



Adelaide Sword Academy

Safety Briefing

2021 v.2

Table of Contents

Safety Principles.....	1
Principles of Training:.....	2
Principles of Freeplay:.....	2
The Call of HOLD!.....	2
Code of Conduct.....	3
Breaches.....	3
Penalties.....	4
Safety Gear.....	4
Required gear for drilling.....	4
Required Gear for Freeplay.....	4
Freeplay.....	5
The Intensity Scale:.....	5
Order of Play.....	6



Safety Principles

When training with weapons you hold your partner's life in your hands. This is a sacred trust and must not be abused.

Most injuries occur either through sparring with poor control, or are self-inflicted through insufficient warm-up, technique or care. It is essential then, that we conduct ourselves so as to

minimise the chance of injury to ourselves, and to others. No amount of gear can save you from stupidity, blindness, poor communication, or simple *lack of control*.

In other words ...

“My safety is whose responsibility?”

“**Mine.**”

“My partner’s safety is whose responsibility?”

“**Mine.**”

It comes down to **you and me** – our skills, our attitude, and especially our ability to take responsibility for our actions.

To that end, there are a few principles that everyone must adhere to, whether training, sparring, or teaching at Adelaide Sword Academy.

Principles of Training:

1. **Safety** – Everyone leaves training healthier than when they started.
2. **Awareness** – Be mindful of what you are doing. Use caution in all that you do.
3. **Respect** – Acknowledge your partner as your equal and friend. Their well-being, and quality of training, is your responsibility.
4. **Communication** – Ensure you and your partner are on the same page on everything, and thank them after every training.

Principles of Freeplay:

1. **Honour** – Do unto others as you’d have done unto you.
2. **Control** – We accept bruises, not injuries.
3. **Realism** – Fence as if we were using sharps.

At anytime, for any reason, it is okay to take a **break, dial down**, or even **stop** if you are feeling overwhelmed. And we must give good feedback to our partners if they are hurting us - they *need to know*. And if they don't/won't/can't dial down, the instructor *needs to know*.

And above all else: **Don’t be That Guy**. You know that guy, the one who tries to win drills, who is overly competitive, hits too hard, changes things mid drill, and is generally unaware of how they are affecting (probably hurting) their partner. We hate that guy. Don’t be that guy.

The Call of HOLD!

The call of ‘HOLD’ **immediately** ends free play or drilling, and all fencers must freeze when it is called.

Anyone may call hold at any time during training or free play. Every fencer is obliged to call ‘hold’ if at any time they are genuinely concerned for injury – theirs or others.

If you are concerned about your control in free play or for any reason (for example, loss of focus, fatigue or anger) you must **stop** or ‘dial it down’ to a lower level of intensity. Similarly, if you feel

your opponent has lost focus, or control, or just started 'flailing' in either training or free play, you **must** call HOLD and ask if they are OK.

Code of Conduct

1 Camaraderie

We will show fellowship, concern and regard for all of our fellow members, and to the school itself. We will encourage each other.

2 Courtesy

In our dealings with each other and those outside the school we will act and speak with courtesy and respect.

Example violations: Verbal abuse or belittling of any sort. Slander or gossip. Taking advantage of others.

3 Prowess

We strive for excellence to the best of our abilities.

Example violations: Gamesmanship, poor preparation. Lack of focus in training.

4 Integrity

We will be trustworthy, keep our word, and be safe to those around us.

Example violations: Intoxication. Lack of weapon care. Bullying or harassment.

5 Discipline

We will work hard, accept the authority of those in charge in the training hall, and at school events.

Violations: Disobeying direct requests from an instructor. Acting against agreed school regulations or guidelines.

Breaches

If there is an issue at training, such as:

- There is a near miss, or an injury
- Someone is making you feel uncomfortable, or there is a breach of conduct
- Someone is acting uncontrolled in drilling or sparring
- There is a gear failure

Then you must take it to the **instructor, or ranking fencer immediately**. What you say will be kept private. An incident report form must be filled out by the instructor/ranking fencer immediately after being made aware of the issue.

We will attempt to mediate the situation to the satisfaction of all parties.

Penalties

Minor penalties may be set by an Instructor within training, up to and including expulsion from that session. They are at the fencer in charge's discretion.

Major penalties may include expulsion from the school. Options for rehabilitation will be considered in each situation. They will be considered together with the all the senior fencers.

You have a right to an advocate in any disciplinary setting.

Safety Gear

The most important piece of gear is your own good sense. Fence according to the limits of your equipment, exercise control and respect the weapon at all times, and you will never have a serious injury.

Minimal Safety Gear:

- FIE-rated fencing mask.
- Gorget to protect the neck.
- Gloves suited to the weapon being used (plastic or steel).
- “Sensitive-spot” protectors – rigid breastplate for the embreasted, cricketbox for the entesticled.

Minimal gear is only suited for contact drilling, and light levels of freeplay. For anything more, additional protective gear will be required:

- An overlay and back-of-head protector for the mask.
- A quality HEMA fencing jacket.
- Rigid protection for joints (Elbows, knees).
- Rigid protection for forearms and shins.
- Protection for other areas (shoulders, thighs) as necessary for your chosen weapon style.

Required gear for drilling

- Boffers = thin leather/working gloves, fencing mask if striking the head.
- Plastics = Minimal Safety Gear.
- Steel = Minimal Safety Gear.

Required Gear for Freeplay

- Light = Minimal Safety Gear.
- Conversational = Minimal Safety Gear **plus** Jacket
- Earnest play with Synthetics: = Minimal Safety Gear **plus** torso protection, elbow protection, back of head protector on mask.
- Earnest play with Steel weapons = Minimal Safety Gear **plus** Jacket, Mask Overlay with back of head protector, rigid joint, forearms and shin protectors. Good quality protective gloves are especially required for longsword.
- Competitive: **Full kit** – extra rigid protection for joints, and lower limbs required.

Freeplay

The three principles of freeplay (recap):

1. **Honour** – Do unto others as you'd have done unto you.
2. **Control** – We accept bruises, not injuries.
3. **Realism** – Fence as if we were using sharps.

The Intensity Scale:

1. No Touch Play
2. Light Play
3. Conversational Play
4. Earnest Play
5. Competitive Play

Anything more than Level 5 is dangerous, uncontrolled, brutal, and is never acceptable.

Before any freeplay or sparring:

Communicate with your opponent to see what level of intensity you are **both** happy with, and **calibrate** your blows and tempo to within the chosen level of intensity.

Level 1: No Touch Play

- Absolutely no touching the opponent with any part of the blade.
- Very slow, maximum control of the blade.
- Useful for freedrilling, training distance, timing and intensity control, drilling with sharps. (senior students only!)

Level 2: Light Play

- A touch, or a tap with the blade. No blade flex with a thrust.
- Slow, deliberate tempo. Do not speed up to get a hit, you can only take a tempo at the same speed as your opponent.
- Useful for freedrilling, minimal gear sparring, and practise for beginners.

Level 3: Conversational Play

- Moderate play – relaxed, noncompetitive, friendly.
- Moderate blows. Cuts must be pulled. Moderate blade flex allowed. Do not rush to get a hit, but can begin playing around with pressure and speed.
- Useful for integrating new techniques, sharpening perceptual abilities, coaching, and fun.

Level 4: Earnest Play

- Speed and power are important and legitimate elements of earnest play.
- All blows must be controlled, but greater speed and power generation are allowed – only bruises acceptable!
- The attitude of the fencers must remain noncompetitive – must have goals beyond just hitting your opponent, or else the fight will escalate.
- Useful for high level freeplay, practising pressure fighting, endurance, and composure.

Level 5: Competitive

- Be safe, and strike your opponent without being struck.

- All fencers must remain composed and controlled, but no hard limit on speed and power.
- **Must** have a safety marshal to adjudicate and monitor the fight.
- This is the level of Tournament fighting.

Brutal, Dangerous, Uncontrolled:

- Blows delivered through the target.
- Reckless rushing in or charging the opponent.
- Turning to expose the back of head.
- Blocking cuts with the hand/arm.
- Wild lashing out.
- Clubbing motions.

Order of Play

Before Sparring:

1. **Communicate** with your partner, and **mutually agree** to a given level of intensity according to the Intensity Scale – use your good sense of your own abilities, and look out for your partner as well. Never go higher than what you and your opponent can handle, and you can always dial down if you are uncomfortable.
2. Ensure that you are **both** wearing the correct level of protection for your chosen level of intensity – **Do not** begin sparring if either one of you has inadequate equipment.

During Sparring:

1. **Salute** your opponent before you begin the bout. This signifies your acknowledgement of your opponent as worthy of your respect, your honour as a fighter, and your readiness to begin fighting.
2. Fight with respect, honour, control, and with your whole spirit. Have fun, and be the best that you can be!
3. If you **receive** a hit, **acknowledge** it verbally, and by tapping the spot you got hit. Step back, and start a new bout. You may also **discount** your own hits on your opponent, if you believe that it was of poor quality (hit with the flat, poor edge alignment etc.) But you cannot make calls to your own advantage (“I hit you there”).
4. If you hear the call of **HOLD**, you must stop immediately. The call of **HOLD** can be made at anytime by anyone for any reason of safety, and if you hear it, you must stop!
5. You may yield or cede a bout if you are unable to continue by raising your hands, tapping out, or kneeling. You must never strike an opponent making these gestures

After Sparring:

1. Thank your opponent and shake their hand/fistbump
2. Give constructive feedback to your opponent.