lunging with your right foot (keeping the left stationary). Clearly, this measure (as all the others) depends on several factors such as your stature, ability, and on the length of your sword. Measures are therefore relative and not absolute.

**Misura Stretta** - "narrow measure". The distance between you and the opponent from which you can offend him with the point of your sword by just bending your body and knees forward and extending your arm (without moving the feet).

Understanding your measure is important. Understanding the different measures for your opponents is more so.

So what attributes make up measure.

Height, arm length, sword length and length of their lunge or single forward motion (I say this as some forward motion is not considered a lunge but still adds to a person's measure.)

So I tend to use my measure against all opponents. If I cannot hit them they can not hit me. But I am 6'4, I have long arms and legs. If I go into a lunge I can cover a long distance.

Other people are shorter or taller, some use 42' blades others 36'... It all matters in the end. When entering the list watch to see their blade length. Watch how they move are they fleet of foot, do they tend to move forward fast. How tall are they.

All things to help you size up your opponent. And help figure out their measure. Again I'll mention that while waiting to enter the list watch your fellow fencers.

Look for their holes, their movements and there tells.

## PARRY RIPOSTE...

**Riposte**~ a fencer's quick return thrust following a parry.

So we have talked about defence and the parry and the different guards. Now we move towards attack. And we again start with defence and show that a good defence makes a good offence.

For each parry you can riposte at your opponent. Now you want to make sure you have a good strong parry and you have moved your sword out of line with you before you riposte or they can follow your line and most likely create a double kill situation.

A well executed parry is the best start to a good killing blow. You are attacking from a point of safety and some control.

Each parry will open a different form of riposte. The follow through motion is fairly predictable, you can shift and adjust the point angle and direction but too much variation will slip you out of the parry. And will leave you open to a response by your opponent.

A standard well executed parry riposte is very fast and direct. And hard to protect against. You are within their measure. They have made a hole and are moving in for the kill. You have few choices at this point.

Find a way to move out of line. A compass pace shifts your body line and changes your sword out of their repose line. Often stepping back fast will force them to come up short and miss their riposte. Or try to parry the shot with your off hand.

You can also shift your regular parry line out past its normal arc and hope you have pushed them far enough out of line to make them ineffective. This is a last ditch attempt as you are moving further out of line, it leaves you open should they do a fast disengage or pull back and add a fast thrust.



PRIM (FIRST)



*"Do not regret what you have done"*

*~Miyamoto Musashi, The Book of Five Rings ~ Go Rin No Sho*

## MOVING IN FOR THE KILL...

So we have looked at the parry riposte And I know you're wondering when do I get to kill my opponent well we start here and now.

The first kill shot that I see all new people go for is the head. An blazingly fast all or nothing shot at the head. Now this is good and bad. Often people see a new person and are left to believe they will be easy to defeat. I have learned that the new fencer is the one to worry about the most. They do not know not to do this or hey that won't work.

So you are used to fencing people who follow the rules. So the new fencer sees the open head and in there zeal they fire a fast shot and put too much power behind it. And will ring the other persons bell.

As a new fencer please be careful of these joyous shots and all that enthusiasm Remember your calibration. And go for the shot. But don't hit to hard.

Now when considering your attack you have to go back to your defence. As your guard will allow you to attack a specific way. As will how you parry and move.

I will split the body into 4 sections for your ease. Upper, middle and lower are all kill areas.

**Upper**~ This is from the shoulders where your neck attaches to the top of your head. (head and neck)

**Middle**~ The middle is just that. From the shoulders down to the hips.

**Lower** ~ The legs. (Upper thigh, hips, groin)

**Hands & Arms**~ These are not kill areas but they are my preferred targets of opportunity.

The most efficient way to split this is to go by guard position and give the 3 basic attacks for each. Each of these attacks are assumed to have a slight forward motion. Be it a half step or a lean forward to gain measure.

The off hand in front and out to help protect.

## Prim (first):

**Upper:** From the high guard with your sword angled in front of you, you can fire a killing shot from here to the Upper section. Coming down and letting the blade go forward straight. (for some who are shorter they need to let the blade tip rise and move forward)

**Middle:** From High guard with your sword angled in front of you, you can fire a shot forward. Aiming for center mass (solar plexus) Aiming for the middle will be the best shot as it allows you room to pivot as you are parried. Or if the parry is late to hit a shoulder as you are shifted past center mass.

**Lower:** The lower shot is slightly different. As you need to change the wrist position. As you drop your arm and point you switch to Seconda (second) and drop the point down and in towards there lower body. This is awkward but effective if your opponent is not aware of the versatility of coming from Prim.

Prim is not the best ward to be in. Often its considered the start and transition into seconda and into tirs. More often than not in the SCA you will start in your en garde stance with your sword in Tirs.

Prim has that classic feel and looks cool but is hard to hold and defend from. Quiet often it's used to throw off your opponent within the SCA if you are not trained by a book learner you will often not even use Prim. So often it's a nice way to distract or make your opponent wonder.

When I see it I giggle step back half a step to be out of its range as often a shot from prim is done with a lunge or fast step forward. I'm just far enough back they might keep their arm in Prim longer...

Causing them more fatigue. Sword held in prim is hard... lol

SECUNDA (SECOND)



TIRS (THIRD)



*“if he goes for your foot, poke him in the head... its basic geometry”*

*~Gareth*

Following the guards we move to **Secunda (second):**

Secunda starts with the arm out with a slight bend at the elbow. It's like a lightning bolt. Shots fired from here should be forward. Often people will do what is called shot gunning. Before they fire a shot they will pull their arm back and then fire forward with much more force. This is bad as it's a huge tell, but also again the shot if it hits will be very solid.

**Upper:** From Secunda you are on an even plane. Your sword is mostly flat, tilted up slightly at the point. But it's a straight shot to target. Aim for the nose of your opponent and thrust forward with a forward moment. When not defending this is one of the most used shots. It's a speed shot. It can be a finesse shot if it's done fast and with little pressure. A kiss shot as its sometimes called. Your opponent hears it more than feels it. Just enough contact to touch but not to rock the head back. Your opponent has to stop a second to realize your arm moved and they heard the thrust on their mask. And they are dead!

**Middle:** From Secunda you are just firing straight ahead at your opponents solar plexus. Again this is a fast shot to the center mass. Do not pull back and fire forward. Just extend your arm fast with forward movement This shot is often a good opener that will be parried most times. But can slip through if the parry is slow or late. Also with this shot it's easy to add a slope pace and move around the parry. Shifting your body off line. And letting your blade pivot off the parry to keep on line for the kill.

**Lower:** From Secunda as you move forward as a thrust to the middle, bring your off hand out front before your head and drop your blade tip as you thrust forward. The angle difference will change where you hit. A slight angle will get just under the hilt of the parry and can connect lower belly and groin area. If your fast and can get in and out you can even take a foot.

This shot should always be done as a fast in and out. It leaves you very exposed. The off hand should be up and out to protect in any case.

Moving into **Tirs (third):**

as mentioned before have your off hand up and ready to parry anything that may threaten you as you attack. While you attack you leave a whole. Protect yourself as you try to kill.

Welcome to the en garde position. This will be your defensive position. Quiet often any shot from here will be a riposte through a parry. However like the other 2 guards you have the ability to attack from here as well.

**Upper:** From the en garde position you are thrusting up and out with your forward movement. Your point should already be aimed up at their head. So it's just a forward follow through with the sword and your arm.

**Middle:** You move forward and thrust and drop your point to hand level and push through to the center mass. Again this may get you parried or not. An early parry may miss. A late parry might drive the point home into the shoulder.

**Lower:** From the en garde position you are lowering the point of the blade by dropping your wrist and moving forward. This is often done fast, starting as a middle shot and dropping at the last second under the hilt. Again aiming for the belly area, often hitting groin or upper inner thigh.

Now if the person is known to be slow footed aim at the top of there thigh as they move back you might get knee. It's only a leg but it's something. If I'm in close and my blade is down before I pull back ill try to get a draw cut on the calf or the ankle.. Take what you can when you can.

*If your opponent is of choleric temperament, seek to irritate him.*

*~The Art of War, Sun Tzu, 600 BC.*

**Hand & Arm:** Hand & arm are not a kill shot. But they are items of interest. If I can take your hands you can no longer continue to fight. If I take your main hand you are forced to fight with 1 hand and in your off hand.

Most people do not train much in there off hand. So taking their main hand is a handy cap!

Depending on the hilt taking hands can be difficult. Most of all its your point control and calibration.

**Ring hilt:** If your opponent has an open ring hilt you can see a single hole at the top of the hilt. If you follow the blade line down you can poke into that hole.

The best defence for this is a wrist twist at the last second that will shift the hole causing the thrust to deflect or hit hilt.

**Bell guard:** The bell guard is by far the hardest to get around as it's a solid bell around the whole hand. There are no gaps, no holes, just this sweet sounding ring as you hit it.

How do you get into or around this. You shift the angle of your opponents guard. Each hit on the guard will cause the bell to shift. If your opponent is not paying attention you can shift the angle of the guard. This will allow you to see a fraction of wrist. It's a small margin but its better than none.

The other way around the bell is to lever over. Firing your shot to the top of the bell guard. As your tip goes over the edge raise your hilt quickly so the thrust is redirected over the edge down to the wrist. Or if the shot is coming towards you, you hit forearm.

**Clam shell & Pappenheimer hilt:** There hilts are good guards but have openings on the top and bottom of the hilt. If your guard is to low or to high. You can see exposed fingers on the grip and pommel or the top of the wrist. These holes are smaller than the ring hilt. But manageable with good point control.

**The Arm:** The arm is another target it's not as hard to hit as the hand through the hilt but often its further away and you have to reach for it. Often Ill aim for the top of the hilt as my opponent is moving in and my tip will hit lower forearm. If they're moving too fast sometimes you get the skid into the elbow and lower biceps. This stings and often bruises fast.

Quiet often you will fire a shot to the center mass or upper chest. And the parry will push you into a shoulder or biceps. If I'm being pushed out wide ill try to take the arm as I leave. Better something then nothing.

If your first shot doesn't get you a kill take any piece that is available. It may not be a kill but it's one step closer.

**Legs & feet:** I teach 2 things using geometry. The distance between your sword and my foot is less then my sword and your head. So if I see you going for my foot. I poke you in the head. Even if you manage my foot. I have to sit... your dead.

I also teach how to snipe the foot. Test out your opponent see how they protect their feet. If they use a low leg parry you can play around and try for their leg.

If they snap the foot back and thrust down and out towards your head. Don't go for the foot.

Often you will be parried low and away or you will find yourself in a low bind both blades down low. I will try to angle my blade to take a calf or an ankle before I manage my retreat. Again the same as the arm. If you can take them one piece at a time... do so!

Place your off hand on their blade push it away as you pull back from the clinch and draw the edge of the blade over there leg as you go.

*The good fighters of old first put themselves beyond the possibility of defeat,  
and then waited for an opportunity of defeating the enemy.  
~The Art of War, Sun Tzu, 600 BC.*

## **MOVING IN VS. CHARGING...**

The concept of forward movement is often at the discretion of the one moving. If a person rushes at me and I hit them too hard it is said to be my fault. I am to have care and control of my blade and be able to break my wrist so as not to connect too hard.

Stepping back and doing a stop thrust on a person is often not considered a happy medium. But sometimes with some people it's all you can do. A stop thrust is when you pull back out of range your arm extended and relaxed. You have no forward motion when your opponent makes contact with your tip and you pull back with their momentum.

If their forward momentum is still coming at you, you then break your wrist and pull back with your arm. Your tip still touching them and your pulling the blade back as if they are pushing it with their momentum. And really they are. What is forward movement vs. charging.

This is subjective and I will as always give my interpretation. It is not the only one there is. But it's how I see it and respond:

***Forward motion is when you move forward at a controlled pace keeping your defence up and mounting a controlled attack.***

**It is not running or charging the opponent.**

**It is not putting your head down and flailing your blades  
as you run at an opponent**

Now I am a tall man with a long reach. I have seen every manner of advancement to try and get in close and take away my reach advantage. There are people who charge in. They know that if I hit them hard I will be called on it. So they hope that one moment of frustration and reaction will be enough to get in close and get the kill.

~ GARETH'S LITTLE BLACK BOOK OF SCA FENCING ~

Those people get the stop thrust. And if it hits them hard there is no more I can do about it safely.

I will not die simply because it's easier for you to charge than to attack with care and skill.

You can cover a great deal of distance using the footwork I have shown in this book. I have seen it done quickly and efficiently. Covering distance need not be dangerous to either party.

Now learning how to use your off hand and a parry so that you can move the blade out of the way as you make your way into your range and my measure. That is how it should be done. Gaining control of your opponent's blade or at least holding it out of line as you move in will work better.

I used to feel bad whenever someone would charge in and I hit them hard even after doing everything I could not to hurt them. I think both sides need to take care of each other. One side cannot be completely held accountable for the safety of both parties.

***Take care of yourself and those you play within the lists.***

***Flailing***~ We all do it at one time or another. It's either inexperience or fatigue. Your sword just swishes around in the air around you trying hard to protect you, lashing out at your opponent. It's fast, hard and out of control.

***know your limitations...***

Here is where we ask everyone to understand their limitations. No one forces you to fight past your own comfort level, or constantly till you are too tired to safely defend yourself. We are there to govern ourselves. You know when you're tired and when you are a danger to others and yourself.

**Stop take a break and rest take a drink, get out of the sun.**

**Come back when you have rested some and can enjoy the fight.**

**Watch your energy level, think of your exposure to sun and heat.**

**Don't wait till someone has to ask you to sit down for your own safety.**

*He who knows when he can fight and when he cannot will be victorious.*

*~The Art of War, Sun Tzu, 600 BC.*

## THE BEAT PARRY...

I do the beat (snap) parry here as its more into attack then defence. The beat parry is a strong wrist parry that makes your blade snap against that of your opponents.

As a parry is sword on sword pushing and controlling, The beat parry makes the Perry and snaps against the blade pushing it off with force.

This parry is strong and causes your opponents blade to vibrate and move off line fast.

While the blade moves off line and vibrates you can make a fast thrust at your opponent while they struggle to gain control of the blade and come back into line.

This parry causes your opponents wrist and forearm to fatigue quickly. I used to use it constantly. But over the years I have let it become only the odd time. As I would get people complaining that my parry was too hard and they could not fight for the rest of the day as there wrist hurt.

But it's a viable form of attack/defence working together. This form of beat attack comes from German forms. Beat the blade down then hit it more and come back up with a quick strike while it's out of line.

At the right time this form of attack can cause you to win a match. But it's not a thing you want to do constantly. Vary your attacks. Look at your angles.

## NOT ALWAYS A STRAIGHT LINE...

Every straight thrust has different angles that can be achieved. There will be many times where a straight line is not the quickest way to a given point.

We always teach and drill in the proper parry. The angle, the amount of redirection to pass the body from a straight thrust.

Now is where we let you know that forever excellent parry that stops that first shot. There are several ways to pivot or change the angle of the blade so that it by passes that excellent parry.

Following any parry aimed at the center mass and successfully parried you can while you have the parry intact use the parry to angle around to your target. A slight step in and pivoting your wrist you can change the angle of your attack as long as your blade is in opposition.

Now often I hear people complain that "***You taught me that the parry works and keeps me safe, why did I die***"... Fencing as with all martial arts is fluid. We train to parry the first contact and to block the most common shots. Once you have the basics down. And have acquired some muscle memory we show that as a fluid form one attack can flow into another and another.

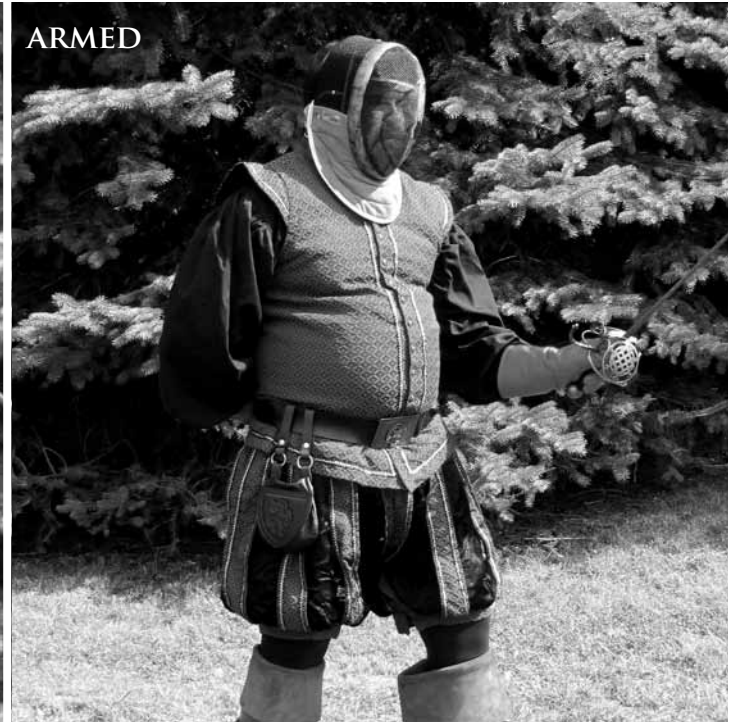
Fencing is not just a series of single thrusts and parries. As it often looks two people squared off looking for that one perfect, one shot, one kill scenario.

Fencing is often like tennis a rally for position. parry -thrust-block-parry-redirect-hand parry... It can be a dance.

If you find that you have the parry and someone is able to pivot past the parry back up. or do a compass pace so that as they move ahead and turn you are backing and turning keeping the original parry.

Or simply parry 9 back and away.





**King Arthur:** [after Arthur's cut off both of the Black Knight's arms]

*Look, you stupid Bastard. You've got no arms left.*

**Black Knight:** *Yes I have.*

**King Arthur:** *\*Look\*!*

**Black Knight:** *It's just a flesh wound.*

*~Monty Python and the Holy Grail (1975)*

## BUT YOU HAVE NO ARMS OR LEGS...

So we talked about taking hands and feet before but we did not talk about what that means in accordance to the rules.

**Armed**~ In our kingdom any legal attack to the arm from the tip of your longest finger up to your shoulder and just under a hand width under the arm makes the arm immobile It's a good thing to learn to hold that arm behind your back. Often ill hold onto my belt.

Under the rules fighting only stops when a hold is called. So in fact after taking your hand your opponent does not have to give you time or space to swap your sword to your good hand. They can in effect press the attack and kill you before you switch.

I will take a step back and allow my opponent to safely switch hands. So there is no weapon tossing, to lunging in to attack during the moment of pause. Now I have seen it both ways. I have seen the fencer who took the hand rush forward and kill before the sword has had a chance to change hands.

I have seen the fencer who lost the limb toss the sword to their off hand and in one fast motion redirect the toss to a thrust at their opponent Neither of these do I approve of.

Now after you take the first arm and have it behind your back. If your other hand/arm are taken you have lost as you may no longer attack or defend. So as I stated before I often will do my best to take hands as they are closest to me, and if I get both I have won and not had to kill my opponent.

**Legged**~ F.A valid blow to the foot or leg will disable the leg. In heavy rapier the fighter must choose to fight from a sitting or kneeling position and remain in that position. The fighter may not rise up, change from kneeling to sitting, sitting to kneeling, fall forward or intentionally move from this position except for reasons of safety or courtesy. The fighter is allowed to rotate on the ground, while sitting or kneeling, to engage their opponent.

With the changes to the rules now being legged has much less negative to it. Before you had to sit and you were unable to change facing shift left or right to follow your opponent.

When facing an opponent you legged remember they are now lower to the ground you have to lean in to reach them. This is more limiting to you then them. It's very much like leading with your head.

What is the best way to kill a legged fencer. Using your off hand push the blade out wide and coming for the kill shot. Or if you are cautious like me.

Take their hands too. ***"If I have to ill take you... one ... piece.. at a time"***

As the one who has been legged. Once you are sitting as comfortable as you can be. Look up to your opponent and ask in a matter of fact tone...

***"Do you yield"...***

don't yell don't sneer just ask as if you are concerned for there well being You legged me I beg you to yield so I don't have to kill you!

When you are the legged one. Your limited in movement but you are better able to attack. Aim for the toes keep them off balance... keep your off hand out and high and moving. It can and will save your life.

Try to draw your eager opponent in and when they get in range thrust to the head.



*“Do you yield”?*



*Echo Base Officer: Your Tauntaun will freeze before you reach the first marker!*

*Han Solo: Then I'll see you in Hell!*

*~Star Wars: Episode V - The Empire Strikes Back (1980)*

## THANK YOU...

In the 5 years since I thought up this idea. Several people have been kind enough to help me out.

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