



THE ACADEMY OF
EUROPEAN MEDIEVAL MARTIAL ARTS
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The Art of Longsword Combat

Book 1



The first of four books covering
a complete training system
by the Academy of European
Medieval Martial Arts

David M. Cvet

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The Art of Longsword Combat Book #1

A student's (recruit) reference manual for the development and
training of medieval martial arts focused
on longsword with grappling and dagger techniques
for the preparation of achieving a scholler rank

Written by

David M. Cvet

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Forward

The purpose of this first book of a four book series is to train the student in the methods, principles and techniques of European Medieval Martial Arts, focusing on dagger, grappling and the longsword. This work was originally created to form the basis of the recruit training program for the Academy of European Medieval Martial Arts or



AEMMA. References for this work include but are not limited to historical documents and treatises such as Fiore dei Liberi, 1410, "Flos Duellatorum", Hans Talhoffer, 1459, "Alte Armatur und Ringkunst", Hans Talhoffer, 1467, "Fechtbuch aus dem Jahre 1467", Jakob Sutor, 1612, "Künffliches Fechtbuch"

The Academy's mission is to resurrect the combat skills, philosophies, principles of an accomplished European Medieval martial artist and to achieve a state which would be consistent with that of a medieval warrior in both technology and ideal." The goal of this

organization is to resurrect European medieval martial arts to the same level as today's Asian martial arts schools and academies, and to re-establish medieval combat as a viable 21st century martial art alternative. The objective is to not only achieve realism in the discipline of armoured and un-armoured combat, but also the philosophy and principles that surrounds this form of martial art.

In order to support the Academy's mission and goal, this document along with the companion instructor's guide entitled "The AEMMA Longsword Instructor's Guide" was written to provide the reader with the necessary reference and tools to train oneself and others in this form of martial art.

Book 1 provides the recruit/student with the knowledge and skills necessary to achieve the rank of **scholler**. All training and instruction builds upon what is learned at each level. Upon completion of this level of training, the student will be competent in performing all of the basic guard stances, fundamental offensive forms, drills and possess a basic historical knowledge of the martial art. A companion student's training guide provides the outline for the training program including the structure of the oral examination to be taken at the end of this training.

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Training Overview

The objective of this manual is to provide the student with a structured and detailed guide to follow for the purpose of training in the historical medieval martial arts and to prepare the student for the challenge for the prize of “**scholler**”. This manual is not intended to replace the principle historical sources, but is intended to augment them.

The medieval longsword, *langeschwert*, or *spada longa*, was a specialized form of the “knightly” cruciform sword that developed in the early 13th century. Although it initially developed to combat reinforced mail armour, by the mid-15th century, the longsword had also become a “dueling” weapon in the city streets of Europe. This style of swordplay became so popular that sparring matches are recorded in Germany as late as the mid-18th century, two hundred years after the weapon’s usefulness on the battlefield had long since died out.

The introduction to the medieval grappling, dagger and longsword is designed to provide the student an intensive overview of the weapon and the basic techniques of its use. Upon completion of the course, the student will have a working knowledge of the historical terminology and techniques of the medieval masters, and will have been exposed to a wide variety of concepts, drills, and sparring/fighting sessions. This course presents the initial concepts that provide the framework for AEMMA’s medieval swordsmanship, and is expanded upon the later skills levels¹. In the end, the skills learned by the student through this training program can, in effect be used in today’s modern combat situations (well, except for the sword) because the combat techniques are consistent with today’s fighting situations. Therefore, from a personal enhancement perspective, if a student wishes to learn the art of self-defence against an attacker poised with a knife, or perhaps simple hand-to-hand engagements, even though the techniques are sourced from the 14th or 15th centuries, these techniques are also employed in today’s modern combat training programs. The end result of this training for both men and women are:

- a) Contributes to the individual’s overall strength, flexibility, balance & cardiorespiratory fitness;
- b) Build’s individual courage, confidence and self-discipline.

Training Objectives:

Academic: To provide the student with a historical overview of the medieval longsword, and its role in the history of historical swordsmanship.

Practical: To present a sequence of routines, methodologies, solo and partner drills, that will provide the groundwork for fighting with the longsword in a style derived from northern Italian and German sources of the 14th through to the 17th centuries.

¹ This paragraph and the previous were sourced from the Chicago Swordplay Guild student guide. The approach and objectives of CSG and AEMMA training programs are very similar.

Basic Principles

The following briefly describes the basic fight principles that the student must know and apply to successfully defeat an opponent. These principles are consistent with today's combat training systems.

a) Physical Balance

This refers to the student's ability to maintain his/her equilibrium and remain in a stable fight position during an engagement. This is critical for deploying a defensive maneuver or posture, and for launching an effective attack against the opponent. There are two aspects of balance that the individual must possess:

- The student must develop the ability to move the body, utilizing such concepts as passing steps and gathered steps as an example, and to ensure that the feet do not cross and are kept apart at approximately shoulder's width. Also the need to lower the body's center of gravity to enhance stability.
- Through training and experience, the student must also be able to move his/her body in an engagement to maintain balance and stability, while at the same time, exposing the opponent's weak points.

b) Mental Balance

A successful student must also maintain mental balance, in that he/she must not allow fear or excitement to overcome his/her ability to concentrate or react skillfully during a fight.

c) Position

This refers to the location of the student in relation to the opponent. An important principle when being attacked is to move the body to a safe defensive position in order to prevent the student from being hurt. Then, the student would look for a counter-attack opportunity. This principle would apply in both armed and unarmed engagements. Movement to an advantageous position will require accurate timing and distance perception.

d) Timing

The student must learn through experience, the best time to move to an advantageous position in an attack. If the movement is too soon, the opponent will anticipate the movement and deploy a counter or adjust his/her attack. Similarly, if the student moves too late, the opponent will be successful in delivering his/her strike or attack at the instant when the student is most vulnerable.

e) Distance

This describes the relative distance between individuals engaged in a fight. The student must learn how to position oneself at a distance that is most advantageous. Adjustments to this distance is continuous during an engagement to ensure that the student maintains the most advantageous range between himself/herself and the opponent.

f) Momentum

A critical principle that the student must learn to acquire is the understanding of the physics behind momentum. Momentum describes the body's tendency, while in motion, to continue in the direction of motion unless acted upon by another force. The greater the mass or speed of the movement, the greater momentum. This is a key principle that can be effectively employed during longsword attacks, whereby the student can leverage the momentum of an attack, and redirect the momentum behind the strike, and counter (parry) with an attack. This principle

applies to other forms of attacks, and provided the student understands the principles behind momentum, the following can be deployed:

- ❖ The student can use the opponent's momentum to the student's advantage by introducing an imbalance on the part of the opponent by exploiting the opponent's own momentum.
- ❖ The opponent's momentum can be exploited by forcing it to extend further than is expected by the opponent, thus causing imbalance.
- ❖ The student must also be aware that the opponent can also use the student's own momentum to the student's disadvantage, and therefore, must avoid placing the student in an awkward and vulnerable position.

Safety Precautions

In order to prevent injuries or at least reduce the probability of injury during training and fighting, the student must consider the following before and during training:

1. The student must follow the instructor's direction, instructions and guidance, and if unclear, request clarification.
2. The student must not get ahead of the instruction, regardless of the skill the student may possess.
3. The student must offer no resistance and must allow each maneuver to be freely executed during training stages to allow for the perfection of the movement.
4. The student shall be cleared of any jewelry, watches, chains, etc. that might interfere with the drills and possibly result in injury.
5. The student understands that strikes are to be simulated, especially during the learning stages. It is not important to be quick nor to place any power behind the strikes.
6. The students must learn to establish a consistent signal to indicate to the partner to stop applying pressure delivering sword strikes during training drills.
7. The student must undergo an adequate warm-up exercise period, along with stretching to reduce the possibility of injury.
8. The student will ensure that the required protective equipment is worn during training drills.
9. Periodically, the student must inspect their equipment to ensure that it is kept in optimum condition. If the equipment is deemed unsafe, or not optimal, the instructor will terminate the training for that student which requires the equipment.

Reference: The material in the introduction and safety precautions of this manual has been sourced from the US Army Field Training Manual, No. 21-150, Washington, 1992, and has been modified to suit the historical martial arts scope of training.

Training Program Structure

This first book will provide the student with the fundamentals of defense and offense, an understanding of the underlying physics of the longsword, the anatomy of the longsword and an introduction to training drills that are critical to developing skill and competency. This book introduces the student to the historical sources that were used in the development of this training system. AEMMA's training system is the result of the research conducted on the historical sources identified in this book as well as many hours of "reconstructionist" effort to ensure that the training system is both viable and comprehensive. This level of training in this book will position the recruit to successfully challenge for the prize of a **scholler** rank.

The basic training principles that the students must internalize includes:

1. basic sword exercises and movements
2. footwork
3. competency in sword technique
4. ability to redirect and/or manipulate your opponent
5. ability to direct your opponent without physical contact

Training is comprised of a number of sections, each with it's specific objective. The following describes the sections that form the longsword training program.

1.0 Exercise Forms

"Therefore let every man that is desirous to practice this Arte, endeavor himself to get strength and agility of body, assuring himself, that judgement without this activity and force, avails little or nothing." Giacomo di Grassi, 1570.

The above statement rings true in that in order to achieve perfection in any craft or skill, practice...practice...practice... is required. The swordsmanship training program is no different. The exercise forms enhance flexibility and strength with respect to wielding the sword. Therefore, the exercises are repetitive, difficult and long. Discipline forms the core of the training program.

In the opening of every training session, the students are positioned into a circle, each able to see the other and everyone able to see the instructor without any obstructions and a ritual opening of the training is delivered by everyone. Then warm-ups without the sword follow the opening. Other exercise forms will incorporate the sword, which is why the sword is placed on the floor at the feet, at approximately 45° from the vertical with respect to the student. This reflects the student's "readiness" to arm himself/herself in the event of a surprise attack.

Some suggestions for warm-up exercises can be found at the end of this manual in **Appendix B**.

The sword arts require a commitment to cardio and muscle training outside of class time. It is highly recommended that students do further training as described in **Appendix C** "Augmenting Training".

2.0 Other Weapons Training

The purpose of training with other weapons is to expand and enhance the student's "experience" with respect to longsword training by incorporating training drills based on other weapons types. These would include unarmed or grappling combat techniques (some aspects of "ringen" from Talhoffer's manuscript), unarmed vs. knife combat (Talhoffer, Liberi and Marozzo) and knife vs. knife (Talhoffer, Liberi and Marozzo). Many of the subtleties of combat cannot be adequately learned and trained with when the focus is only on a single weapons type, and therefore, this training system presents certain elements to expand one's expertise and experience in martial training.

3.0 Deployment of Strikes and Guards

Students are instructed the variations and deployment of strikes, guards and wards from a trajectory perspective, physical attributes such as stance, angle of attack, parrying and re-directing, integration of footwork, and drills. They are performed repeatedly by the student, along with variations introduced into the drills. In any delivery of a strike or deployment of a guard must demonstrate absolute control and discipline when wielding of the blade. Any delivery must be able to be stopped instantly by the student in order to change strategy, direction or execution of the form. These forms practiced in this component will be used as a basis for sequences of delivery and deployment which are comprised of one or more strikes and or parries. These basic forms must be internalized and delivered naturally and with fluidity. Sword drills are initially employ wooden wasters and in later ranks utilize combat-ready, steel swords, depending upon level of competency.

4.0 Folgen (Sword Drills)

The term "*folgen*" is a German term that means "following". It adequately describes the aspect of training comprised of sword drills. The term "*folge*" is more of a singular term, that means "follow". The purpose of the *folgen* is to introduce the student into structured contact drills. This will begin the process of striking an opponent with the sword, and to receive strikes in which the student invokes an appropriate defensive form. The practice drills in this level provide the student the opportunity of practicing in a highly structured drill in which all offensive and defensive forms are used with a partner. Each student will take turns in progressing through an offensive and defensive drill. Portions of the drills incorporated into the AEMMA training program are comprised of the classic "Moulinet" drills devised by Capt. Alfred Hutton as described in his works "Old Sword-play", 1892.

Each student, when practicing in pairs will take turns progressing through an offensive and defensive *folgen*. The ultimate objective of the *folgen* in later levels of skill is to achieve full free-form fighting. The *folgen* in later levels of competency can include practice with steel swords, however, in this level of training, the students are limited to wooden wasters only.

When the student is familiar with the *folgen*, depending upon the competency levels, structured sword fighting and free-form sword fighting may be introduced with wooden wasters provided the minimal protective equipment is available.

5.0 Reihenfolgen (Sword Sequences)

The *reihenfolgen* are series of patterns of movements which contain a series of logical and practical attacking and blocking techniques. Although it is not known if this form of training was used in the medieval period, the *reihenfolgen* are an extremely useful mechanism to practice the offensive and defensive forms outside of the training Academy. The objective of the *reihenfolgen* is to enhance the fluidity of movement of the sword, increase the students confidence and comfort wielding a sword, provide a safe and relatively structured mechanism for steel-to-steel demonstrations, and to facilitate training so that the student can use their skill at a more rapid pace. In each *reihenfolgen* there is a certain set of predetermined movements which the student can practice alone, without a partner. Some *reihenfolgen* have been created by the Academy as a result of the research of medieval swordsmanship and medieval training, and others are borrowed from sources such as Hutton's manuscript² (moulinet). The utilization of the techniques in the *reihenfolgen* evolved from and have been tested in the Academy during training and research. In this way, each sequence has been improved and refined, and have evolved into the sequences practiced in the Academy today.

6.0 Fechten (Fighting Engagements)

An effective way of incorporating the techniques and principles from training is to apply them in fighting engagements. This is known as "*fechten*" or fighting. To fight is referred to as "*fecht*". This is an old German word which is referenced in historical documents written by Talhoffer and others previous to him. These were known as "*fechtbuch*" or fighting books.

At this level of training, *fechten* is done with wasters only. Simple techniques are practiced at 1/2 speed, under the close supervision of the instructors. As students progress to higher levels (not covered in this book), steel swords and armour are utilized and the speed and intensity of the *fechten* is increased.

² Capt. Alfred Hutton, "Old Sword-play", 1892

Ranking and Skill Competency

The ranking system described below is based on a similar ranking system first employed by academic institutions around the 15-16th century to determine the individual's position within a hierarchical system of competency. Ranking includes five (5) distinct levels: recruit, scholler, free scholler, provost and maestro. The word "scholler" is derived from a Latin word "schola" or "school". Therefore, given that a scholar or "scholler" (old English) is someone who studies an academic subject (using the "under-graduate student" analogy), this was found to be applicable to the initial rank of a western martial arts student. Taking this further, a "free scholler" is one who is undergoing advanced training, similar to a graduate student from an academic perspective. The academic or research component of this ranking system begins early in the "scholler" rank during the student's training with his/her participation in an existing or ongoing research project.

The designation of "provost" is granted by the school's governing body and is achieved when the student has achieved the highest technical skill of a weapon and that a research project is completed along with a research paper submission. A "provost", by definition is an individual who is the head or master of a particular college or subject. Using this definition with respect to martial arts would also include weapons skills, relevant techniques and their surrounding history. One can use the analogy that a "provost" has obtained a doctorate in this particular weapon's type. A "maestro" is one who has been granted this title by an external governing body such as the International Masters at Arms Federation (IMAF³) and who has achieved the highest technical and intellectual skills with a minimum of three (3) weapons types (an individual who holds multiple "Ph.D's").



One of the most important steps in the progression from the rank of scholler to maestro is the concept of "prizes and challenges". The quest for the prize of promotion is a fundamental cultural component of the Academy, in which most, if not all students desire to obtain the prize through a minimum of 3 challenges against individuals in the next rank desired for each weapon currently being trained in. The play for the prize is comprised of two steps. The first step occurs as an event internal to the Academy in which the student's skills are assessed in private by the AEMMA governing body. The second step is for the student to submit a challenge for the prize of scholler, however, no student is allowed to submit challenges until the private examination is complete and deemed successful. There is no real time span before the student can play for the prize once the challenge has been submitted, however, it is usually left up to the student. Only the recruit and scholler has this prize option in the promotion to scholler and free scholler rank respectively. Higher ranks prizes are governed on a time basis structure.

The expectation of training is that the student, with regular practice and commitment can achieve the highest ranking and competency level, maestro in approximately 5 to 10

³ www.scherma-tradizionale.org

years. This has great variations, depending upon the commitment of the student to training, attendance to classes, research project development, availability of the student to training, physical capabilities, stamina and their natural physical skills of the student. Skill and safety are paramount in the training program. The ranking and competency levels are described below.

Ranks and their Attributes

Recruit

The **Recruit** is an entry level student of the martial art. The student begins their training with an overview of the Academy, the key personnel, overview of the training program, and begins with instruction on the basics of grappling, dagger and swordplay. As a recruit, the student is provided the opportunity to assess whether or not to pursue this form of martial art with commitment. In terms of equipment requirements, the initial cost to begin training is low in this level.

Attributes of a Recruit

- completed the administrative requirements in terms of fees payments, membership and waiver forms
- the application has been approved and accepted by the Academy
- satisfies the recruit equipment requirements (training T-shirt, black leggings/training pants), waster (sword and dagger), black training boots/running shoes

Responsibilities of a Recruit

- read and study the recommended historical manuscripts that are available, and be able to recognize and distinguish the manuscripts and their authors
- continue practicing outside the formal training session of the Academy
- can attend as a representative of Academy/school or chapter at symposiums, workshops and conferences at a reduced fee
- can volunteer and assist in the general operational and administrative aspects of the Academy/school (workshop coordination and setup, equipment administration, etc.)
- if the recruit is serious about pursuing this training, the acquisition of the relevant scholler-oriented equipment must occur

Skill Development and Training Specifications for Recruit

Theoretical:

- the structure and nomenclature of the sword,
- familiarity with the various armour components,
- familiarity with the English nomenclature of the sword forms and some elements of the classical Italian and German derivations,
- a familiarity with the historical swordsmaster's treatises and their relationship to the training received,
- the student understands the mission of AEMMA.

Martial:

- a basic understanding and demonstration of the classic guards and wards,
- basic grappling and dagger techniques,
- a basic understanding and demonstration of footwork, including both passing and gather steps,
- the ability to deliver all of the *folge* trained in this skill level both from an individual perspective and in pairs.

Recruit Training Points

- recruit training includes internalizing the exercises forms (both with and without the sword), i.e. the exercises that will enhance sword control and the strength and flexibility of shoulders, arms, wrists, forearms along with foot work
- cross-training techniques are introduced, including fundamental holds and body toss (in preparation for unarmed/knife/*ringen* techniques in later levels)
- the student will learn all of the guard positions, offensive and defensive forms
- elemental structured *folge* are introduced to provide the opportunity of the students to engage (sword-on-sword) with partners
- an introduction to cutting with the longsword using a sharpened steel sword
- all forms, including exercise, offensive and defensive that employ the sword will be wooden (hickory or similar) swords
- estimate completion of this level of training is a 3-6 month period

Scholler

A **scholler** is a student of the arts and who has committed to learning and training in the arts. The scholler recognizes that this is a life-time commitment to achieve the level of excellence that will enrich the student's life. The scholler must abide by the rules and constitution of the Academy, and be prepared to obtain the relevant historically accurate arms & armour for those weapons trained with.

Attributes of Scholler

- possesses basic skills in at least three weapons/fighting styles (e.g. grappling, dagger, longsword)
- has succeeded in obtaining the "prize" of scholler through no less than three (3) challenges
- rank of "scholler" granted by the Academy's governing body
- possesses the minimum equipment components as specified for scholler rank

Responsibilities of a Scholler

- can participate as a representative of Academy/school or chapter at symposiums, workshops and conferences
- participate in the challenges of students for the playing for the prize of a scholler rank
- participate in the challenges of students for the playing for the prize of a scholler rank in other schools upon invitation by that school
- assists in the general operational and administrative aspects of the Academy/school (workshop coordination and setup, equipment administration, etc.)
- can participate in the governing body of the Academy in an advisory capacity or as part of the executive under invitation
- can participate and contribute to research & development projects, under the direction of a free scholler, provost or maestro
- provide assistance in training classes when call upon by the instructor or TA

Requirements to obtain Scholler Designation

- the student must successfully complete a private oral examination and test conducted by the Academy/school's governing body, in which one is assessed on technique, the initial defensive and offensive movements of sword handling, sword control and history based on the material provided in this training program

- the student must be successful in his/her winning the prize of promotion to scholler in a contest in public scholler test against no less than three (3) challenges
- annual membership dues, monthly training dues or quarterly training dues (depends upon the fees structure implemented by the Academy) are paid for on a regular basis and there are no outstanding dues
- the student must satisfy the minimum equipment requirements for training, tournament and presentation purposes
- the student must apply for participation and contribution to an existing research project, under the direction of a free scholler, provost or maestro

Skill Development and Training Specifications for Scholler

Theoretical:

- increased familiarity with the classical Italian and German naming conventions,
- enhanced understanding and integration of concepts as hard pressure, soft pressure or kinesthetic awareness into training,
- enhanced understanding and integration of timing, distance and placement in terms of attack, defense, parry (flat vs edged), reponse.

Martial:

- advanced grappling techniques,
- higher skill level with dagger techniques and it's integration into engagements (structured fight training),
- enhanced abilities to deliver all of the *folge* trained in this skill level both from an individual perspective and in pairs.

Scholler Training Points

- additional forms are introduced that require practice with a partner in order to increase the level of experience in defensive and offensive movements
- individual-oriented *folgen* sequences of repetitive forms include a series of offensive-oriented forms and defensive-oriented forms, of which they are "complementary" so that individual-forms can be practiced with partners
- *fechten* introduced (with limited range of defensive and offensive movements) limited to the employment of wooden waster swords
- introduction of grappling techniques, sword grabbing, half-sword techniques, defensive to offensive positioning
- estimate that scholler training is at least a 6-12 month period before the student is able to consider challenging for the prize of free scholler
- competition/tournament participation with the weapon of skill and with the approval of the executive of the Academy

Free Scholler

The **Free Scholler** is a student of the historical martial arts that has developed skills in multiple weapons types, such as longsword, pollaxe, quarterstaff, sword & dagger, sword & buckler to name a few. A free scholler with skills in any of these weapons types is also in a position to instruct students in any or all of the he/she is weapons skilled in. A student is automatically designated a free scholler should he/she acquire a designation of "Acknowledged Instructor" by the International Masters at Arms Federation (IMAF) in one or more weapons type. The free scholler may often be requested to provide a supporting role of teaching assistant (TA) provided a letter is granted by the Academy/school's governing body to those who had successfully achieved the prize of free scholler. The free scholler must abide by the rules and constitution of the Academy and must have in possession all of the relevant arms & armour for those weapons types that the free scholler has skill in. The rank of free scholler is the minimum rank to possess in order to create a chapter of the Academy.

Attributes of Free Scholler

- possesses a minimum of scholler ranked skill in at least one weapon type
- has succeeded in obtaining the "prize" of free scholler through no less than three (3) challenges
- rank of "free scholler" granted by the Academy's governing body
- may be designated as an "Acknowledged Instructor" for a weapons type by the IMAF
- is able to startup a chapter of the Academy in a location remote to the parent Academy

Responsibilities of a Free Scholler

- represents the Academy/school or chapter at symposiums, workshops and conferences as a lecturer, presenter, board memberships, etc.
- participate in the challenges of students for the play for the prize of either scholler or free scholler ranks
- participate in the challenges of students for the play for the prize of ranks in other schools upon invitation by that school at the scholler and free scholler ranks only
- actively participates in the general operational and administrative aspects of the Academy (operations, workshop coordination and setup, equipment administration, etc.) in a role defined by the executive as an advisor or officer
- participates, contributes or develops a research & development project(s), under the direction/guidance of a provost or maestro
- provides instruction and training classes in the skilled weapons type and teaching assistance to other instructors or TAs when called upon

Requirements to obtain Free Scholler Designation

- the student must successfully complete a private oral examination and test conducted by the Academy's governing body
- the student is successful in his/her winning the prize of promotion in a contest in public against no less than 3 challenges
- has identified and initiated a research project which has been accepted and approved by the AEMMA governing body
- to provide assistance in training classes in the weapon of skill with permission of the instructor or TA
- membership dues are up to date, and paid for on a regular basis
- noted contributions to the development, promotion and enhancement of the Academy/school (through training, research projects, operational, etc.)

Skill Development and Training Specifications for Free Scholler

Theoretical:

- greater emphasis on study of the historical treatises,
- examine in detail, training principles and theory as presented in the historical treatises.

Martial:

- more work on tuning judgment, distance, timing and placement,
- single time parry & offense.

Free Scholler Training Points

- intellectual training in the philosophy and principles in the art of combat, manipulation of the opponent, control of battle, control of opponent
- *fechten* continues (planned defensive and offensive movements), but will employ steel swords
- contact free-form *fechten* introduced, but will initially use wooden-waster swords
- advanced *folgen* sequences of repetitive forms are introduced
- introduction to manipulation of the opponent, learning the art of control of battle
- more and advanced grasping techniques, sword grabbing, defensive to offensive positioning
- introduction of alternative weapons combat, e.g. longsword engaged with polearms (halberds, bills, pikes, etc.), longsword engaged with sword & shield, etc.
- estimate free scholler training duration of up to 6-18 months
- competition/tournament participation with the weapon of skill and with the approval of the executive of the Academy

Provost

The Provost, for all intent and purposes, is a local master without the official designation of maestro by the IMAF. The provost must demonstrate exceptional skill in at least four (4) weapons and demonstrate skill in any combination of those weapons (e.g. dagger against sword, etc.) The provost has developed an intimate understanding of the different characteristics, underlying principles and theoretical approaches to each of the weapons skilled with. This individual has obtained this rank after many years of study and training. A key responsibility of the provost is the training and teaching of students. The provost must abide by the rules and constitution of the Academy, and promote the principles of historical martial arts and organizations that are focused on the formalization of these arts, e.g. IMAF.

Attributes of a Provost

- demonstrates teaching skill in both individually-oriented training and group-oriented training sessions
- possesses a solid analytical understanding of the historical treatises
- possesses a high degree of skill in multiple weapons in no less than four (4) types
- demonstrates skill at handling multiple opponents
- has succeeded in obtaining the "prize" of provost through no less than six (6) challenges
- rank of provost granted by the Academy's governing body

Responsibilities of Provost

- represents the Academy or chapter at symposiums, workshops and conferences as a lecturer, presenter, trainer
- actively participates on one or more external governing bodies and entities as an advisor, board member, etc.
- agrees to accept challenges for the prize of provost by students in a position to deliver the challenge
- participate in the ranking of students and their designation within the Academy/school at the scholler, free scholler and provost ranks only
- participate in the ranking of students in other schools upon invitation by that school at the scholler, free scholler, and provost ranks only
- deliver instruction and training to students of all ranks
- to liaise with specific academic and or museum institutions (with permission from Academy/school's governing body)
- to liaise with other specific training academies (assume the role as the primary contact within the Academy/school for one or two other training academies) (with permission from Academy/school's governing body)

- participate and contribute in creating and implementing policies within the Academy/school and the external governing body
- has submitted a research paper on a relevant subject and which has been accepted by the Academy/school's governing body and which has been published in the Research\White Papers area of the web, as well as the Electronic Journals of Martial Arts & Sciences and other publications.

Requirements to obtain Provost Designation

- the student must successfully complete a private oral examination and test to determine the candidate's viability and which is conducted by the Academy/school's governing body
- must be of at least 25 years of age, and possess at least 5 years of skills development in historical fencing and fighting techniques
- the student is successful in his/her winning the prize of provost in a public test which has the following attributes:
 - achieve success against no less than six (6) challenges that covers various weapons and fighting techniques
 - demonstrate knowledge of fencing & fight theory by responding to queries by the Academy's governing body or by his/her peers,
 - demonstrate teaching skill by giving an individual lesson(s) and group lesson(s) to the other candidates or students identified by the Academy's governing body,
 - demonstrate fencing and fighting proficiency in a practical test against one opponent, then two, using a weapon of choice,
 - demonstrate knowledge of hopology⁴ by analysis of a weapon chosen randomly by the Academy's governing body or by his/her peers,
 - analyze an unfamiliar treatise plate, chosen by the Academy or peers, and describe the possible techniques and methods therein.
- has submitted a research paper to the Academy/school's governing body, its review and acceptance
- acceptance into the Academy/school's governing body

⁴ Hopology is the study of the evolution and development of human combative behaviour. <http://www.hopology.com>

Maestro

The rank of **maestro** can only be designated by an external body such as the International Masters at Arms Federation or IMAF. All of the responsibilities and attributes of a provost extend to this rank. The only additional responsibility may be the active participation on the governing body of IMAF by invitation, providing the maestro with an international responsibility with respect to the promotion and formalization of historical fencing.

Criteria of the Candidate for the rank of Maestro

- The candidates that have access to an IMAF master and must train with him/her for an appropriate period of time.
- The candidate must be presented to the examination board by that master training the candidate. Candidates that do not have access to an IMAF master locally may test for masters certification by presenting an independent study and paper. This study must encompass all of the requirements and criteria of IMAF.
- A formal letter of intention to test with the International Masters at Arms Federation must be initially submitted by the candidate. Following this, a formal presentation must be made of his/her study which must be representative of the work and research that the candidate has done to that point. All work must be historically accurate and verifiable/documented within the period treatises. If accepted a candidate must then fulfill the requirements of IMAF in order to be eligible to test for Master at Arms.

Overview of Historical Manuscripts Referenced

The training program is based on a number of treatises written during various periods between the 13th and 15th centuries. These manuscripts, or portions of them are available in the online library on AEMMA's web site located at <http://www.aemma.org>

Fiore dei Liberi, 1410

"Fiore dei Liberi of Cividale d'Ostria was born sometime between 1340 and 1350 in Cividale del Friuli, a small town on the river Natisone in Italy. Given that he had written the treatise "Flos Duallatorum" between the years of 1409 and 1410, and that according to the information in the prologue of the manuscript, he had been practicing the art of swordsmanship for 50 years at the time of his writing, the birth year is an estimate. With the exception of what is written in the prologue of this treatise, very little is known about Fiore dei Liberi. The illustration on the left depicts a portion of the prologue. What the prologue does describe is that his family is of noble origin, however, but not well placed. He initially learned the art of swordsmanship as a child and young man in his village where he fought in friendly assaults and duels as was the custom in that period. However, in order to learn the art from the best of his time, he left his village and went to Germany to learn and train in swordsmanship under the direction of the scholar Johannes Suvenus (a former

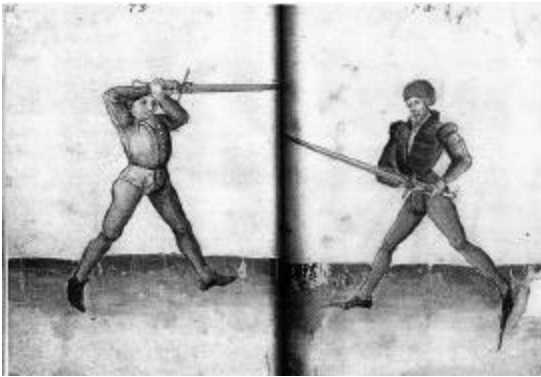
scholar of Nicolaus con Toblem). The knowledge he acquired under Suvenus' direction elevated Fiori dei Liberi to a master swordsman of his time. He participated in numerous battles in and around Italy for the last 20 years of the 14th century. In 1383 he fought in Udine on the side of the town during the civil war. In 1395 he was in Padua for a duel and four years later in 1399 he was in Pavia. Little is known of his life and deeds around this time until the beginning of 1400 when he entered the court of Niccolo III d'Este, Marquise of Ferrara, as the master swordsman. He acquired a commission in the early 1400s as a master swordsman on behalf of Signore di Ferrara. He then began to write the manuscript for the nobility on behalf of Signore di Ferrara. In 1410 Fiore dedicated his treatise to his Marquise. After 1410 there are no records of his life or of his death." Massimo Malipiero: **"Medieval Swordfighting"**.



Flos Duellatorum, or 'Flower of Battle' is primarily composed of illustrations with short rhyming captions in Italian. Sections include wrestling, dagger, sword, spear, two handed sword, armored combat, pollaxe, and mounted combat. There is also a considerable discussion of disarming techniques. Longsword, dagger and grappling has the greatest attention in the manuscript. The figure on the bottom of the previous page is an example of one of the illustrations that depicts the *posta de coda longa* or long tail guard.

"Unknown", c1470

The original Solothurn publication of 'Das Solothurner Fechtbuch' is thought to be written sometime in the late 15th century. This may be supported with an inference to



Paulus Kal which could date the manuscript no earlier than c1470. It has recently been re-compiled and published by Zentralbibliothek (Central Library), Solothurn, Switzerland in 1989 by a Swiss gentleman by the name of Dr. Charles Studer. The re-compiled manuscript was prepared from the surviving 30 plates of the original 60 which contains 57 illustrations of the original 120 that illustrate a number of techniques such as armoured

longsword, mounted fighting, dagger, grappling (ringen) and shield work which appear strikingly similar to those illustrations found in Talhoffer's works. Studer's publication focus was on the cultural and legal context of the judicial combat engagements depicted in the original manuscript. Dr. Studer, neither a swordsman nor fencer did not possess the authority on historical European martial arts and therefore his interpretative comments are suspect.

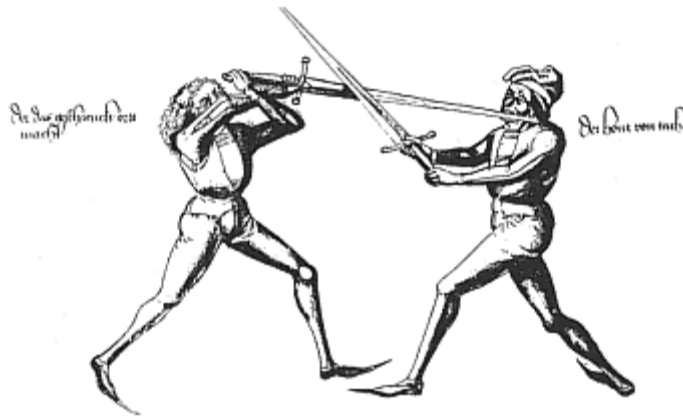
Hans Talhoffer, 1467

Talhoffer's *fechtbuchs* or "Fight Books" survive in at least 3 editions; 1443, 1459 and 1467. This manual is based principally on Talhoffer's *fechtbuch* of 1467. Talhoffer's

Fechtbuch aus dem Jahre 1467 or 'Fencing Book of the Year 1467' was re-printed in Prague, 1887 by an officer in the Austria-Hungarian Empire by the name of Gustave Hergsell.

Although little is known about the "man", we do know that Hans Talhoffer was born in "Swabia", a relatively small area of Southern

Germany which now lies chiefly within the present states of Baden-Wurttemberg and Bavaria. This region derived its name from the Suevi, an ancient Germanic tribe which

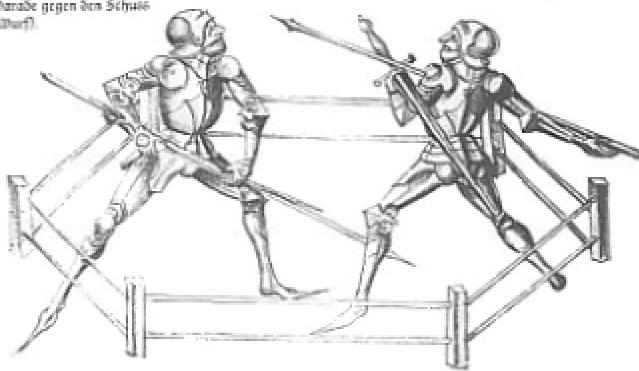


settled in the area during the great migrations of the fifth century. Swabia has a history of martial tradition, and by the fifteenth century of techniques its master swordsmen, such as Johannes Liechtenauer, had influenced fight manuscripts both in Germany and Italy.

An unfinished *fechtbuch* of 1389 written by Hango Döbinger, who was possibly a student of Liechtenauer, documents much of his masters' theory. The German medieval swordsmanship pedagogy can be traced back to Liechtenauer, who lived during the 14th century and traveled Europe to learn the mysteries of armed combat. After his death, his pupils began to document his works and methods so as to preserve the principles and methods. It is clear that medieval swordplay was not the brutal hacking as often depicted in modern films, but rather sophisticated methods of timing, placement, positioning, judgment, avoidance, footwork and manipulation. The following is an extract from "Setting The Record Straight: The Art of the Sword in Medieval Europe", Galas, M.: *"Despite his failure to complete his work, Döbinger manages to convey the theoretical basis for the German art, which is surprisingly modern in tone. Concentrating on the*

hier haben wir begonnen,
und dieser steht in der
Parade gegen dem Schuss
(Wurf).

Dieser will mit dem Spass
schlagen (werfen).



importance of seizing the initiative, on maintaining the offensive, and evading the opponent's attempts to find the blade, Döbinger at times sounds like a modern epee coach. In another section, Döbinger discusses the time advantage of the thrust over the cut - a theoretical concept usually ascribed to the Italian rapier masters. In addition, Döbinger describes how Liechtenauer

divided the opponent's body into four target areas - a division still used in modern fencing. Finally, dispelling the misconception that medieval swordsmen relied on strength alone, Döbinger states that a weakling using Liechtenauer's art would be as likely to win as a strong man. In summary, Hango Döbinger's observations make clear that medieval fencing masters - at least in Germany - had developed their art to a much higher degree of sophistication than they have previously been given credit for."

The work of the Swabian fight training system was not confined to Germany. Another famous writer, Fiori de' Liberi claimed to learn and train in the art of swordsmanship under the direction of the scholar Johannes Suvenus, a Swabian.

Talhoffer's *fechtbuch* is a catalog of fencing actions and consists of illustrations with short descriptions

Wie der ihn mit dem Arme gefasst
hat, stößt der mit seinem rechten
Ellbogen auf seinen rechten Arm, und
mit dem Stoss greift er ihm unter
seinen rechten Fuss, reißt ihn auf
und wirft ihn darüber hinaus.



Der hat es
nicht gut,

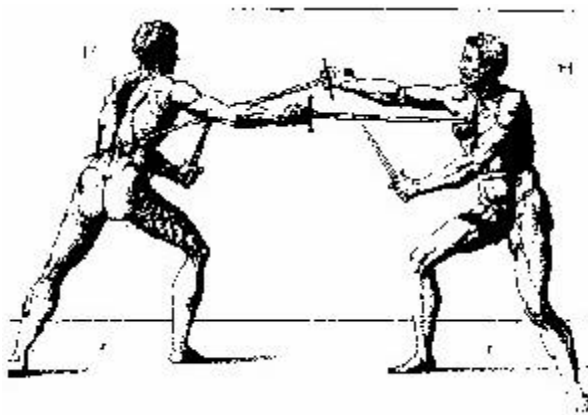
Der will den über den
Schenkel werfen.



for the two-handed sword, sword and buckler, sword and shield, dagger, wrestling, pollaxe, judicial combat, and mounted combat. As well as some specialized forms for the judicial duel: double-ended dueling pavises used with sword or club, and man in a pit with a club and a woman with a rock in a sock. His illustrations (plates or "*tafel*") appear throughout this training manuscript.

Other manuscripts that AEMMA has used as resources include, but are not limited to the following:

Camillo Agrippa, 1568



Camillo Agrippa, 1568 " *Trattato di Scienza d'Arme* " Agrippa was a theorist who simplified Marozzo's eleven guards to four. He is regarded as the man who defined rapier as a cutting and thrusting weapon.

Giacomo di Grassi, 1594



Giacomo di Grassi, 1594, "His True Arte of Defense" di Grassi's document covers two-handed sword, poll-arm, and pike, as well as rapier, and rapier with dagger, cloak, buckler, and target. It was first written in Italian in 1570 and later translated into English and published in 1594.

Vincentio Saviolo, 1595

Vincentio Saviolo, 1595, "His Practice" (in two books) a conversation-oriented document between Vincentio and his friend Luke, on their discussions of rapier techniques with the dagger.



George Silver, 1599

George Silver, 1599, "Paradoxes of Defense". Silver spends a fair amount of time frothing at the mouth about the folly of the new fangled Italian rapier play, as opposed to the English sword. He provides some interesting discussion on the proper use of sword and buckler, two-handed sword, dagger, various pole-arms, and pike. Core principles of the true fight are presented in the manuscript including the infamous 4 governors, true and false timing and the 4 grounds. More on this is can be found in the section covering theory and history in this manuscript.

Jakob Sutor, 1612

Sutor's '*Neu Künfftliches Fechtbuch*' was originally written in Frankfurt in 1612 and then republished by Wilhelm Hoffman in Stuttgart in 1849. He begins his work with 16 pages



covering the "*langen schwerdt*" or long sword. These include the classic guards and a few pages devoted to grappling techniques. He follows this with coverage of the "*dusaken*" or *dusack*. A *dusack* is essentially, a large, elongated "meat cleaver", one sharp

edge, slightly curved blade with an integral hand grip. It has a certain resemblance to a large machete. It is unclear if the *dusack* were made out of metal or were originally employed as wooden weapons for training purposes only. His works concludes with ample coverage of the rapier, rapier and dagger trailing with a few pages covering pole-weapons.

Mess. H. Angelo and Son, 1790

The "Hungarian & Highland Broad Sword" is a beautifully illustrated manuscript containing very little text but includes 24 black and white plates depicting mounted guards, and cuts and thrust forms utilizing the Hungarian broad sword. This sword is very similar to the sabre in general shape, except that the broad sword appears to be a more hefty weapon than the sabre. The plates were originally designed and etched by T. Rowlandson, under the direction of Mess. H. Angelo and Son. Mess. Angelo and son were the fencing masters to the Light Horse Volunteers of London and Westminster. The manuscript was dedicated to Colonel Herries.

Alfred Hutton, 1889

Hutton's "Cold Steel: A Practical Treatise on the Sabre" is based on the old English backsword play of the 18th century and is combined with the method of the "then"



ST. GEORGE'S FARRY.

modern Italian school. This manuscript also includes other weapons including the short sword-bayonet, the constable's truncheon, and knife techniques (based on Marozzo's earlier works). With respect to the sabre, discussion surrounds the guards, moulinet, cuts, points, timing and distance, aspects of all forms of swordplay.

Alfred Hutton, 1892

Hutton's "Old Sword-Play" was part of a triad of great Victorian practitioners of the sword, the other two being Sir Richard Burton and Egerton Castle. As a Victorian, Hutton partakes of all the limitations of his school. He completely discounts all swordsmanship before the 16th century. He



Plate 3: "Porta di Ferro Alta" (Quarte). After Marozzo

takes a progressive view of swordsmanship, which presumes evolution towards greater and greater "perfection", although he does not show this nearly as heavily as do Burton or Castle. He also is very prone to extending the techniques of his own time and school into the past, whether or not it was appropriate. However, taking these limitations into account, his work is an adequate introduction to the techniques of swordplay from the 16th through 18th centuries--provided the student goes on beyond Hutton.

Brief History of Armour

11th Century Arms and Armour (to approximately 1066 AD)

The figure below illustrates a typical hauberk of the 11th Century extending to mid thighs or knees with loose sleeves. Although the illustration is derived from a 12th century manuscript “Life of St.Guthlac”, the chain mail adequately illustrates the typical armouring of the 11th century extending to mid thighs or knees with loose sleeves and the coif integral with the hauberk. Over the coif is a steel cap with a nasal bar protecting the face. Wealthier knights and those of importance may also have had chausses or mail leggings laced across the back of the calf.



NORMAN KNIGHT
C. 1066

Under the hauberk can be seen a loose form of tunic or gambeson to prevent chafing from the rings of the mail. Some type of padded garment may have also been worn over, or in place of, the plain tunic shown. Later in the 11th century, loose fitting surcoats were worn over the mail. Often these were white or other light colours to help reduce the heating effect of the sun during battle.

The figure carries a large kite type shield with a supporting strap or “guige” over the right shoulder.

The sword of this period is carried on a sword belt around his waist. The lance is shown shortened in the figure, but would usually have been about 7 feet long.

The helmet used by the Saxons was usually of spangenhelm type, made of iron plates overlaid on the outside with sheets of gilt copper secured by silver-capped nails. This form of construction and decoration remained unchanged for centuries. The nasal guard was characteristic of the Norman helmets. Most warriors during the Battle of Hastings often wore mail hoods or “coifs” underneath their helmets.

Figure 1 Eleventh Century Knight

12th Century Arms and Armour (to approximately 1180 AD)

The individual in **Figure 2** is wearing a hauberk that extends to his mid thighs or knees and to his wrists. He has an integral coif covered by a steel bowl-shaped or conical helm with a nasal bar protecting the face. Under the mail is worn a gambeson as they did in the previous century to prevent chaffing by the mail. The chausses or mail leggings were much more popular in the 12th century. These were worn by lacing with leather straps behind the leg and calf. Normal for this period would be a large heater shaped shield with a supporting strap over the right shoulder. The sword typical of this period is carried on a sword belt around his waist



NORMAN KNIGHT
C. 1180

Both the arms and feet were now more commonly protected with mail than in the previous century. In the last few decades of the 12th century, the sleeves of the hauberk became longer, ending in mitten-shaped mail gloves called “mufflers”, which were slit at the wrist to permit the hands to be withdrawn at will. The palms were not covered with mail, since this would impede one’s grip of a weapon. Early forms of mufflers left the fingers and thumbs exposed.

Figure 2 (left)
Armouring of
the 12th
Century

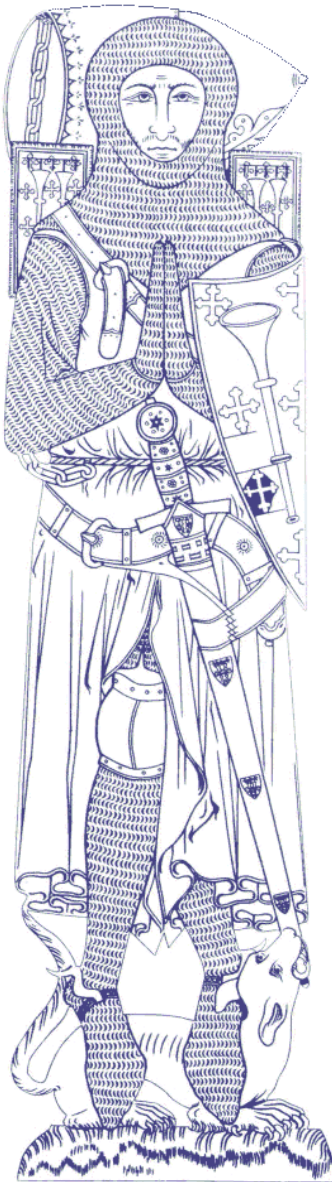
Long and usually sleeveless full-skirted cloth gowns called “surcoats” were typically worn over the mail towards the end of the 12th century. These first appeared in the second half of the 12th century but did not become widely popular until the 13th century. **Figure 3** on the right from the Winchester Bible illustrates knights wearing surcoats. It is possible that they developed through the influence of the Crusades. Armour worn under the intense sun of the Middle East would have been uncomfortable to wear. The compromise was to wear light coloured surcoats to deflect the worst of the sun’s rays.



Figure 3 Introduction of the surcoat

13th Century Arms and Armour (to approximately 1275 AD)

Figure 4 below illustrates Sir Roger de Trumpington, a brass form from Trumpington Church, Cambridgeshire. He wears a scabbard attached to the sword belt by thongs. His hauberk extends to his mid thighs and the sleeves extend to the wrists, often ending in mufflers or mitten-like extensions with an opening which could be closed with a lace just below the wrist. He has a separate coif that covers his shoulders. Under the coif is a steel cap which accounts for the irregular shaped head.



Over the hauberk is worn a surcoat which was often of fine material - silk - and may have been embroidered, the bottom edge showing a finished, dagged, edging. This is held in place by a thin cord or leather belt tied about the waist. Numerous reasons for the surcoat have been brought forward, including that the surcoat was worn over the armour to simply keep the armour clean. Another suggestion is that they were a garment modelled on the flowing robes of the Saracens, designed to keep the armour cool in the heat of the Holy Land. Finally, they may have been adopted to display the wearer's coat of arms.

Under the hauberk is worn a gambeson to protect from chaffing by the mail. The chausses are augmented by cuir-boulli⁵ protecting the knee caps. This is an example of the beginnings of the development and integration of plate armour. These were normally used to divide the chausses and provide intermediate support of the heavy mail around the knee. It is thought that a single piece of mail from thigh to foot could impede ease of movement.

He has a heater type shield suspended by a strap or "guige" over his right shoulder. The sword typical of this period is carried on a sword belt hung over the hips allowing the weapon to hang at the front of his body angled slightly forward. There were two common helmet designs during this period. The first being the "chapel de fer" or kettle hat.

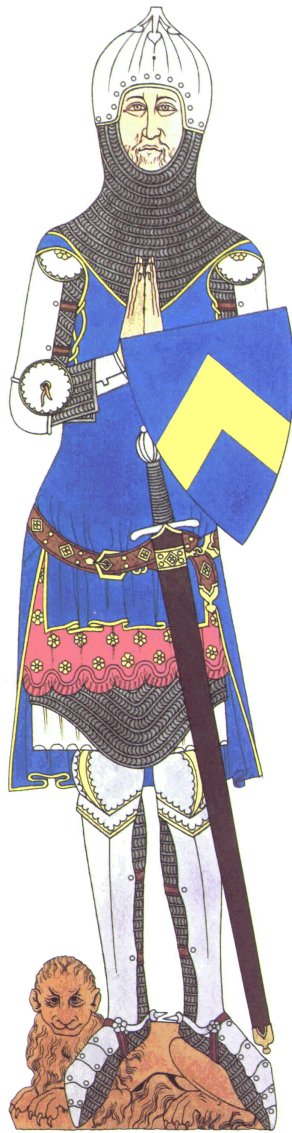
Figure 4 Armouring of the 13th Century

It resembled a medieval cauldron or kettle. The other consisted of a round bowl with a wide brim, assembled from number of plates riveted together, as was the earlier "spangenhelm". A second helm was the "great helm" similar to the one illustrated behind the head in the above figure. This was extensively used by the knightly class and was often worn with a coif. It also had a guard chain attachment to prevent the loss of the helmet during battle.

⁵ cuir boulli – hardened leather by super saturating in water or boiled in molten wax.

14th Century Arms and Armour (to approximately 1385 AD)

Figure 5 below illustrates Sir John d'Abernon, c1340 in the Parish Church of St. Mary, Stoke d'Abernon, Surrey. It shows armouring typical of this century, including a basinet form of helmet and aventail.



The armour of the 14th century was characterized by the increased useage of plate armour made of various materials, including *latten* (a brass-like copper alloy), whalebone, iron and steel. For the duration of the 14th century, the knight would continue to wear a chain mail hauberk. The hauberk only reached to just below hip level, sleeves extending to the wrist. Mail chausses were worn, covered with plate armour on the legs, called “greaves” strapped with leather behind the legs. After mid 14th century, the arms were frequently completely covered in plate armour and the arm protection was completed with a pair of gauntlets. In the latter half of the century, breast plates made their first appearance. During the latter part of the century a body defense known as a “brigandine” was developed. This was a piece of body armour which followed the principle of a coat of plates.

During the beginning of the 14th century, the helmets followed a globular basinet design, along with an attached aventail of mail. However, the great helm remained in use for the most part of the first half of the 14th century. Later the skull component became so tapered that it formed a truncated cone and the side and front of the helm were extended downwards to almost rest on the shoulders and chest of the wearer. This evolution in the design facilitated the deflection of a downward thrust of a sword or battle axe. In the early half of the century, helmets were often provided with pivoted visors.

In the beginning of the century, a knight still wore a surcoat or flowing gown over his armour.

Figure 5 Armouring of the 14th Century

This may have proved to be a hindrance while fighting on foot. Often, illustrations depicted the surcoat tucked up into the belt. Later, the front of the gown was shortened to expose the bottom of the coat of plates. By mid 14th century, it had risen to knee level both at the front and the back. The illustration above left depicts an earlier version of the surcoat.

A garment known as coat of plates was also worn. In the illustration above, it is depicted just below the surcoat and jupon. Often they had heraldric devices affixed to the surcoat or jupon in order to display their identification on the battle field and tournaments.

15th Century Arms and Armour (to approximately 1499 AD)

Figure 6 below illustrates armour made for Archduke Maximilian (later, the Emperor



Maximilian I) created by Lorenz Hellschmied of Augsburg, c1480. The beginning of the 15th century witnessed the development and exportation of an “international” style of armour. The production of armour was centred in two geographical regions, northern Italy, (centred in Milan) and Germany. The most important armour production centres in Germany were Augsburg, Landshut, Nuremburg and later, Innsbruck. As the century progressed, both countries developed a distinct style of armour. The kettle and basinet proved to be the most popular with the German knights during the early part of the 15th century. Another common form of helmet was the “sallet” which probably derived from the 14th century basinet. The illustration on the left depicts a sallet style helmet.

To complete the defenses, gauntlets were worn. Until about the mid century, the typical hour-glass form of the 14th century were worn. A new form of gauntlets appeared around this time, which resembled a mitten. This mitten gauntlet was constructed with a one-piece main plate which was shaped to the base of the thumb and had a slight bend along the knuckles. Later, the Germans produced a fluted style with ribs, and with finger lames. Occasionally, gauntlets had separate fingers, and cuffs so long that they reached the elbow.

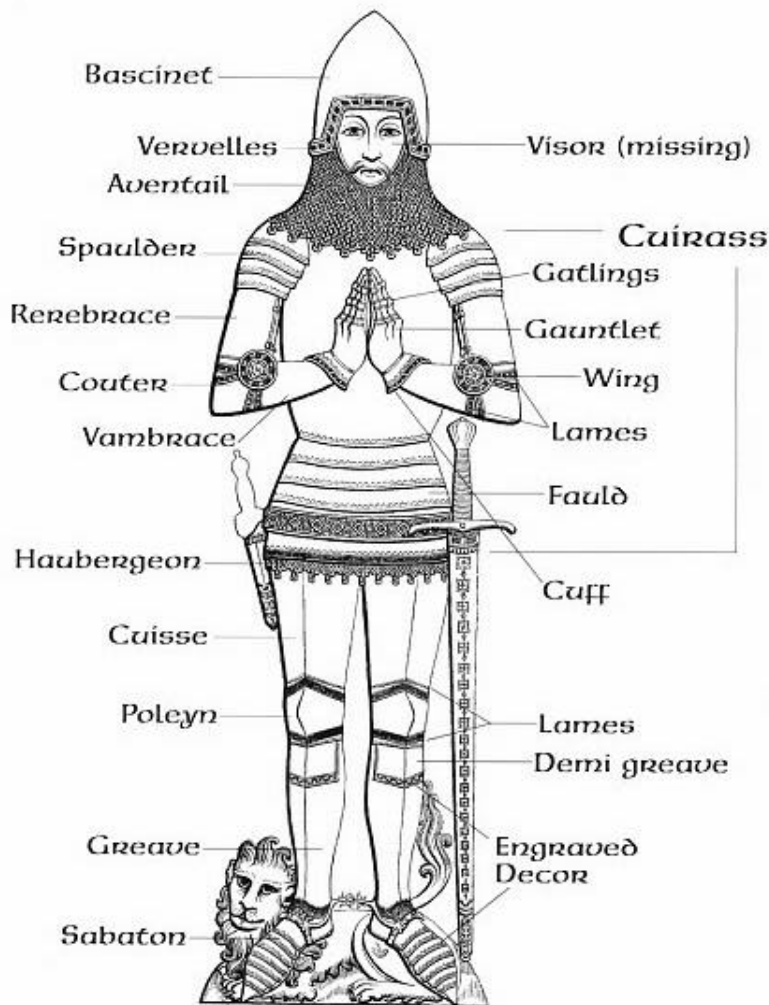
The Italian armours were more rounded in design, as opposed to the “fluted” Gothic lines favoured by the Germans. The Italian armour gave their armour a more utilitarian and robust appearance. This was accentuated by increased armour integrated into the body armour on the left side. Body defenses were first influenced by the Italians until approximately 1420. There was little distinction between the German armour from the rest of Europe. Later, a new

Figure 6 Armouring of the 15th Century

breast plate appeared known today as the “*kastenbrust*”. It had a boxy appearance, whereby the top of the breastplate sloped outwards and downwards from the chest, angling sharply to the waist to form a deep undercut.

Armour Nomenclature

The figure below is a useful tool to illustrate the various components of a complete suit of plate armour. The names are accompanied with Italian names. The following includes a description of the components as they are illustrated.



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Left Side of Illustration

Bascinet or Basinet: an open-faced helmet with a globular or conical skull enclosing the sides of the face and neck. Usually worn with an aventail, and occasionally a visor.

Vervelles: staples attached to the base of a basinet for securing the aventail.

Aventail: a curtain of mail attached by means of staples (vervelles) around the base of a helmet (usually a basinet), and covering the shoulders. Also called camail (French).

Spaulder: a light laminated defence protecting the point of the shoulder and top of the arm.

Rerebrace: plate armour for the upper arm.

Couter: a plate defence

for the elbow, also known as a spelt couter.

Vambrace: armour designed for the lower arm.

Haubergeon or Habergeon: a short type of hauberk (hauberk: a mail shirt reaching to between the knee and hip, and invariably with sleeves).

Cuisse: plate defense for the upper thighs

Poleyn: a cup-shaped plate defense for the knee, usually includes a side wing-like extension on the outside of the knee for additional protection.

Greave: also known as "*schynbald*" or "*jamber*". Plate defense for the leg from the knee to the ankle, initially protecting only the front in the early 14th century and later covering the entire leg. It is constructed of two contoured plates, fitted with hinges and closed with either pins or straps.

Sabaton/Solaret: either laminated plate defense or mail defense for the foot, ending in a toe cap.

Right Side of Illustration

Visor: protection for the eyes and face; a plate defence pivoted to the helmet.

Cuirass: a backplate and breastplate designed to be worn together.

Gatlings or Gadlings: protruding studs or bosses (sometimes zoomorphic) on the finger and knuckle joints of a gauntlet.

Gauntlet: defense of articulated plates for the hand in the form of a glove. Gauntlets can also be in the form of a mit or initially of mail.

Wing: a wing-like extension of the poleyns, for protecting the outside of the joints.

Lames: a narrow strip or plate of steel, sometimes used in armour to provide enhanced articulation of the joints.

Fauld of Four Lames: armour plate strips composed of horizontal lames attached to the bottom edge of the breastplate to protect the abdomen

Cuff: an extension of the gauntlet for defending the wrist, contributing to the classic "hour-glass" shape of the gauntlets.

Demi greave: a small defense plate transitioning the poleyn articulations to a greave on the lower leg.

Other Terms

Stop rib: a small metal bar riveted to plate armour to stop the point of a weapon sliding into a joint or opening.

Gardbrace: a reinforcing plate closely shaped to the pauldron, first appearing in the 15th century on Italian armours. It often covered the lower 3/4's of the front of the pauldron and was attached to it by a staple and pin as indicated in the figure.

Breastplate: Usually, a single plate of armour for the front of the torso, down to the waist.

Lance rest: a support structure for the lance when couched, bolted to the right side of the breastplate and was occasionally hinged.

Plackart: A reinforcement plate attached to the breastplate. It covered the lower half of the breastplate, however, Italian armour typically covered the entire breastplate.

Guard of Vambrace: an exaggerated defence for the right elbow and vambrace armour for the lower arm.

Lower Cannon: individual plate armour, tubular in form to protect the lower arm.

Fauld of Four Lames: armour plate strips composed of horizontal lames attached to the bottom edge of the breastplate to protect the abdomen

Tasset: a defence for the top of the thigh, hung from the fauld by leather straps to cover the gap between the cuisses and breastplate. This form of armour first appeared in the 15th century.

Arming points: ties of flax or twine by which the armour was secured in place.

Mail standard: a mail hood or coif often worn under the helmet for additional protection for the head and neck areas

Pauldron: a laminated plate defense for the shoulder extending at the front and rear to protect the armpit.

Gussets of mail: shaped pieces of mail which were sewn to the arming doublet to cover the armpits and portions of the arm left exposed by plate defenses.

Anatomy of the Sword

The student must become familiar with all aspects of the sword, its construction, the material and the components.

The first thing the student must learn is that there are two edges to the sword. The “true” edge and the “false” edge. The true edge is the edge that is facing and which will strike your opponent. The false edge is facing you. If the sword is flipped, the false edge will now become the “true” edge and the true edge becomes the “false” edge.

The figure below illustrates the components that make up a sword. What is not seen is the “tang”. That is the narrowed portion of the blade, on which the grip is attached. The pommel keeps the hilt assembly in place.

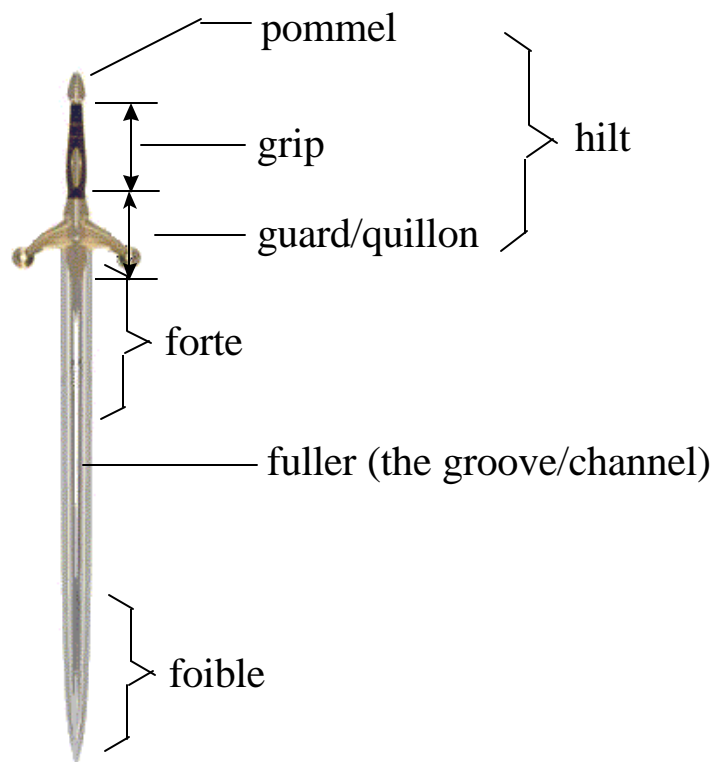


Figure 7 Anatomy of the sword

The best defense is in the *forte* (strong) area of the sword, near your guard. This is the area of the sword that you will parry with. The least defensive area for parrying is the *foible* (weak). The opponent will have more control over your weapon when parried in this area. The guard can also be used to disarm your opponent and pommel can also be offensive by striking your opponent.

Physics of the Sword

Center of Percussion

The center of percussion or COP of the sword is also known as the “sweet spot” of the blade. This is the point on the blade, which experiences the minimum vibration as a result of the blade being struck or striking another blade or target. When the blade comes into contact with a target, a shockwave passes through the blade. The blade possesses a natural “harmonic” balance in which the blade will experience areas of maximum vibration and minimum vibrations. The points of maximum vibration are the “crests” and the points of minimum vibration are the “nodes”. The COP is one of these nodes on the blade, and it is the node that experiences the least amount of vibration in the blade. The COP is generally located approximately $\frac{2}{3}$'s to $\frac{3}{4}$ s of the length of the blade from the guard or quillon. If the blade is struck at this point or COP, the energy of the shockwave will travel to the target instead of into the shaking blade. A second node rests near the guard. This position of this node on the blade side of the guard will dramatically reduce the vibration felt by the hands gripping the hilt and reduce tiring of the grip. A well structured sword, i.e. a sword that possesses good harmonic balance will not transmit the shock to the hands on the grip when struck.

Balance Point from Guard

The balance point from guard or BPG, is also known as the “center of gravity” of the sword. It is where the sword, if suspended by a string would remain level to the floor. The BPG on most swords should fall 4-6 inches ahead of the guard for a broadsword and approximately 22%-23% of the distance from the tip of the pommel to the tip of the blade for rapiers. It is not clear from any ancient documents and treatises if these characteristics were understood or were considered when constructing swords.

The Grip for the longsword

Proper grip is critical to ensure a high degree of control, accuracy and stamina with the hands. If one grasps the sword with a “death-grip”, similar to one gripping a baseball bat, one will tire very quickly. However, if the grip is somewhat relaxed and optimally placed on the grip and pommel, one will be able to endure long periods of time in combat with little tiring.

The fundamental principle employed is that you "steer with the right and brake with the left". This means that the most, if not all of the maneuverability is managed by the right hand (assuming you are right handed, the reverse is true for left handed grips). The left hand is used to either apply more power to the strike by tightening its grip or to play a major role in the "pulling the shot" by applying the "brakes". The grip could be described as similar to holding a "fishing rod". The grip is relatively relaxed in order to "feel" the sword, and force is applied when it's needed.

The left hand is positioned somewhere in the neighbourhood of the pommel, or right on the pommel. Gripping the pommel with the left hand offers the greatest control and leverage when delivering a strike.

To test the appropriate grip, grasp the grip area of the hilt as you would a fishing rod. While you are grasping the sword, have a partner grasp the sword near the point and raise the point to almost a vertical position. The grasp on the grip does not change in position nor alignment with the floor. The partner should be able to simply pull the sword from the grasp, which indicates that there is little pressure on the grip. Returning the sword to a horizontal position, you will notice that if you try to pull the sword from the grasp, it is difficult if not impossible. This clearly indicates that much of the support of the sword is the natural leverage and pressure points offered by a relaxed grip.

Theory and History

The purpose of this section is to provide some of the necessary theoretical and historical information necessary to satisfy the scholar requirements. It is extremely important that the student begin to develop a deep level of understanding of swordsmanship and all the aspects that surround it, i.e. the theoretical aspects as well as the historical aspects. Most material is available on the AEMMA website at <http://www.aemma.org>, while others will require some investigation on the part of the student.

The student must review and study the works written by historical masters that include Fiore dei Liberi, Hans Talhoffer and George Silver. The units below will aid in identifying the salient points that should be understood from each manuscript.

1) Fiore dei Liberi – 1410

Liberi documented a very systematic and complete training manual for the development of contemporary martial art skills of the time. Liberi recommends that this training system not be used to train thugs, given the techniques are sophisticated and deadly. Thugs would not possess the self-discipline to control when and when not to employ the techniques described. He begins the training program with grappling. Although students of the sword would prefer to begin training with the sword, Liberi reasoned that those students who are committed to learning the way of the sword would remain throughout the earlier levels of training and develop an appreciation of the skills learned and recognize how these skills can be leveraged to longsword or pole- weapons training. Those students that are not cognizant of this leave the program early – a good filtering mechanism. The AEMMA training program structure is heavily influenced by this approach by Liberi and is clearly visible in its structure with respect to recruit training. The student undergoing this level of training will consider the following point:

- i. review the classical Italian nomenclature and description of each of the posts and guards found in his manuscript entitled “**Flos Duellatorum**”

2) Hans Talhoffer – 1467

This manuscript was one of the first that received attention by the western martial arts community. An initial re-publication of this manuscript by VS Books, Hearne, Germany suddenly made this manuscript available to the fledgling western martial arts community back in 1998. Since then, a new publication by Mark Rector has provided the WMA community with the same German treatise in English.

The difference between Talhoffer and Liberi is that it appears that Talhoffer’s manuscript is simply a collection of techniques, many quite interesting and considerably sophisticated. It is implied that one that studies this manuscript, should have a good basis

of skill and expertise in order to successfully utilize this manuscript. The student will need to consider the following points:

- i. review the section on “*langes schwert*” (longsword) – plates 1-67
- ii. review and identify similar dagger techniques as instructed previously in this training program in the online section entitled “*Degen (Dolch)* (Dagger) - plates 170 – 190”
- iii. review and identify similar grappling techniques as instructed earlier in this training program in the online section entitled “*Ring* (Wrestling) - plates 191 – 221”

3) Giacomo di Grassi – 1594

Although a later period master, di Grassi does make references to the importance of footwork, timing and judgment. These are the “soft” skills that all martial artists must develop. di Grassi discusses how one would obtain the necessary attributes to develop skills in judgment (knowing when to strike without leaving an opening to be struck in return, straight line attacks and timing). The student will need to consider the following points:

- i. of paces – principles of harmony of footwork and hand
- ii. principles of the true art of defence – judgment, strength and activity – falsing/deceit

4) George Silver – 1599

Although “George Silver spends a fair amount of time frothing at the mouth about the folly of the newfangled Italian rapier play, as opposed to the English sword.”, he reveals in an easy to read style, the classic principles of the true fight. He discusses the four critical components of a true fight engagement that the fighter must internalize: four true times, four false times, four grounds and the four governors. Of course, the utilization of such concepts is dependent upon the engagement situation and the fighters involved.

For example, consider two swordsmen engaged but out of range of each other. One moves his hand in order to position his sword and then steps forward. He is using the *true time*. The opponent however, steps forward first and then positions his sword. He is using *false time*. This means that the user of the true time is now already prepared to attack the opponent because the opponent’s sword would not as yet be in place due to his using the *false time*.

Silver’s work is extremely important and the student should “nail” down the principles. For convenience, a brief of summary of the principles follow.

The Four True Times

1. The time of the hand.
2. The time of the hand and body.
3. The time of the hand, body, and foot.
4. The time of the hand, body, and feet.

The true times refer in descending order the comparative speeds of movement of the various parts of the body. The movement of the hand only is the fastest moving part while the more complex movement that involves the hand, body and feet are slowest in comparison.

The Four False Times

1. The time of the foot.
2. The time of the foot and body.
3. The time of the foot, body, and hand.
4. The time of the feet, body, and hand.

The false times are the inverse with respect to speed of the body parts. The fighter must be aware that false times would create openings that the opponent will take advantage of.

“Thus have I thought good to separate and make known the true times from the false, with the true wards thereto belonging, that thereby the rather in practicing of weapons a true course may be taken for the avoiding of errors and evil customs, and speedy attaining of good habit or perfect being in the true use and knowledge of all manner of weapons.” **George Silver, 1599**

The Four Grounds

1. Judgment
2. Distance
3. Time
4. Place

Within the context of the four grounds, judgment defines the ability to maintain the optimum distance between yourself and the opponent. The optimum distance is to be positioned such that you are out of striking range, however, you are close enough to take advantage of any openings that may occur. Time is that defining moment when you can safely attack your opponent without him being able to reciprocate. Place refers to the opening in the opponent's defence through which you can deliver your attack. Therefore, through judgment, you keep your distance, through distance you get your time, through time, you safely win the place in which to strike the opponent.⁶

The Four Governors

1. Judgment
2. Measure

⁶ The four grounds were originally written by Silver, however, Maestro Terry Brown does an excellent interpretation in his book.

3. Pressing In

4. Flying Out

The first governor is judgment, which is to know when your adversary can reach you, and when not, and when you can do the like to him, and to know by the goodness or badness of his lying, what he can do, and when and how he can perform it. The second governor is measure. Measure is the better to know how to make your space true to defend yourself, or to offend your enemy. The third and fourth governors are a twofold mind when you press in on your enemy, for as you have a mind to go forward, so must you have at that instant a mind to fly backward upon any action that shall be offered or done by your adversary.⁷ The student must consider the following points:

- i. the issues regarding the Italian masters
- ii. principles of the true fight, independent of weapons employed
- iii. timing of the true fight vs the false fight
- iv. the four grounds/principles and their meaning and application to the fight
- v. the four governors and their meaning and application to the fight
- vi. the general rules of a successful engagement

5) Sigmund Ringeck – c1389 – 1440

Ringeck's "Commentaries on Johannes Liechtenauer's Fechtbuch" is included because Maestro Liechtenauer is often considered the grandfather of fechtbuchs. A number of fechtbuchs written since Liechtenauer's day all demonstrate his influence. His commentaries support the critical attributes of a good fighter, those being footwork and tactics (judgment, distance, time, place). The following is a self-explanatory extraction from Ringeck's translated text. This text is available freely from a number of sources on the internet.

Footwork

Note: This is the first tenet of the long sword: learn to strike blows equally well from both sides if you want to learn to fence well.

Note: If you want to strike from the (your) right side, make sure, your left foot is forward (at the beginning); if you want to strike from the left side, the right foot must be forward.

If you strike an oberhau from the right side then, follow the blow with your right foot.

If you do not the blow is wrong and ineffective, because your right side stays behind. Because of this the blow will fall short and cannot travel in its proper arc towards the left side. If you strike from the left side and you do not follow the blow, it too is wrong. That is why no matter from which side you deliver the strike, follow the blow with the same foot. So you will succeed in all techniques. This is how you shall strike all blows.

⁷ The four governors were extracted directly from Silver's "Brief Instructions..."

Tactical Basics

When you are closing to an opponent, do not watch his blows and do not wait for what he might use against you. Because all fencers, who just wait for their opponents blows and do not do anything else than warding them off, do not succeed very often. They are defeated very often.

Note: Always fence using all of your strength! When you're close, strike at his head and at his body, so he may not be able to change through (*Durchwechseln*) in front of your point. After the blow, from the bind, strike light blows at his next opening, as is described in the section about different blows and other techniques.

Note: This tenet is addressed to left-handers and right-handers. If you are a right-handed fencer and you are closing to an opponent and you think you can hit him, do not strike the first blow from the (your) left side. Because you are weak there and you cannot resist, if he binds strongly against your blade. Because of this, strike from the right side, you can work strongly "*Am Schwert*" ("on the sword") and you can use all techniques you like. So, if you are left-handed, do not strike from the right side, since left-handers are usually not used to strike effectively from the right side and vice versa.

Note: Above all other things, you must understand the principles of "before" (*Vor*) and "after" (*Nach*), because the entire art of fencing is based upon it. "Before" means, pre-empting him with a blow or a thrust against an opening before he can hit you, so he must defend/displace (*Versetzen*). So, be flexible in your defence and aim with your sword at one opening after the other, so he cannot get through with his own techniques. But, if he rushes in, start wrestling.

"After" means: If you do not succeed with the "before", wait for the "after". These are the defenses against all techniques he uses against you. So, if you have to displace him, make the displacement 'simultaneously' (*Indes*) and from the bind, strike immediately at his nearest opening. So you win the "before" and he remains in the "after". Also, you should –during the "before" and "after" –notice 'simultaneously' (*Indes*) how you can "work" against the strong or the weak of his sword.

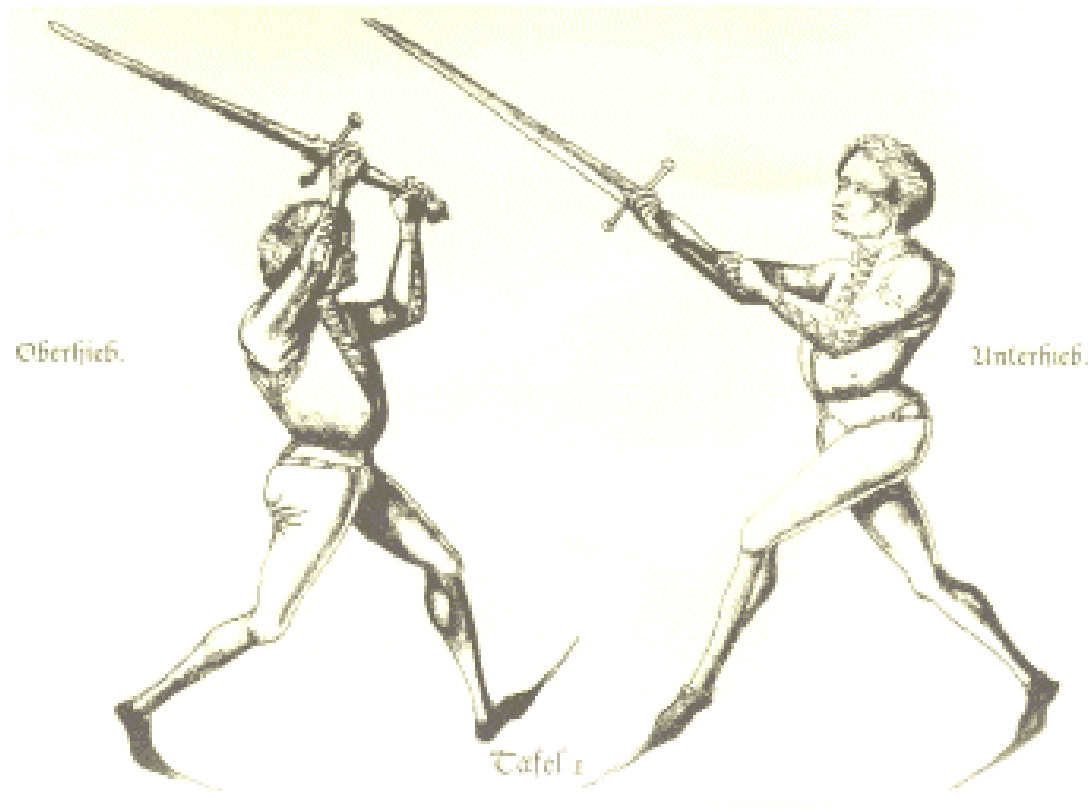
This means: The strong of the sword reaches from the cross guard to the middle of the blade, with it, you can hold opposed, if somebody binds against it. The weak reaches from the middle of the blade to the point. Here you cannot hold opposed. If you firmly understand this, you can "work" and defend yourself very well.

Princes and Lords learn to survive with this art, in earnest and in play. But if you are fearful, then you should not learn to fence. Because a despondent heart will always be defeated, regardless of skill.⁸

⁸ Due to the proliferation of "photocopies" of various historical texts from unknown origins including Ringeck, the only known public source is available on the HACA website at <http://www.thehaca.com>. - permission to use the extract was granted by HACA

Recruit

Book 1: Recruit Physical Training Program



This section introduces the students to the history of European medieval martial arts, historical background on the evolution of the longsword, various stages of armour development, and an introduction to the fundamentals of medieval swordsmanship. A student entering the world of medieval martial arts will typically begin with the training presented in this book and who will incur a duration of three (3) - six (6) months depending upon commitment and time devoted to practice.

1.0 Grappling (abrazare) Techniques

Introduction

The student is introduced to grappling or wrestling techniques (*abrazare*) as is called in Fiore dei Liberi's manuscript. The training begins with these wrestling techniques because it forms the basis on which other skills are layered upon, such as dagger and longsword techniques. The student is introduced to the techniques described in Liberi's "Flos Duellatorum" written in 1409/1410. It is critical that the student comprehend that the techniques learned in this part and the later dagger part, are extremely dangerous techniques! The student must remain cognizant that his/her partner is exactly that, a training partner, and not someone to compete with during the training exercises. In Liberi's manuscript, there are very few instances (four instances we believe) in which he refers to the partner as an "opponent". The student will view his/her training partner in the light of "scholler" (*scholare* – Italian, someone that has more experience than he/she) or "players" (*zugadore* – Italian, a partner in training) or "companion" (*compagno* – Italian, another reference to a partner in a non-aggressive orientation).

Complete medieval combat training does not only involve developing skill with the sword. Other skills are necessary in order to develop high degree of swordsmanship skills. In battle conditions, one must be comfortable and able to continue combat, hand-to-hand/grappling should one lose the sword, or if the opponent closes in on the student. Following this section, the student is provided with basic skills in the area of close-quarter combat with dagger techniques that leverage what was learned in this section.

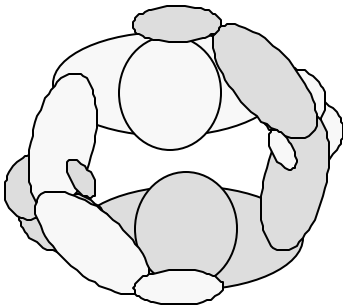
The student at the end of this training part will have developed a good understanding and some skill in the area of guards (positions in preparation to deploy defensive or offensive maneuvers) and begin the development of timing, distance, judgment and position. Advanced grappling and throw techniques as documented by the other masters will be explored in later levels of training. The skills developed in this level of development comprise the minimum technical requirements for the acquisition of the rank of scholler.

1.1 General Grappling Fundamentals

We begin this training with the four (4) fundamental grappling holds. These form the basis on which more sophisticated knife and longsword disarming techniques will be introduced in later skill levels training. These are forms to familiarize students with fundamentals of fighting and are taught foremost as combat techniques. A short description of each hold follows. The illustrations depict the holds from above in order to provide a visual clarification of the holds described.

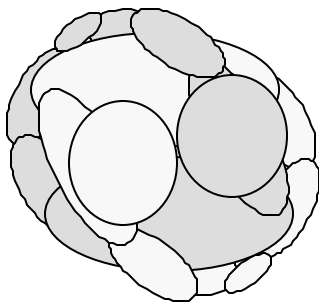
Another concept is the notion of the opponent's "inside" and "outside". His/her "inside" is the area of the body to the left of the weapon wielding arm (assuming right handedness) and his/her "outside" is the area of the body to the right of the weapon arm.

1.1.1 Neck & Elbow Hold (L & R)



- position the feet approximately shoulder width apart, and face your opponent at a distance apart that will allow you to place your hand on the back of your opponent's neck without stretching
- place your right hand on the back of your opponent's neck (right hold)
- place your left hand on the right elbow of your opponent
- your opponent implements the same hold on you
- switch hand positions, so that the hold is now reversed (left hold)

1.1.2 Diagonal Hold (L & R)



- position the feet approximately shoulder width apart, and face your opponent at a about 1/2 arm's length distance apart
- take your right arm over your opponent's left shoulder and down the back diagonally towards the right waist
- take your left arm, around the upper part of the right waist and up and lock a grip with your right hand
- at the same time, move into your opponent, placing your head solidly against the base and left side of the opponent's neck applying some downward pressure with your forehead (this will prevent a "head butt" from your opponent during live situations)
- switch hand and head positions so that the hold is reversed (right hold)

1.1.3 Back Hold

- position the feet approximately shoulder width apart, and face your opponent
- lowering yourself with your legs, wrap your arms around your opponent's back, locking your hands in a grip
- your head will rest against the chest either with the left side of your face or the right (this position will allow you to invoke a hip-thrust throw or a gravity throw which will be described later)
- the figure is an extract from Talhoffer's manuscript, plate 195 or "tafel 195". It illustrates a hold similar to the back hold currently described. The caption associated with this illustration from the manuscript reads *"Wieder ein gleiches gegenseitiges fassen. - Nach dem gegenseitigen fassen sieht er den Unterarm, ergreift ihn am kopfe und schwingt ihn von sich."* which translates to: "Again, the same mutual hold. -



From the mutual hold, thus he draws beneath his arm and grasps him by the head and swings him away from himself."

1.1.4 Belt Hold



- position the feet approximately shoulder width apart, and face your opponent
- lowering yourself with your legs, reach forward and grasp the "belt-line" or the top of the pants/trousers with each of your hands (right and left sides)
- the figure on the left is an extract from Talhoffer's manuscript illustrating the belt hold attempt, however, the individual had gotten himself into a head lock position. The caption associated with this illustration from the manuscript reads: *"Im Durchgehen ist dieses der Bruch, dann wurgt er ihn am halse."* which translates to: "In this pass-through, thus this one breaks and chokes him about the throat."

- with this type of hold, you would be in a good position to deliver a hip-thrust throw

The following section describes 3 increasingly advanced levels of drills to designed to develop the necessary grappling skills. The drills are not competition, and therefore, the student and partner must be managed by an instructor or coach to ensure that the pair don't get away from themselves.

1.1.5 Grappling Drills

Level #1

These training drills are to be conducted in pairs. This drill is designed to increase the student's comfort with grappling his/her opponent. In order for this to occur, the opponent must assume a non-resistant "living mannequin" role. In other words, the student delivering the holds, will have free range and unrestricted ability to deliver the above holds, in whatever sequence the student desires.

The student must transition between each of the holds described above, alternating between left and right holds if relevant.

This should be done for about five (5) minutes for each student.

Level #2

This drill is similar to level #1, except the partner now presents some resistance to the holds, making the holds a little more difficult. There should be no offense on the part of the "living mannequin" role, only resistance.

This should be practiced for about five (5) minutes for each student.

Level #3

In this drill level, the pair is now working against each other, each trying to get the better of the other, utilizing any one or more of the holds learned. Each attempts to work out of the grips by the opponent, and also attempts to deliver a hold and secure control of the opponent.

This should be practiced for at least five (5) minutes.

During this drill, some additional enhancements can be included:

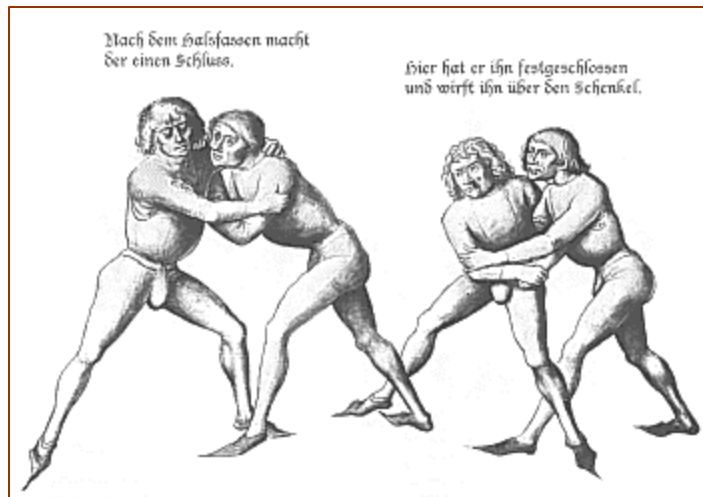
- when using the neck & elbow hold, the one taking the initiative, should consider pulling the opponent's head towards you in order to cause the opponent to momentarily lose footing or cause an imbalance in the opponent
- when delivering either diagonal hold, or back or belt hold, using your hip, thrust your hip under and then up against the opponent, using the leverage of your lower body and legs to momentarily lift the opponent off the floor
- when in a hold position (you are on the defensive in this case), try to force your hands through the hold from the inside giving you more leverage and provide you the opportunity to deliver a hold on your opponent

1.1.6 Fundamental Throws

Continuing with the basics of unarmed combat training, we now utilize the holds learned above and throw the opponent using either one of the pair of techniques described below. These throws by no means should be considered a complete unarmed combat training method. These have been introduced purely as a method of expanding one's longsword training to include cross-training techniques and as a precursor to grappling and half-sword techniques introduced in scholler level of skill training.

Hip/Thigh Throw (L/R)

- position the feet approximately shoulder width apart, and face your opponent at a distance apart that will allow you to place your hand on the back of your opponent's neck without stretching
- place your left hand on the back of your opponent's neck (left hold)



- place your right hand on the left elbow of your opponent
- move your left leg so as to position the leg in front of the opponent
- using your left arm and body, "push" your opponent's head downwards and forwards to the right over your left leg (where the head goes, the body will follow)

- use your body to facilitate the force behind the throw over the hip
- the figure is an extract from Talhoffer (plate 219), which depicts this classical throw

Under-arm Gravity Throw (L/R)

- facing your opponent, grasp the left wrist with your right hand and raise his arm upwards
- at the same time, lower yourself using your legs only and while still gripping the arm, walk under the arm and wrap your arms around the opponent's waist or lower chest
- place your head against either his side or back
- twist your torso towards the right and at the same time, kick out your left leg back and away from your opponent and leveraging gravity, fall on your opponent such that he lands on his face/chest and you land on him with your back and rump
- repeat this with the left hand grip

1.2 Abrazare Techniques

1.2.1 Four Guards (*quattro posta*)

The student is introduced to the specifics of wrestling or *abrazare* and grappling as described by **Fiore dei Liberi**. This covers the four fundamental guards that form the basis of all skills developed in later units. In Liberi's manuscript, each section begins with crowned masters (*magistro*) that illustrate the *posta* or stances. In addition to the masters that introduce the fundamental *postas* in the beginning of each section, other masters are included that introduce sub-sections. This will be evident in the later parts of this section. All the illustrations in this section are extracts from **Fiore dei Liberi's "Flos Duellatorum"**, of the Novati Pissani edition.

❖ *posta longa* (long guard)



The long guard is deployed in preparation for a throw, providing the foot placement is correct. The right arm is extended outwards and upwards, the left hand somewhat relaxed on the left side (ready to grab, strike, etc.). The right leg is forward and the left leg is trailing. The reverse is true with the extension of the left arm. This guard will be illustrated later demonstrating the capabilities of this guard position with respect to throws.

❖ *dente di zenzia* (boar's tooth)



The boar's tooth illustrates the starting position of a very volatile movement in which the right arm begins with the elbow bent approx 90° (upper arm parallel to the floor, the forearm perpendicular). The left hand is relaxed on the left side in preparation to grab or strike. Right leg is forward and left leg trailing. The right arm would move forcefully upwards, which is a fundamental move to break a grip. Frequently, from the boar's tooth, one would assume the long guard resulting in throwing the opponent.

❖ **porta di ferro** (iron gate)

The iron gate illustrated depicts the master with both hands positioned approximately waist height, palms down, left leg forward and right leg trailing. The weight is distributed over the left leg. This guard is most often assumed at the end of the movement, i.e. if the master grabs the opponent, forcing the opponent to the ground by assuming the iron gate guard or in preparation of a dagger attack.

❖ **posta frontale** (frontal guard)

The frontal guard is similar to the iron gate, in that both hands are in a similar position and raised to approximately the height of the shoulders. Right leg is forward and left is trailing. It is with this position that one would block an oncoming attack or grab the opponent and move towards the iron gate to take your opponent down.

1.2.2 Abrazare – Master #1 (wrestling techniques)

- ❖ shoulder hook (agent) → **boar's tooth** (counter)



The agent⁹ grasps the patient agent's¹⁰ shoulder with his left hand, and attempts to grab the patient's left hip. The patient agent thrusts his left hand forward to grip the elbow/upper right arm of the agent, and deploys the **boar's tooth** (*denti di zenchiar*) with the right arm while stepping through the hold – the patient agent must not bend down or over while deploying this hold.

- ❖ shoulder hook (agent) → **boar's tooth** failure → **long guard** with leg grab (counter)



The agent grasps the patient agent's shoulder with his left hand, and attempts to grab the patient's left hip. The patient agent thrusts his left hand forward to grip the elbow/upper right arm of the agent, and deploys the **boar's tooth** (*denti di zenchiar*) with the right arm while stepping through the hold – the patient agent must not bend down or over while deploying this hold.

- ❖ shoulder hook with hip grab (agent) → face push following through with **long guard** to **iron gate** (counter)



The agent grasps the patient agent's shoulder with his left hand, and successfully grabs the patient's left hip (similar to iii). The patient agent suppresses the agent's right arm with his left, deploys the boar's tooth (*dente di zenchiar*) over the agent's left arm, positions the right leg behind the agent's left leg, face push, grasp agent's left leg, following through with **iron gate** (*porta de ferro*) with throw over patient agent's right leg.

⁹ agent: the individual on the offensive

¹⁰ patient agent: the individual on the defensive

- ❖ shoulder hook with hip grab (agent) → face push following through with **long guard** to **iron gate** – variation (counter)



The agent grasps the patient agent's shoulder with his left hand, and successfully grabs the patient agent's left hip. The patient agent suppresses the agent's right arm with left, deploys **boar's tooth** (*dente di zenzhiar*) over the agent's left arm, positions the patient agent's right leg between agent's and does a face push with the right hand on the agent by twisting to the right, following through with a long guard (*posta longa*) and takedown to iron gate (*porta di ferro*).

1.2.3 Abrazare – Master #2 (counter techniques)

- ❖ face/chin push and hip grab (agent) → elbow push (counter)



The agent grabs the face, chin or nose of the master – patient agent (wearing the leg band) with left hand and right hand grabs the patient agent's left hip. The patient agent simply grabs the elbow with right hand and pushes up to escape.

- ❖ continuing → hip turn and throw (counter)



The counter successfully executes with elbow push, then turns hips counter-clockwise positioning right foot between agent's legs, at the same time, grab the agent's right wrist with left hand and across the shoulders destabilizing the agent, and with the right hand, grab the left leg of the agent, and lift agent and throw.

Note: this move is extremely dangerous – at minimum, you must have mats on the floor.

- ❖ face/chin push and hip grab (agent) → boar's tooth and ear press (counter)



The agent grabs the face, chin or nose of the master – patient agent (wearing crown) with left hand and right hand grabs the patient's left hip. The patient agent deploys the boar's tooth (*denti di zenchiar*) in order to grab the agent's side of the head and using thumb, deliver an ear press.

- ❖ ear press (agent) → long guard → iron gate (counter)



The patient agent (wearing knee band) counters with a boar's tooth and then the patient agent rotates to the left, positioning right leg behind agent's left leg, and deploys a **long guard** (*posta longa*) with right arm and finally assumes the **iron gate** (*porta di ferro*).

- ❖ diagonal hold (agent) → long guard (counter)



The agent grabs the patient agent with a diagonal hold and the patient places right leg behind the agent, deploys the **long guard** (*posta longa*) and throws over leg and assumes the **iron gate** (*porta di ferro*).

❖ full nelson (agent) → finding a wall (counter)



The agent (wearing the band around the leg) grabs the patient agent in a full nelson hold. The patient agent seeks out a wall or tree to push back with great force using the leg(s) off the wall or tree. This will cause the agent to release the hold.

❖ belt hold (agent) → finding the crotch (counter)



The agent grabs the patient agent with a belt/hip hold. The patient agent (wearing the band) assumes a similar hold and "strategically" places his/her knee into the crotch to force a release of the agent's hold.

❖ belt hold (agent) → face push with **frontal guard** (counter)

The agent grabs the patient agent's belt/hip. The patient agent (wearing the band) places both hands on the agent's face and pushes using the **frontal guard** (*posta frontale*) by poking the eyes.

1.2.4 Abrazare – Master #3 (more counter techniques)

- ❖ face/chin push and hip grab (agent) → elbow push & throw (counter)



The agent grabs the face, chin or nose of the master, the patient agent (wearing the crown and band) with right hand pushes off the face grab and continues pushing. The agent loses his balance and the patient agent grabs the agent's right leg with his left hand and facilitates the backward throw.

- ❖ neck grab (agent) → elbow compression and nasal push with boar's tooth (counter)



The agent grabs the patient agent's neck (wearing the band) with his left hand. The patient agent counters with a **boar's tooth** (*denti de zenchiar*) with his right arm, compressing the agent's left elbow, and continues with a nasal push to the rear.

- ❖ face grab (agent) → eye compression with **frontal guard** (counter)



The agent grabs the patient agent's (wearing the band & crown) lower face with both hands. The patient agent counters with a **frontal guard** (*posta frontale*) with both hands and pushes the thumbs into the eyes of the agent and pushes towards the rear of the agent.

1.3 Transitional Training

This “transitional unit” prepares the student for the next part of the training, that being dagger or “*daga*”. The weapons used in this section are simple dowels. The point of this transitional unit is to train the student in becoming comfortable with blocking and parrying with a dowel, and to use the dowel as a grappling tool.

❖ **iron gate** (agent) → neck lock with dowel (counter)



The agent attempts to grab the patient agent's legs from an **iron gate** (*porta di ferro*) guard position. The patient agent (wearing the band), with the dowel strikes the agent behind the neck with right hand and hooks the neck with the dowel. Left hand grabs the other end of the dowel resulting in a crossed-forearm grip on the dowel. The patient agent resumes the **iron gate** (*porta di ferro*).

❖ **Shoulder grip** (agent) → chin push and dowel hook on thigh (counter)



The agent attempts to grab the patient agent's shoulders and or neck. The patient agent using the **boar's tooth** with the left arm, comes up on the inside of the agent's right arm, and pushes under the chin, pressing the thumb into the soft tissue under the chin. At the same time, the patient agent hooks the dowel on the agent's left thigh through his crotch, and using this hook, lifts the agent's leg with the hook in conjunction with the chin push.

2.0 Dagger (*daga*) Techniques

Introduction

This part of the student's guide will provide the student with the basics of dagger techniques. These are the fundamental concepts that must be learned, on which all other techniques and skills are based upon. This training is by no means complete with respect to dagger techniques, however, basic skills in this area will enhance the overall experience and skill of the student and position the student to challenge for the prize of scholler. The purpose of this unit is to introduce the student to basic offensive and defensive dagger techniques, all from the perspective of an underhand or *sopramano* grip on the dagger (ice pick grip).

1) dagger attack → ward and strike

This basic exercise is designed to introduce the student to the notion of moving off-line when under attack, and to develop a natural ability to ward off an attack with one hand and use the other hand to attack at the same time rather than being idle.

- ❖ attack from above → ward to the inside
*begin with the **porta di ferro** stance (left leg forward), re-direct attacking arm to the outside with the left hand, move inside by stepping to the right with the right foot (gathered step) - right hand prepared to strike or punch*
- ❖ attack from above → ward to the outside
*begin with the **porta di ferro** stance (left leg forward), re-direct attacking arm to the inside with the right hand, move outside by moving the right foot forward and to the left (passing step), rotate body clockwise and followed by left hand prepared to strike or punch*

2) dagger attack → ward and throw

This exercise takes the above basic one step further by deploying a known guard, the *posta longa* in order to take the opponent down. The student will learn the importance of timing and footwork in order to successfully deploy this ward and throw.

- ❖ attack from above → ward to the outside
*begin with the **porta di ferro** stance (left leg forward), re-direct attacking arm to the outside with the left hand (in this case, actually grip the wrist with thumb downwards) and push the attacking arm upwards and towards the rear*



*step forward with the right foot (passing step) and position the foot behind the attacker's right leg and simply deploy the long guard and take down the opponent over your right leg (The illustration on the bottom right of the previous page is an extract from **Fiore dei Liberi's "Flos Duellatorum", 1410.***

3) dagger attack → ward, disarm and strike

- ❖ attack from above → forearm grip and twist and disarm
the attack is met with a grip to the agent's forearm with the patient agent's left hand (thumb downward) just shy of the agent's wrist. The patient agent then immediately twists the agent's forearm towards the left, pressing the patient agent's inside forearm against the agent's blade. Continuing with the twisting of the agent's forearm, and the blade pressed against the patient agent's forearm, the agent will release the dagger



- ❖ attack from above → grip wrist and elbow, arm bent upward at elbow and disarm
the attack is met with a grip to the agent's forearm with the patient agent's left hand (thumb downward) and is immediately forced back and upwards. At the same time, the patient agent will grasp the agent's elbow from underneath and left the elbow with the right hand while the left hand is now forcing the agent's upper forearm back and downwards. This will cause the agent to loose balance, or provide the opportunity to manually disarm the agent.

3.0 Longsword (*spada longa*) Techniques

3.1 Footwork

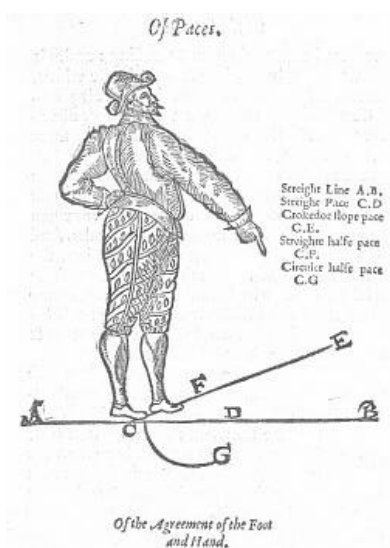
A critical component of fight skills is footwork. A pair of notable masters explicitly documented their thoughts surrounding this aspect of the fight. George Silver stated:

"Of running and standing safe in rapier fight, the runner has the advantage."

followed by

"If two valiant men fight being both cunning in running, & that they both use the same at one instant, their course is doubled, the place is won of both sides, and one or both of them will commonly be slain or sore hurt. And if one of them shall run, and the other stand fast upon the imbrocata¹¹ or stocata¹², or however, the place will be at one instant won of one side, and gained of the other, and one or both of them will be hurt or slain. If both shall press hard upon the guard, he that first thrusts home in true place, hurts the other, & if both thrust together, they are both hurt. Yet some advantage the runner has, because he is an uncertain mark, and in his motion. The other is a certain mark, and in dead motion, And by reason of this many times the unskillful man takes advantage he knows not how, against him that lies watching upon his ward or stocata guard."

George Silver, 1599



Di Grassi's words are also important. He stated:

"As concerning the motion of the feet, from which grow great occasions as well of offense as Defense, I say and have seen by diverse examples that as by the knowledge of their orderly and discreet motion, as well in the Lists as in common frays, there has been obtained honorable victory, so their busy and unruly motion have been occasion of shameful hurts and spoils. And because I cannot lay down a certain measure of motion, considering the difference between man and man, some being of great and some of little stature: for to some it is commodious to make his pace the length of an arm, and to other some half the length or more. Therefore I advertise every man in all his wards to frame a reasonable pace, in such sort that if he would step forward to strike, he lengthen or increase one foot, and if he would defend himself, he withdraw as much, without peril of falling...."

¹¹ a thrust with the hand pronated (knuckles forward, palm outward) passing over the opponent's hand and downward

¹² a thrust with the hand supinated (knuckles down, palm inward) rising from underneath the opponent's ward

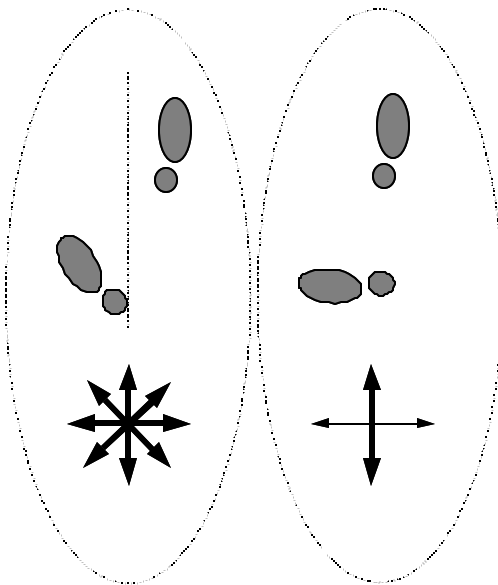
followed by

"It is to be known that the feet move either straightly, either circularly: If straightly, then either forwards or backwards: but when they move directly forwards, they frame either a half or a whole pace. By whole pace is understood, when the foot is carried from behind forwards, keeping steadfast the forefoot. And this pace is sometimes made straight, sometimes crooked. By straight is meant when it is done in a straight line, but this does seldom happen. By crooked or slope pace is understood, when the hindfoot is brought also forwards, but yet a thwart or crossing: and as it goes forwards, it carries the body with it, out of the straight line, where the blow is given. In this unit, the student will focus almost entirely on developing good footwork and will be introduced to additional individual-oriented sword handling drills."

Giacomo Di Grassi, 1594

1) Basic Footwork & Stance

The student must understand that good footwork is fundamental for both offensive and defensive maneuvers. In other words, from well placed and firm footwork will spring all offensive strikes, lunges, as well as thrusts and defensive evasion and redirection. The following describe the fundamental principles of footwork the student must consider.



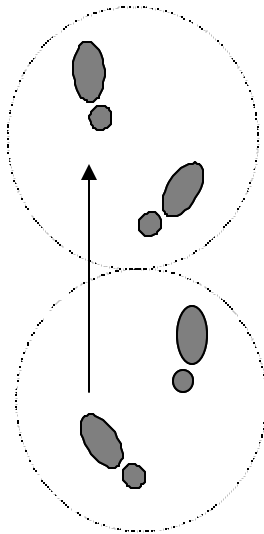
1. Proper and stable stance, foot placement

The illustration on the left depicts the stance that the student assumes. The stance on the far left illustrates the most appropriate foot placement for longsword. The ability to move in any direction is represented by the arrow. One can move in any direction with equal ability, agility and speed. The feet are approximately shoulder width apart (the stance assumes right-handedness). The width of the feet will vary depending upon the physical attributes of the individual. The stance is relatively relaxed with the individual standing erect and the weight is centred across the feet.

Balance is critical, especially when one is wearing armour which can increase the weight by up to 60 lbs. The trailing foot is roughly 45° turned out with the heel approximately positioned on the body's centre (as depicted by the vertical dotted line). The right foot is forward, with toes oriented towards the opponent. The foot is to the right of the body's centre line as illustrated. Knees are slightly bent with the shoulders approximately 60° square with respect to the opponent. This will provide greater freedom and opportunity to attack and parry, despite presenting a larger "target" to the opponent. The stance of the right in the above figure depicts the typical stance of a modern fencer. The primary motion is much more linear and is focused on forward and backward movement. It is included for comparison purposes only.

2. Passing (pass) step

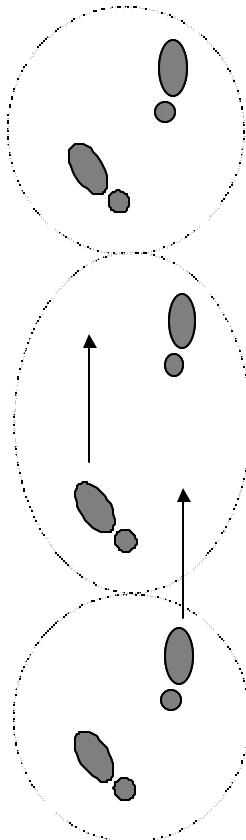
Executing the forward pass is the most innate of human movements, i.e. the walk. The trailing foot moves ahead of the forward foot in conjunction with shifting weight and balance. A similar action occurs with the reverse pass or retreat, however, the lead foot which is moving backward will do so in a slight circular motion towards the rear.



The illustration on the left depicts the starting stance and the resulting stance after a forward pass. The trailing foot, which was the leading foot now assumes a 45° angle outwards, and the leading foot now is oriented towards the opponent. The pass, although natural phenomena, is conducted by shifting the weight forward to the leading foot such that the weight of the body is now centred on the leading foot, more specifically, the ball of the leading foot. The trailing foot lifts up and is brought forward passing the leading foot. Once the trailing foot, which is now the leading foot, the weight centre now shifts to a normal distribution between leading and trailing feet.

3. Gathered step

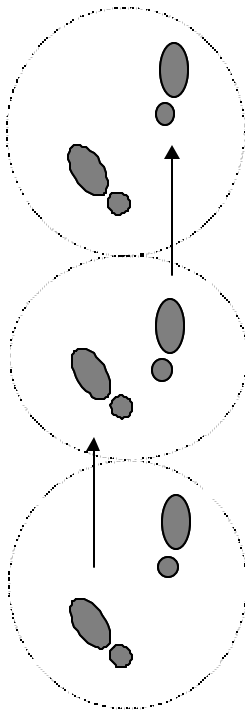
The gathered step is used primarily for the adjustment of range in an engagement while maintaining the foot orientation or stance. This form of step provides the opportunity to adjust range and to remain in an optimum stance with which to deliver a strong strike supported by a passing step with the right foot moving forward from the rear to the front. At all times, while gathering forward or reverse, to keep the body erect, knees slightly bent and centred. Do not lean too far forward or reverse.



The illustration on the left depicts one of two schools of thought with respect to gathered steps. The first is known as the "**committed gathered**". In order to execute this gathered step, one would shift the weight towards to the rear foot. The **forward** gather is executed by taking the leading foot, moving forward and then placing it down heel first followed by a shift of the weight forward. This will take the weight away from the trailing foot which can now be brought forward the same distance. The illustration depicts the starting stance at the bottom, the transitional stance in the middle ellipse followed by the final stance in above.

The **reverse** gathered is executed in a similar manner except the trailing foot is first to move towards the rear followed by the leading foot. Weight distribution is the reverse of the forward gathered. One should not drag the trailing foot or lift it too high

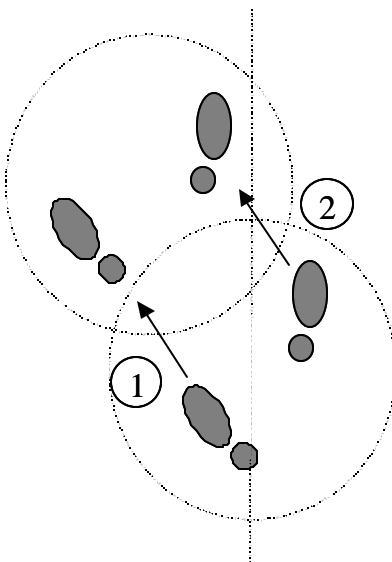
because this would introduce impact on the balance and provide an offensive opportunity for the opponent.



The second school of thought is commonly known as the **'non-committed gathered'**. The observation with this form of step is that while armoured, adjustment of range and the shifting of weight forward results in greater effort should one decide to "cancel" the forward gather by shifting the greater weight from the leading foot backwards to return the leading foot to the normal stance. Therefore, observation and application of this form of gathered step indicates far greater ability to either completely execute the forward/reverse gathered step or to cancel the gathered step. Cancellation of a gathered step is due to some movement or intent of the opponent resulting in one changing his/her mind with respect to adjusting range. Therefore, as illustrated on the left, a forward non-committed gather is executed by lifting the trailing foot and moving it forward to just behind the leading foot. At this point, the weight is equally distributed across both feet. It is at this point, that the individual can easily commit to completely executing the forward gather by moving the leading foot forward to assume the normal stance, or simply return the leading foot back to its starting position. Very little effort is required, and the shifting of weight becomes minimal, which is very beneficial during armoured engagements.

4. Traverse (slope step)

A *traverse* (pronounced "trah" - "ver" - "say") is essentially a side step, whether lateral or angled. It is executed to re-position one off-line from the opponent resulting in a pair of individuals moving in a circular motion around each other, each seeking opportunities to attack. In general, the traverse is executed on the pass, which is the dominant form of footwork with the longsword.

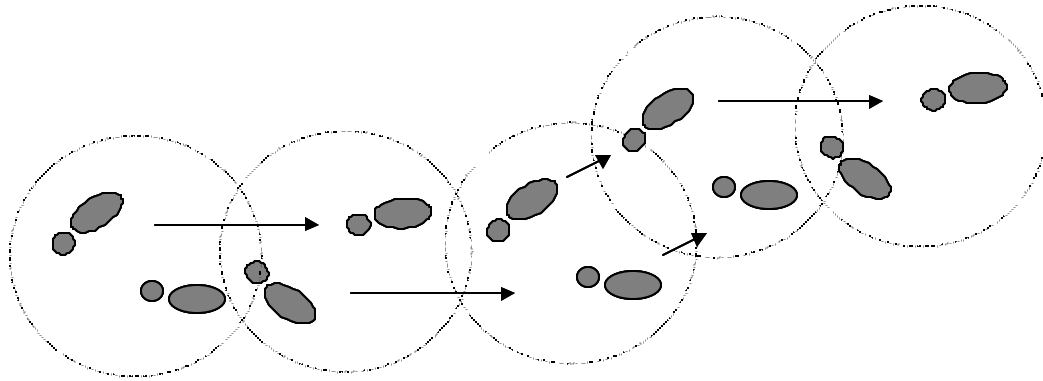


The execution of the traverse, using the illustration on the left, is a pass done by moving the trailing foot forward and to the left. The weight again is shifted slightly forward to the leading foot. Once the trailing foot is planted, the weight shifts again slightly to the now new leading foot and move the right foot forward to assume the leading foot position again. The movement is typically initiated with the trailing foot so as to conceal the intent from the opponent. Assuming a similar starting

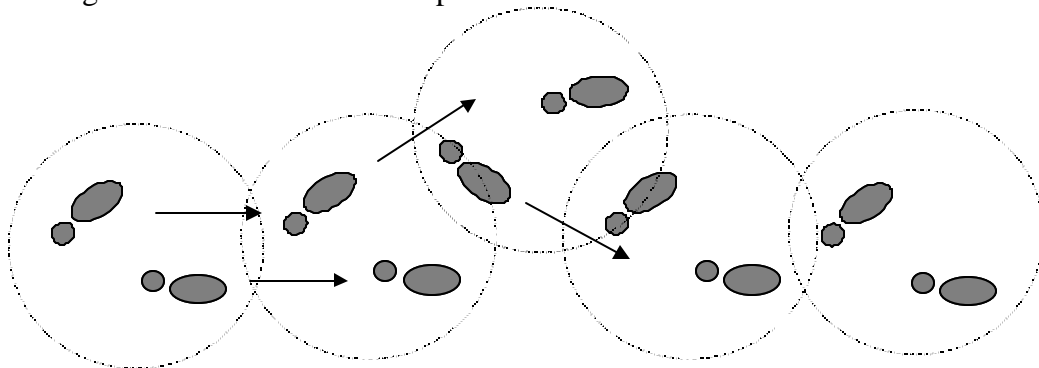
stance as illustrated, and the traverse is towards the right, in this case, the leading foot would initiate the execution, followed by bringing up the trailing foot. This is a gathered traverse.

2) Footwork drills

- i. pass & *traverse* drills – with and without sword: This exercise is executed by the student to familiarize oneself with the integration of a pass with a traverse. The purpose of training with and without the sword is that a weapon introduces a new variable to the student's thoughts while executing the variations of footwork. The traverse exercised will be both to the right and to the left.



- ii. gathered & *traverse* drills – with and without sword: This exercise integrates the gathered with the traverse steps.



- iii. mixed – call out by instructor: The instructor in this case would call out the desired step, pass, traverse right, gathered reverse, etc.
- iv. lunging passing step – thrust with sword

3) Sword Handling

- v. moulinet – stationary
- vi. moulinet – integrated footwork – gathered steps
- vii. moutlinet – integrate footwork – passing steps

In order to deliver a mechanically sound strike, it is important to deliver a strike from the right by stepping with the right forward, however, it is important to be able to deliver a strike from the left.

“That is why, no matter from which side you are striking, follow the blow with the same foot. So you will succeed in all techniques. This how you shall strike all blows.”

Sigmund Ringeck, c.1440

3.2 Introduction to Strikes and Guards

There are eight simple lines of attack (nine if you include the thrust). The strikes encompass the horizontal, vertical, diagonal and which can be delivered from the left to right and right to left. The most versatile of these are the diagonal strikes, followed by the horizontal with the vertical strikes being the least used (due to it being the most easily defended of strikes). The figure below depicts the angles and their classic Italian names with English subscripts. Standard nomenclature for the strikes has not stabilized to date, therefore, the names provided and used in this manual are based on the most common names that are used in the historical fencing community.

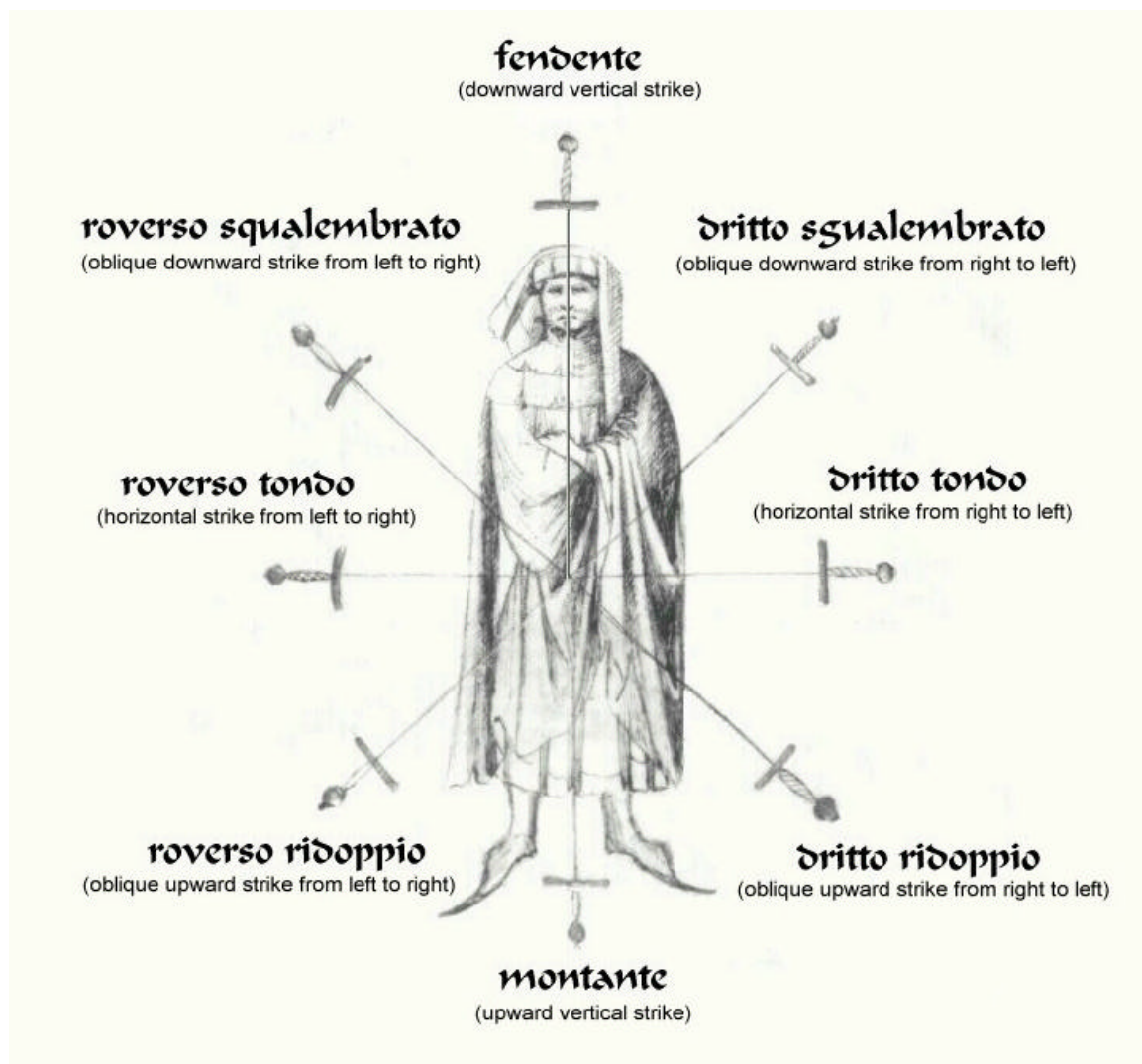


Figure 8 Strike Angles

Fiore dei Liberi simplified the strikes even further by naming all downward strikes as "*fendente*". The upward diagonal strikes were called "*colpi sottani*" and the horizontal strikes "*colpi mezani*". Liberi did not consider the vertical downward strike in his

manuscript, claiming that it shouldn't be used because it is easily defended against. However, this manual does include the downward vertical strike or "*fendente*" as well as the upward vertical strike or "*montante*". These are terms used by other Italian masters and it was felt that these particular strikes do have a place in both attack and defence situations.

The last strike is the thrust, referred to as "*le punta*" by Liberi. In his treatise, thrusts are delivered with both hands on the hilt. However, other masters have documented delivering thrusts with a single hand. Most notably is Giacomo di Grassi. He writes (with respect to two-handed swords):

"The thrust is discharged (as soon as the enemy's sword is found) as far in the beginning as he may with both arms: Then, taking away the cross hand, he shall force it farther on with the pommel hand, as much as he may stretch it forth, always in the discharge, increasing a slope pace. And the thrust being thus delivered, he shall presently retire his said pace, and return his hand again to the cross, settling himself either in the high or low warde."

Giacomo di Grassi, "His True Arte of Defense", 1594

Liberi depicts armoured fighting in his manuscript, but does not illustrate strikes/cuts delivered by the opponent, but rather thrusts. It is evident from his manuscript that there are no thrusts made to the armpit and that thrusts are confined to the face from the front, or to the unarmoured areas of the opponent's back. The armoured techniques rely on grappling, throws and half-sword techniques. This level of training does not include thrusting but the concept and opportunities for thrusting are covered. Thrusting is included as a later part of training when the student has achieved his/her scholler rank.

3.3 The Guards (Posta)

Guards or stances are positions from which the swordsman can deliver an attack or defend oneself, often times with a combination of both. Guards should not be considered static positions. There are a number of guard positions, and each possesses its strength and weaknesses. It is up to the swordsman through training and skill to determine the appropriate guard position for the situation. The swordsman must also be able to flow from one guard position to another during the course of a fight.

Some of the sources have categorized the guards into two groups, the primary guards and the secondary guards. Given that this book's primary source is Liberi's treatise, these are not categorized and are simply listed and described in detail. The guards are very similar to those employed with other weapons such as the single sword, sword & shield and even the quarterstaff. Each guard can be deployed as a right or left position. The student should be comfortable with each symmetrical stance. Assuming right-handedness, the stance would be structured with the student's right leg forward, assuming a **forward stance**; a left leg lead is referred to as the **reverse stance**.

3.3.1 High Guard

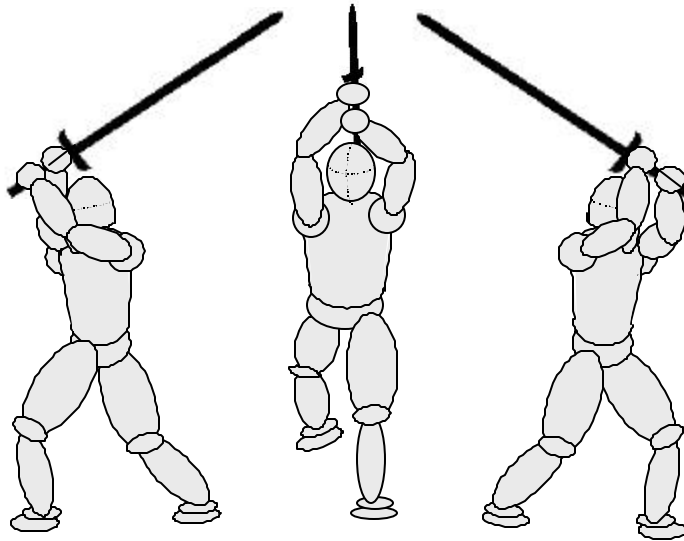
Italian: *Fiore dei Liberi*: posta frontale (frontal guard/crown guard)

Vadi: posta di falcone (guard of the hawk)

Giacomo Di Grassi: della guardia alta (the high ward)

German: *Hans Talhoffer*: oberhieb (over cut)

One will not find this guard in Liberi's treatise, however a variation of this guard is identified in the treatise as the "*posta frontale*". The sword is held above the head, with



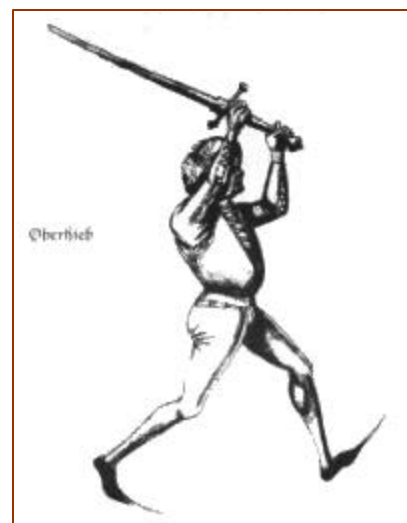
the blade pointing upwards and behind at approximately 45° to the ground (for the *posta frontale*, the sword is held approximately vertically, with the hilt in approximately the same position as the high guard). The pommel should be positioned forward to the forehead, and the guard above the forehead. From this position, one can deliver one of the most powerful centre cuts, or *fendente*¹³ or other offensive deliveries such as the *tondo*¹⁴ or *sgualembrato*¹⁵. This position

Figure 9 high guard

allows one to exploit the energy of the sword on its downward motion to its target.

It is not important which leg is leading when the offensive strike is delivered. The objective is to utilize the energy of the sword and focus this at the moment of contact with the opponent. This guard exposes the torso to potential attack (or invites the opportunity), however, this guard can deliver one of the most powerful downward strikes to eliminate the enemy.

The figure on the right is an extract from **Hans Talhoffer's "Fechtbuch aus dem Jahre 1467"** manuscript, tafel #1, entitled "*oberhieb*". It clearly illustrates the high guard stance. Notice the grip is somewhat spaced, whereby the left hand is grasping a portion of the pommel.



¹³ *fendente* – downward centre cut from above

¹⁴ *tondo* – sideways strike (horizontal – from right to left: *dritto*; left to right: *roverso*)

¹⁵ *sgualembrato* – downward angled cut, from right to left: *dritto sgualembrato*

3.3.2 Middle Guard

Italian: *Fiore de' Liberi*: *posta breve* (short guard)
Camillo Agrippa: *la terza guardia* (the third guard)
German: *Hans Talhoffer*: *pflug*¹⁶ (guard of the plow)

The sword is held with the blade pointing upwards and ahead at approximately 45° to the ground such that the tip of the blade is pointing towards the hollow at the base of the opponent's throat. The reason for this is to enhance the concealment of the true dimensions of the sword. In other words, from the opponent's perspective, he will see a very small cross-section of the sword because of its angle, and will be unable to determine the sword's exact length, thus giving you the advantage on the strike. The pommel should be positioned forward to

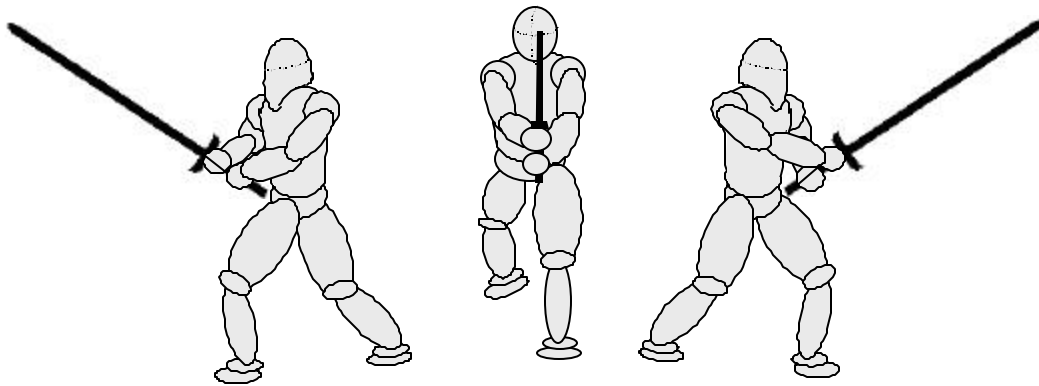


Figure 10 middle guard

the lower abdomen. The grip is fairly relaxed but firm. This position is probably the most natural position, and is also the position from which most parries and offensive strikes can be made from. This also enables a fairly fluid engagement with the opponent to allow one to identify the most opportune moment to strike.

It is not important which leg is leading when the offensive strike is delivered. It is important to note that when a strike from the right is delivered and the left leg is forward, that the reach will not be as great as when one has the right leg forward. However, during battle, having the feet positioned optimally is difficult at best. For this reason, the training program drills will re-enforce the ability to deliver strikes from the right and left with varying foot positions to ensure one is comfortable and confident with strikes from any foot position. The figure above and on the right is an extract from **Fiore dei Liberi's "Flos Duellatorum"** and illustrates the *posta breve* stance.



¹⁶ **pflug** – the German structure is similar to Liberi's, except the guard is not carried in the middle, but rather positioning the hilt against the side of the hip, point oriented towards the opponent.

3.3.3 Low Guard

Italian: *Fiore de' Liberi: porta di ferro* (Iron Gate)
Fiore de' Liberi: denti di cinghiale (Tooth of the Boar)
Giacomo DiGrassi: della guardia bassa (The Low Ward)
Achille Marozzo: guardia di cinghiara porta di ferro larga (Guard of the large iron gate of the wild boar)
German: *Hans Talhoffer: alber* (fool's guard)

The low guard can be both a defensive and offensive posture. It can parry strikes to any part of the body, such as the legs, thighs, shoulder, head and it can be used to deflect aside the opponent's sword followed by a thrust or simply a position from which a thrust can be delivered. This guard position has the advantage of "inviting" an attack from the opponent from which one can quickly deliver a counter with either an upward

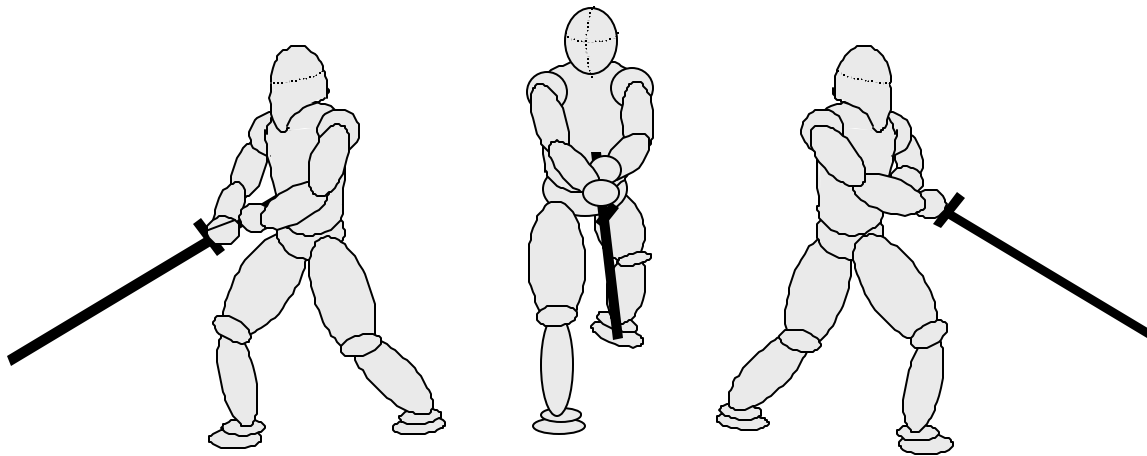


Figure 11 low guard

cut, thrust, re-direct or reposition to a hanging guard (see next section for description on the hanging guard). The low guard is also effective in maintaining "distance" between oneself and the opponent. During the engagement, one can quickly change from the low guard to the middle guard, long guard or hanging guard depending upon the situation. Leg positioning (forward stance vs reverse stance) will determine the "length" of the offensive strike in terms of reach, especially from a thrust perspective.

It is important to understand, that when shifting from the low guard to another guard, the point of the blade must always point towards the opponent, and that the motion of the point be minimum. Much of the motion will focus in the hilt area and the blade will follow. The blade must also move in more straight-lined motions rather than arcs when changing from the low guard to another guard position.

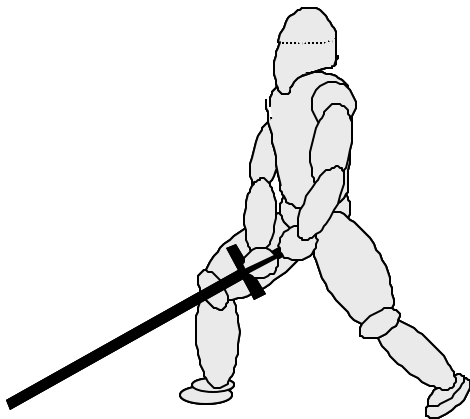


The figure above and on the right is an extract from **Fiore dei Liberi's "Flos Duellatorum"** and illustrates the *porta di ferro mezzana* stance.

Variations of the low guard:

The following describes the variations of the low guard as described by Liberi. It is interesting to note that Liberi doesn't really employ the low guard to defend leg attacks, given that the defense of low strikes to the legs is deployed by placing distance between the offensive strike and the leg. This opens up the opportunity to respond to the attack with an offensive maneuver from the low guard, that typically being swiping the attacking sword aside, and deliver either a cutting strike or thrust. The opportunity for such a response is present because when one delivers a low cut to the legs, the agent exposes the upper part of his/her body to attack, and the fact that the upper body is actually closer to the patient agent, an offensive response by the patient agent is imminent.

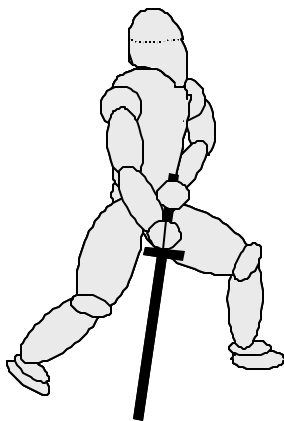
Half Iron Gate (*porta di ferro mezzana*)



The sword is held with the point downwards and forward and slightly outwards and to the left (similar to holding a hockey stick), with the right foot forward - toes pointing to the opponent, the left foot trailing (reverse stance). From this position, one would parry aside the oncoming strike with the false edge followed by a thrust. This would occur in conjunction with the left foot moving forward and out to the left (traverse). Liberi describes this guard as "stabile" meaning turning without moving the feet. The motion is such that the right leg acts somewhat as a "hinge" for the gate and as the body rotates on the right leg, the upper body assumes a

position that is off-line with the opponent's strike and a thrust is delivered from an orientation that is off-line of the initial engagement. The tail guard is simply the reverse of this stance.

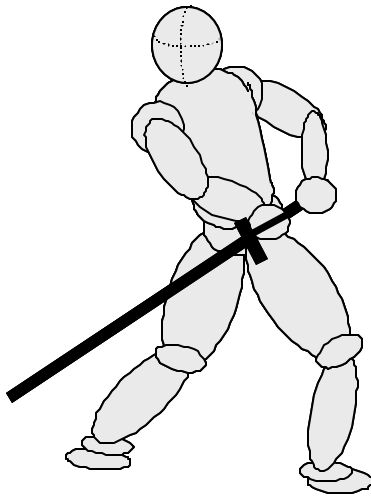
Full Iron Gate (*tutta porta di ferro*)



The sword is held with the point downwards and outwards (think of scribing a triangle, 2 points with the feet, the 3rd with the tip of the sword), left foot forward, right foot back (*forward stance*). From this position, one would parry aside the oncoming strike followed by a thrust as the half-iron gate. However, this guard is delivered in conjunction with the right foot moving forward with a passing step. The motion is such that the left leg acts as a "hinge" for the gate, as the sword moves from the right to the left positioned in order to parry aside the strike with the true edge, and the passing step enables one to close the gap even further to deliver a thrust with greater reach with both hands on the grip and the arms extended. The movement remains on-line with the

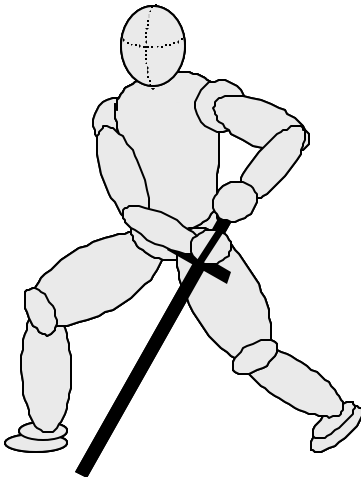
initial engagement. The sword starting in this position will possess greater power for the parry due to its being "chambered" further back.

Half Boar's Tooth (*denti di cinghiale mezana*)



The sword is held with the point downwards and oriented towards the opponent. The right leg is extended and forward, and the left leg is trailing. The weight is distributed mostly onto the left leg. This position is very similar to the *porta di ferro mezana*, except for the weight distribution and the sword is pulled back and is chambered higher up towards the waist. The execution involves raising the sword upwards striking aside the oncoming blow, in conjunction with a traverse with the left foot forward and outwards to the left taking the body off-line from the attacking blow. Once the false-edge has made contact with and struck aside the oncoming blow, the finishing move is to deliver a downward strike with the true edge, finding a target such as the opponent's extended forearms or the head.

Full Boar's Tooth (*tutta denti di cinghiale*)



The stance assumed is very similar to the half iron gate (*posta di ferro mezana*) except for the following differences: the point of the sword is situated behind the forward foot rather than in front of it; the sword is chambered even higher up on the left hip to provide greater power in the upward parry (with the false edge) to parry aside the attacking blow, and complete with a powerful downward strike with the true edge. The foot movement is similar to the half boar's tooth, except the left foot is moved forward and outward to the left (traverse), and the body pivots on the right foot.

An observation of these two stances is that they are the reverse of each other. For example, assume the full boar's tooth stance, while maintaining the orientation of the sword, simply turn the head and body so that you would face an opponent directly behind you. By virtue of the sword position and the rotating of the body and head, you would assume the half boar's tooth guard stance.

3.3.4 Hanging Guard

Italian: *Fiore de' Liberi: Posta di donna* (guard of woman)

German: *Hans Talhoffer: Hangenort* (hanging guard)

The hanging guard refers to a number of variations of guards as described by Liberi and Talhoffer. Both masters do not refer to this guard as a ***hanging guard***. It is possible that the first reference to the term ***hanging guard*** appeared in Zachary Wylde in 1711 whereby he references the hanging guard as being the same as Silver's "***true guardant ward***", and the

guardant ward (Silver) describes what appears to be the ***guard of the woman***. It is considered one of the most versatile guards and can be deployed to parry strikes against the head and upper body,

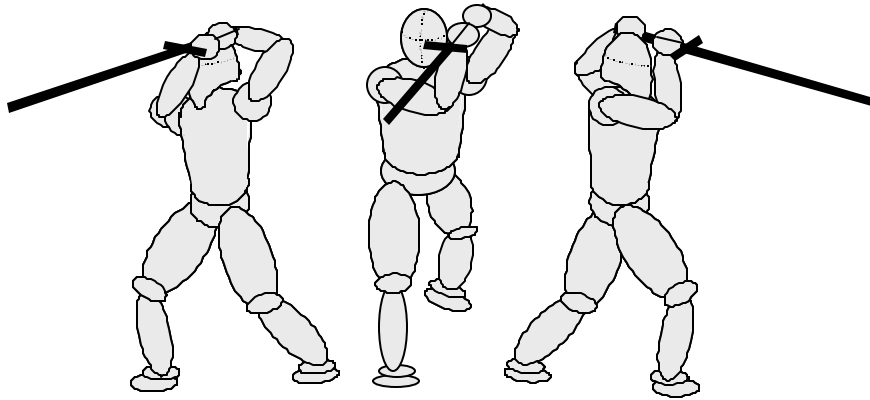


Figure 12 hanging guard

horizontal cuts to the head, body and it can also be quickly lowered to parry against blows to the lower parts of the body. The direction of the blade is such that it is somewhat extended over the leading leg and the point towards the opponent. Therefore, should the left leg be in the lead, the arms and hilt is positioned on the right side of the head, with the blade positioned forward and over the left leg, and the hands will be crossed (***crossed hanging guard***). When the right leg is the lead leg, the same position is obtained, except in reverse as for the left lead leg and the hands are not crossed (***true hanging guard***).

Most of the speed of the parry will occur around the hilt area. One can drop quickly to the low guard, in which most of the motion is centered on the hilt and hands. A variation of the hanging guard is described later. The figure on the right depicts a true hanging guard from **Hans Talhoffer's "Fechtbuch aus dem Jahre 1467"** - tafel #13.



The execution of this guard must be done with care, so as to not cover the face and restrict one's vision. From this position, one can deliver an offensive strike, such as the *squalembato* by rotating the sword on the right hand and deliver the strike to the opponent's left side of the head/neck (assuming the lead leg was the left to start with). This delivery will require very little energy and is a very quick offensive strike. This guard can also be used to deliver a thrusting strike against the opponent. One would step into the opponent, rotate the arms and thrust forward with the point.

Guard of the Window

Italian: *Fiore dei Liberi: posta de finestra*

German: *Hans Talhoffer: Ochs* (ox guard)

Liberi implies that this particular guard is quite universal in its applications. The position of the sword, with point directed towards the opponent and combined with the hand placement makes for a very flexible and viable guard position. Should the cut be high, simply raise the guard. If the cut is low, simply drop the guard, or at least the point to

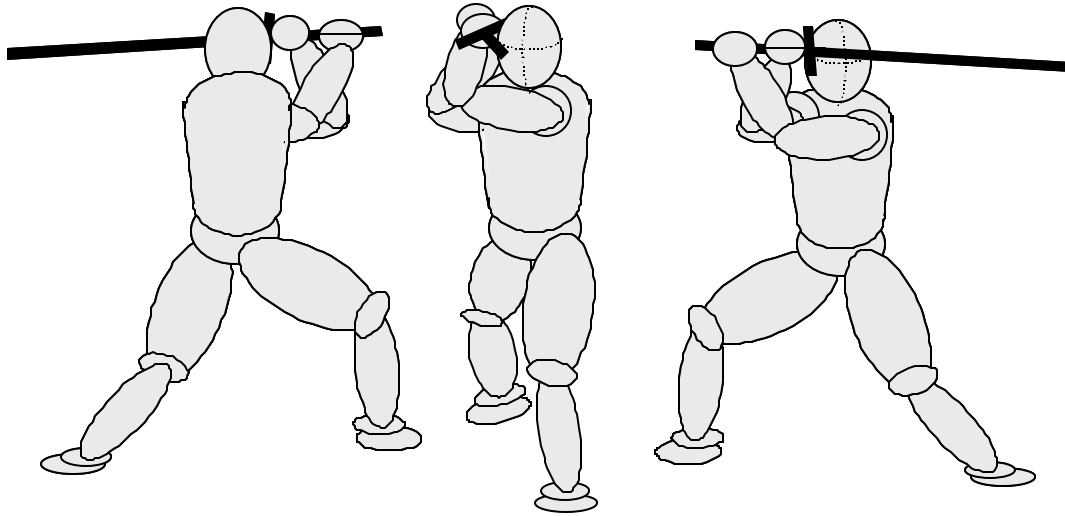
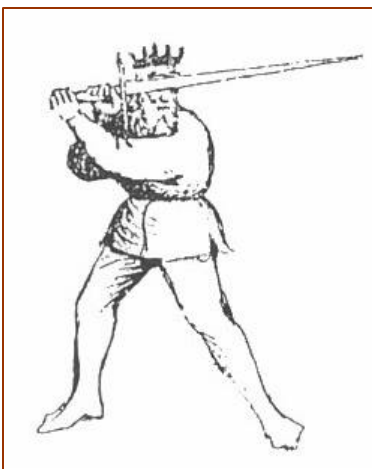


Figure 13 guard of the window

parry the cut. One may even achieve the *tutta porta di ferro* or **full iron gate**. This guard can be deployed from any other guard stance. The sword is raised to approximately



forehead height, and the hilt assembly is positioned in front of the head and behind it, so that the forte of the blade passes in front of the forehead, giving the appearance of one peering out a window from below the sash. The blade is held relatively horizontal to the floor. Most of the kinetic energy of the opponent's strike is re-directed with the relaxed guard of the window. The re-direction is done with the flat of the sword, and not the edge. The edge defense will cause the swords to bind rather than deflect. It is possible that you will be struck with your own sword, on the flat as it receives the energy of the strike, however, wearing armour will protect you from injury. The primary difference between this and the

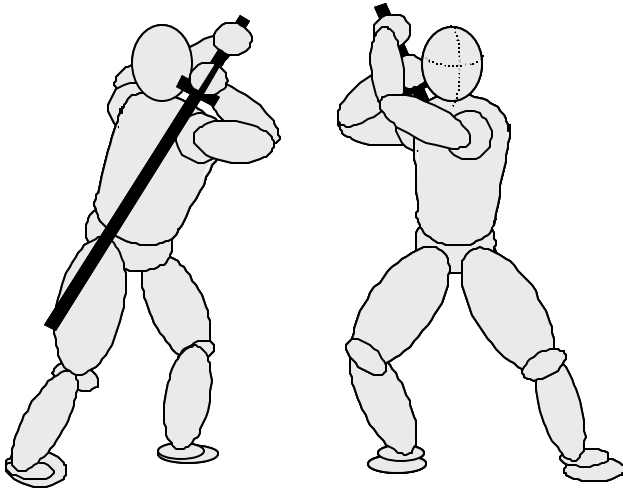
previous hanging guard, is that the weight is distributed on the rear leg (with respect to the opponent) as opposed to the leading leg. The **guard of the window** is the reverse stance of the **guard of the woman** (assuming similar sword orientation).

The illustration above and on the left is an extract from **Fiore dei Liberi's "Flos Duellatorum"** 1410" depicting the *posta de fenestra*.

Guard of the Woman

Italian: *Fiore de' Liberi*: posta di donna

This guard is a variation of the hanging guard as described by Liberi. Liberi illustrates two variations of the *posta di donna*. The first variation, the sword is almost entirely



concealed by the body by positioning it downwards down the back of the wielder. The guard is structured such that the left foot is forward with toes pointing towards the opponent and the left foot trailing. The weight is distributed towards the trailing leg. The second variation as described by Liberi, is very similar to the earlier variation in with respect to body posture and orientation, except the sword is more horizontal in orientation and is behind the head. The weight again is distributed towards the rear leg.

Figure 14 guard of the woman

The sword is held essentially as one would hold a baseball bat. The critical property of



this guard is foot work. Assuming a middle guard with a forward stance (right foot forward) as a start, the guard of the woman is deployed by moving the right foot forwards and to the left, essentially presenting to the opponent your back. At the same time with this step (traverse), raise the hilt and suspend the sword from the right shoulder such that the blade is roughly parallel with the spine. The desired position in the end is to achieve a position off-line from the initial engagement, parry the strike (typically a horizontal strike)

and reposit with a strike to the opponent given his/her side/back is now more exposed. *We have interpreted that the name "guard of the woman" appears to have been applied to this stance given the wielder would overlook his/her shoulder coyly looking at the opponent can be perceived as a woman's look?*



A very similar stance can be found in Liberi's treatise, which is illustrated opposite to the guard of the window (Getty's version). The only difference between the two illustrations is that the sword is behind the head rather than in front. Liberi identifies this guard as a "*posta di donna la fenestra pulsatima*".

3.3.5 Long Guard

Italian: *Fiore de' Liberi: Posta lunga* (long guard)

Achille Marozzo: Guardia de facia (guard of the face)

German: *Hans Talhoffer: Der lange Zornort* (long guard of wrath)

The sword is roughly parallel to the ground, and slightly below shoulder height. The pommel should be positioned forward of the “solar plexus”. This position helps to maintain “distance” between yourself and your opponent. It is not difficult to migrate to

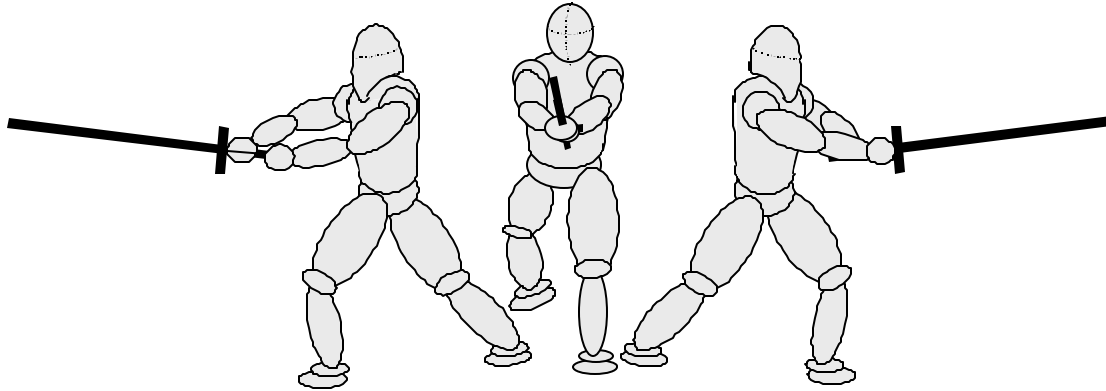


Figure 15 long guard

an alternative primary guard from this position. It has been thought that this particular guard from was designed to provide a good basis for thrust deliveries, however, it is also believed that this guard is relatively static, and is primarily used to keep your opponent at a distance, and provide the opportunity to “study” the opponent from a safe distance. Thirdly, it appears to be the most formidable guard stance to deploy when facing an opponent who has deployed the guard of the half iron gate. The figure on right from Fiore dei Liberi's "Flos Duellatorum", 1410 depicting the *posta longa*.



It is not critical with which leg to lead and which to trail.

This particular guard will not be stationary with respect to the opponent, because part of the “study” includes footwork, to circle around your opponent in order to properly gauge his/her strengths and weaknesses. It is also critical to remember to keep the point of the sword positioned towards the face of your opponent in order to conceal the true length of your weapon. The opponent seeing the sword point-on will find it difficult to determine the length, and may even move in closer assuming the sword is shorter than it is.

3.3.6 Tail Guard

Italian: *Fiore de' Liberi: Posta di coda lunga e distesa* (Guard of Long and Stretched out Tail)

German: *Hans Talhoffer: Nebenhut* (near guard)

The purpose of this guard is to provoke an attack by presenting to the opponent an open shoulder, while positioning the sword beside and behind. This under-stated guard can be used to not only conceal the weapon from your opponent, but can also deliver a surprise strong upward cut with a forward pass of the rear leg, swing out and thrust, lift from behind and deliver a downward strike, etc. This position allows a number of opportunities for alternative guard positions, including assuming a middle guard position by simply arching the sword from the rear and upward and over until the middle guard is achieved. A right stance is the only stance that makes sense if you are right handed (left leg forward)

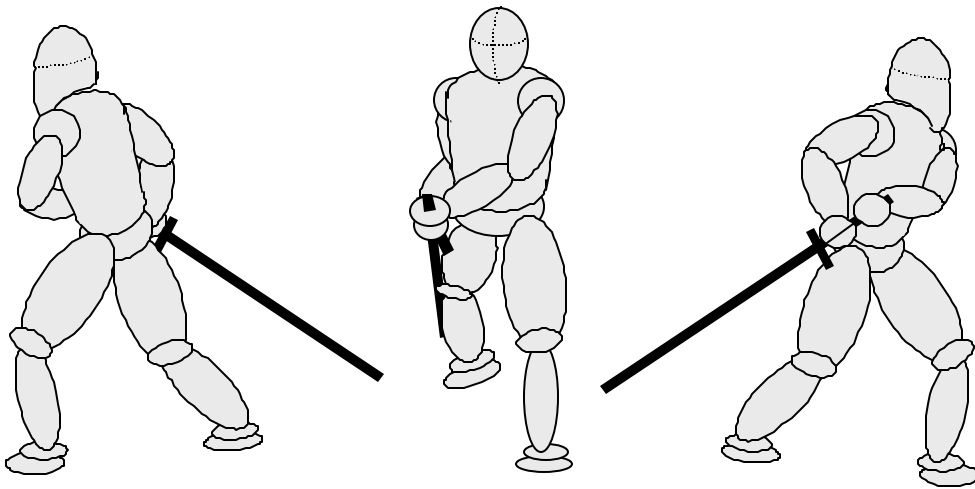


Figure 16 tail guard

The grip of the right hand (if you are right-handed) is the same grip applied when in a middle guard position. The wrist is mildly hyper-extended. It is not important which leg is leading, only that for whichever leg is trailing, that is the side in which the rear guard position is assumed, such that the trailing leg is protected by the sword. A similar observation made with respect to the boar's tooth, is that the tail guard is the reverse stance of the *porta di ferro mezzana*.



The figure on the left is an extract from **Fiore dei Liberi's "Flos Duellatorum"**, labeled as the "*posta di coda lunga e distesa*". Similar figures depicting this guard can be found in Talhoffer's *fechtbuch*.

3.3.7 Two-horned Guard

Italian: *Fiori de' Liberi: posta di bicornio*

The two-horned guard is the starting position to deliver a thrusting strike to the opponent while stepping in or charging in with your delivery. The delivery of the thrust with the charging body behind it with the left palm pressed against the back of the pommel enhances the power of the thrust and may be able to penetrate mail.

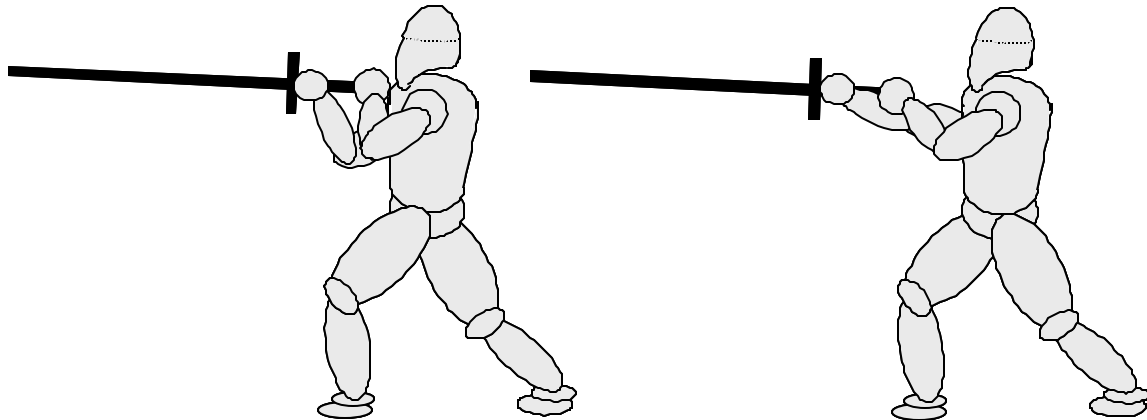


Figure 17 two-horned guard

The wielder of this guard must also be cognizant that the opponent will become fully aware of the manner in which the next potential strike will take, given the grip. The hilt



is brought upwards, situated in front of the upper chest with pommel close to the chest. The left hand grips the pommel such that the forearm is slightly rotated counter-clockwise whereby the fingers wrap the pommel from the left, the palm facing upwards and opened towards the right. This places the left hand in an excellent position to migrate to the end of the pommel during the thrust such that in the end, the palm is used to push the pommel forward into the thrust. The thrust can be made at the mid-section of the opponent as is illustrated above. A similar stance can be used to deliver a thrust to the lower body and a higher stance to deliver the same thrust at

the upper body and head. The typical defensive form is to sweep the sword to the left or right, depending upon the positioning of the thrust. Using the middle guard or similar to block against this thrust.

The figure on the above-left is from **Fiore dei Liberi's "Flos Duellatorum"** manuscript and the illustration is labeled as "*posta di bicornio*".

3.4 The Strikes (Colpi)



3.4.1 Downward Vertical Strike

Italian: *Vadi/Marozzo: fendente*

German: *Hans Talhoffer: oberhaw/oberhieb* (cut from overhead)

1. assume the middle guard stance (as illustrated in the figure below), with left foot forward, right foot trailing, grasp the grip with your right hand and pommel with your left hand, raise the sword up (the left hand doing the “work”) and overhead (ensuring the point of the blade does not extend behind the head), and with a firm and resolute motion, slice the sword downward to approximately 2 o’clock with respect to the floor, apply pressure to the downward thrust through the hilt, as if you were to also strike your opponent with the hilt
2. at the same time, take a large step forward with your back leg (in this case, your right), knee bent at the termination of the cut, left leg behind you
3. when you reached this position, remain in that position momentarily and then return to the **middle guard** stance

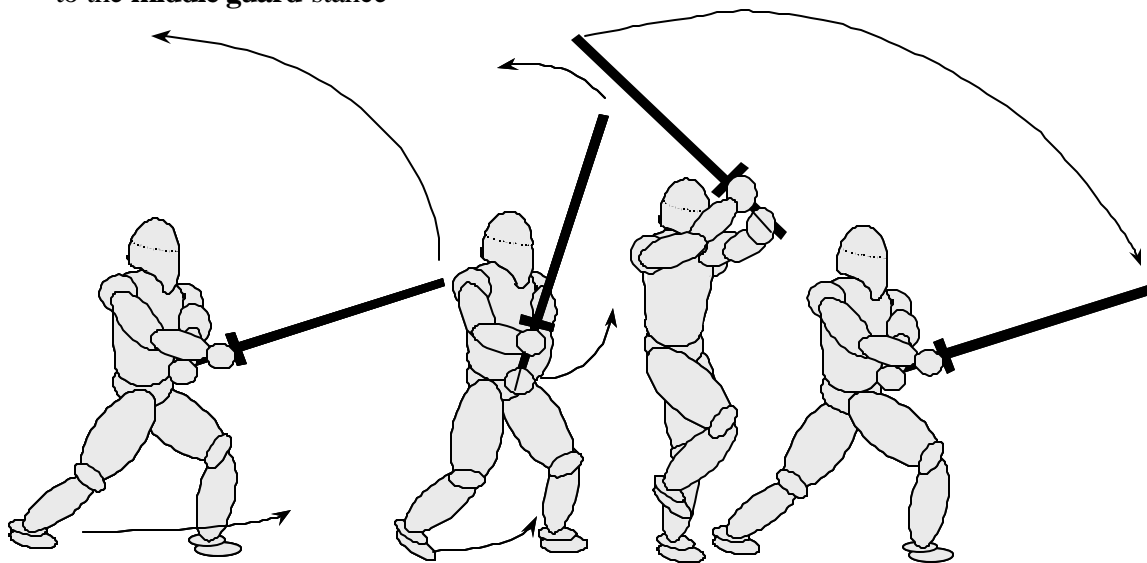


Figure 18 downward vertical strike

Note: In the above figure, both right and left hands grasp the grip to enhance the power of the downward cut. The following are variation of the same strike.

(Note: This and other strikes will require control of the weapon. It is not a simple matter of hammering down the sword, but rather deliver the strike on target with efficiency and effectiveness. Any movement of the sword must be able to be stopped quickly in order for you to change strategy, direction or execution of the form. For example, on a powerful downward cutting movement, you must be able to quickly stop the momentum of the sword at any moment, otherwise, if your intended target moves aside, your sword will

happily bury itself into the earth or log, and you as the warrior will not survive the returned attack)

Variation of the downward vertical cut

- the execution of the **downward strike** is deployed with alternating right leg forward and then left leg forward (the point being that in an engagement, often you are not in the most appropriate stance to deliver a *fendente* while stepping forward with your right foot, and therefore, this practice ensures that you are able to deliver the *fendente*, regardless of footwork.)

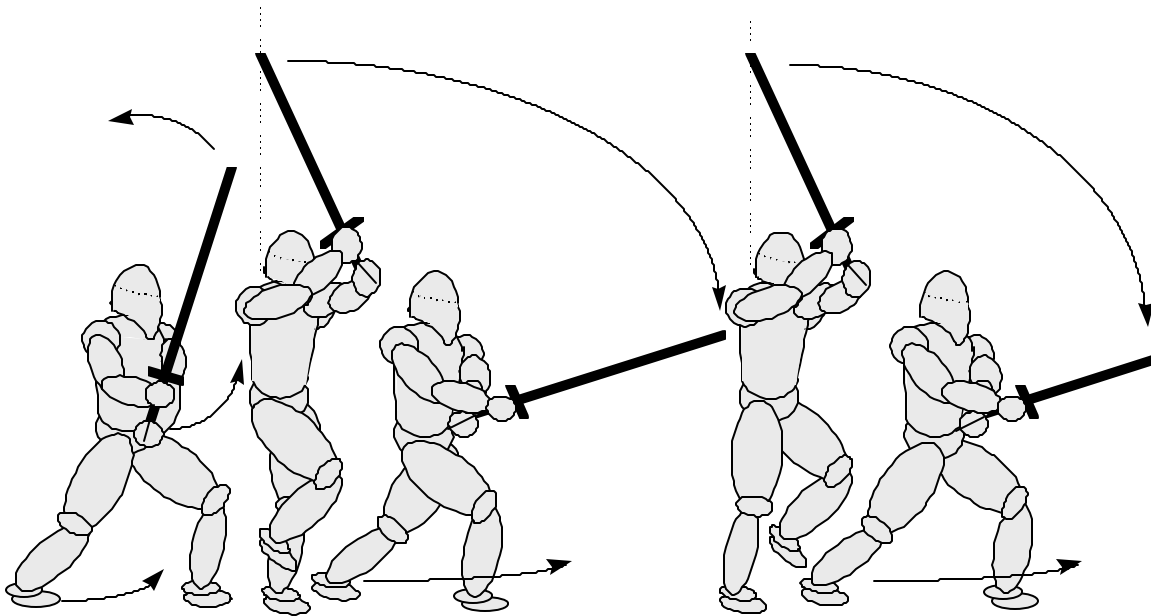
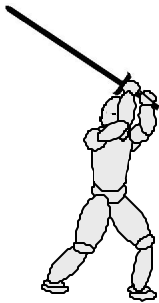


Figure 19 the downward strike with "reversed footwork"

Alternative starting guards for the downward vertical strike

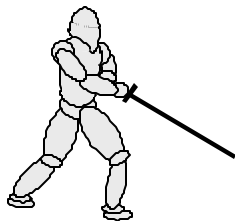
It is important that the student become familiar and comfortable with delivering the downward vertical strike from any of the guards. When delivering the downward vertical strike, the movement will transition through the **high guard** position. The following notes describe certain specific elements of delivering a downward cut from a variety of alternative guard.

High Guard



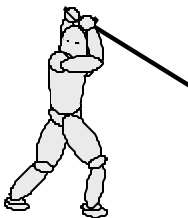
When delivering from this position, it is important to ensure that the sword does not begin from an angle that is less than 45° to the horizontal. If the sword is too far back, it will take a greater amount of energy to return the sword to its highest position (the **high guard**) and will take more time to deliver the strike leaving yourself open to attack. The **high guard** position offers the best position for initiating this strike and you would use gravity to assist the downward strike. You would practice this with taking a passing step forward with the right, and with a passing step with the left.

Low Guard



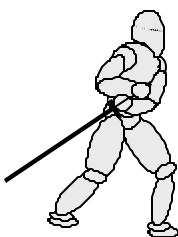
This guard position is deceptive in that one can deliver a vertical strike very quickly and effectively. Two manners of delivery are possible, a) drop the point pull it to your side while rotating the hilt counter clockwise. At the conclusion, you assume very closely, the **guard of the woman** and from there transition through the high guard to deliver the vertical strike; b) simply raise the sword and assume the **high guard** stance and with a passing step forward, deliver the strike.

Hanging Guard



The "secret" when delivering the downward vertical strike from the hanging guard position is to maintain the point of the blade pointing in the direction of the opponent until the **high guard** position is achieved. This will ensure that while you are "cocking" yourself to deliver a downward cut, the opponent is kept at "bay" and thus, reduce the chance of receiving a strike.

Tail Guard



A most deceitful and treacherous guard to begin with when considering deploying a downward vertical strike. Two manners of deployment: a) raise your grip upward and behind your shoulder transitioning through a **guard of the woman**, and finally pass through the high guard and deliver the strike; b) step forward while swinging forward and from the side and raise to the **high guard** and deliver the downward strike.



3.4.2: Oblique Downward Strike

Italian: *Fiore de' Liberi: sgualemrato* (angled from above)

German: *Hans Talhoffer: oberhau/oberhieb*

(**Note:** These strikes are intended to exploit any weakness in the armour of the opponent by targeting arming points or arming straps. If this fails, the collar bone would be the target. Part of the basic areas for attack, is 45 degrees on either side of the head, against the shoulder. *Liberi* refers to these downward strikes as "fendente".)

1. from the **middle guard** stance as illustrated below, raise the sword overhead
2. while you are doing this, begin to move your right leg forward to prepare to "plant" it forward
3. when you have achieved the highest "potential" of the sword position, with force, invoke a downward cut at 45 degrees from the vertical towards the shoulder of your opponent
4. simultaneously take a step forward with your right leg to add power to your downward strike
5. ensure that you transition from a downward vertical cut (from a high guard starting point) to the oblique downward strike to deliver mis-information to the opponent (the opponent will prepare for a downward strike, and quite possibly deploy the incorrect defence)

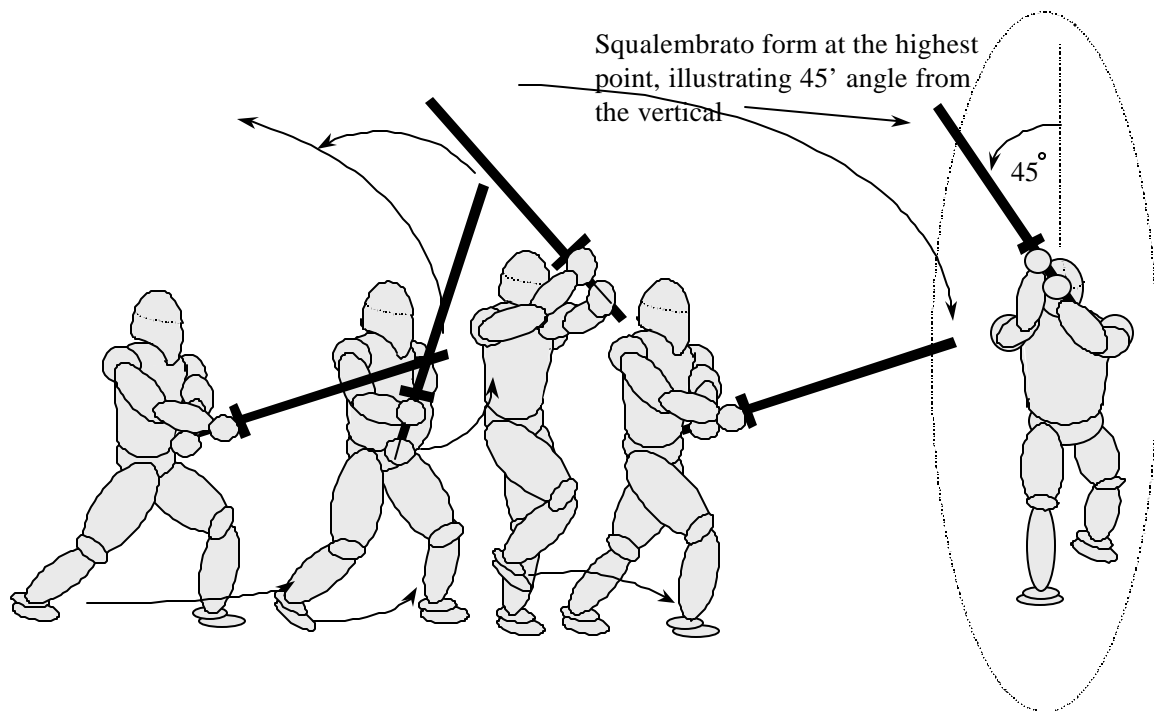


Figure 20 the oblique downward strike

***Note:** The figure on the bottom of the previous page illustrates the movements involved in the oblique downward strike or **sgualebrato**. Note that from the front, the blade is approximately 45° from the vertical, ending at the junction of the neck and shoulder of your opponent.*

*Variations of this form include **sgualebrato manco** for those left-handed individuals, **sgualebrato dritto**, in which only the right hand is used for the execution of this variation. A brief explanation of each follows.*

Variations of the Oblique Downward Strike

sgualebrato roverso (sgualebrato delivered from the left to the right)

1. from middle guard position, raise the sword overhead to assume the **high guard** stance
2. when you begin the trajectory, slide the pommel hand (left hand) up the grip to meet the right hand to reduce the "crossing over" of the wrists during the delivery
3. when you have achieved the highest "potential" of the sword position, with force, invoke a downward cut at 45 degrees from the vertical towards the shoulder of your opponent
4. using your right hand after raising the sword, pivot the sword around your left wrist
5. simultaneously take a step forward with your left leg to add power to your downward strike

Alternative starting guards for the oblique downward strike

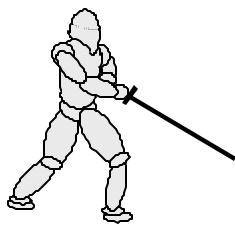
In continuation of training to enhance the student's ability to deliver a strike from any guard position, the following is essentially similar as what was described for a downward strike in the previous section. This section is a copy of the previous section, and is included simply to enhance the thickness of this manual ;-)

High Guard



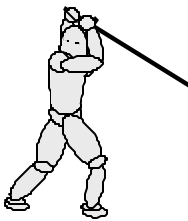
When delivering from this position, it is important to ensure that the sword does not begin from an angle that is less than 45° to the horizontal. If the sword is too far back, it will take a greater amount of energy to return the sword to its highest position (the **high guard**) and will take more time to deliver the strike leaving yourself open to attack. The **high guard** position offers the best position for initiating this strike and you would use gravity to assist the downward strike. You would practice this with taking a passing step forward with the right, and with a passing step with the left.

Low Guard



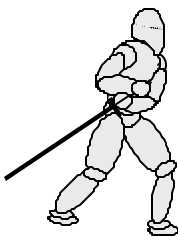
This guard position is deceptive in that one can deliver an oblique downward strike very quickly and effectively. Two manners of delivery are possible, a) drop the point pull it you're your side while rotating the hilt counter clockwise. At the conclusion, you assume very closely, the **guard of the woman** and from there transition through the high guard to deliver the oblique downward strike; b) simply raise the sword and assume the **high guard** stance and with a passing step forward, deliver the strike.

Hanging Guard

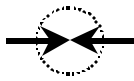


The "secret" when delivering the oblique downward strike from the hanging guard position is to maintain the point of the blade pointing in the direction of the opponent until the **high guard** position is achieved. This will ensure that while you are "cocking" yourself to deliver an oblique downward, the opponent is kept at "bay" and thus, reduce the chance of receiving a strike.

Tail Guard



A most deceitful and treacherous guard to begin with when considering deploying an oblique downward strike. Two manners of deployment: a) raise your grip upward and behind your shoulder transitioning through a **guard of the woman**, and finally pass through the high guard and deliver the strike; b) step forward while swinging forward and from the side and raise to the **high guard** and deliver the oblique downward strike.



3.4.3: Horizontal Strike

Italian: *Fiore de' Liberi*: tondo/traversi (from the side)

German: *Hans Talhoffer*: mittelhou (horizontal cut)

(Note: Control of sword movement is critical to ensure that you do not get into trouble by placing yourself into a disadvantageous position. This movement focuses on cutting your opponent coming out from your right side, right hand applying the power. A large, arched motion of the blade swinging from your side towards the opponent is achieved when complemented by taking a step forward. This strike must be executed with great resolve)

1. starting from the **middle guard** position, raise the sword and assume the **high guard stance**
2. at the same time as you take a step forward with your sword leg (right leg if you are executing this with your right hand), deliver the "impression" of a downward vertical strike (*feint*), drop the point behind you and swing the sword outwards from the right and strike horizontally
3. return the blade to the middle guard position

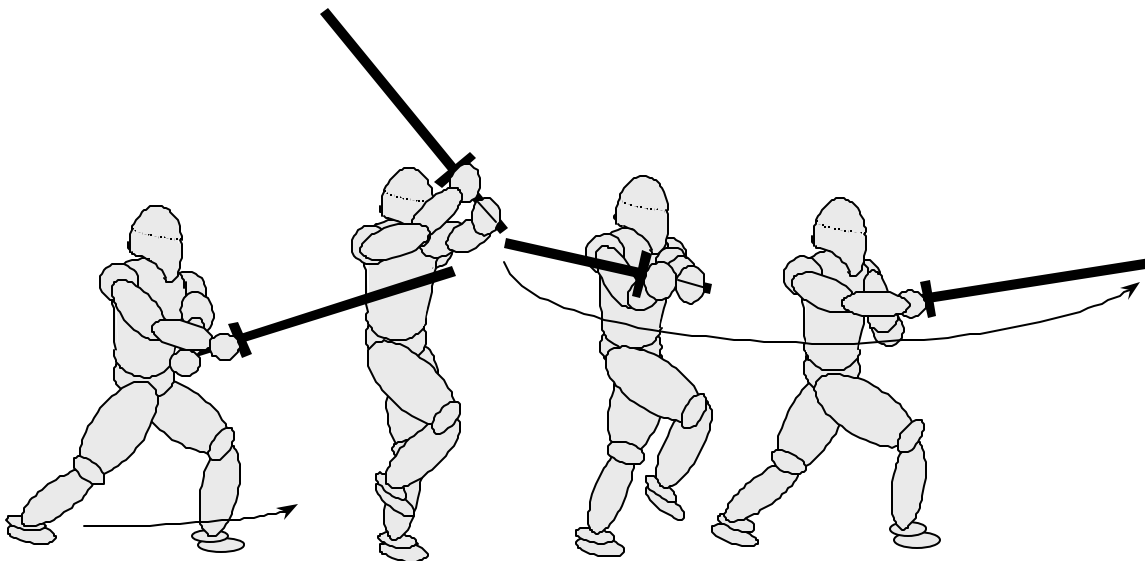


Figure 21 the horizontal strike

*Note: The sword is swung out from your right side (assuming you are right handed), relatively parallel to the floor, and ends directly in front of you with your arms nearly extended. You must envision using this strike to “smash” the armour of your opponent targeting either exposed areas (not armoured) or target arming points to compromise the armour. Variations of this form include right-handed delivery only (**dritto tondo**), delivery using the left hand (**roversi tondo**).*

Variations of the Horizontal Strike

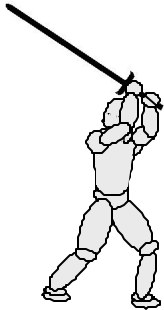
roverso tondo (delivered from the left to the right)

1. from the **middle guard** stance with right leg forward, left trailing, raise the blade over your head to assume the high guard stance, *feint* a downward vertical strike and drop the point behind you and swing it around parallel to the floor forward from the left till the blade is directly in front of you pointing directly ahead (only use your right hand in this maneuver)
2. at the same time, take a step forward with left leg to enhance the power behind the execution, left leg knee bent, foot positioned forward, right leg straight behind

Alternative starting guards for the horizontal strike

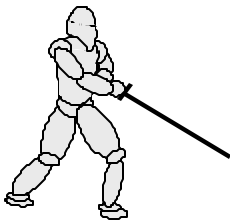
This section continues training with respect to enhancing the student's ability to deliver a strike from any guard position. Again, much of this is a repeat of the previous alternative starting guard positions with minor variations specific to deploying a horizontal strike, and continues enhance the thickness of the manual.

High Guard



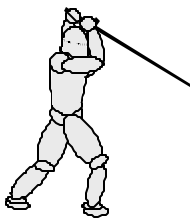
As with the other alternative starting guard sections, it is important for the student to transition through the **high guard** position which offers the best position for initiating a strike leveraging gravity to enhance the power behind the strike. Transitioning through the **high guard** is an effective distraction to the opponent, and which should position yourself into a advantageous position to deliver the horizontal strike.

Low Guard



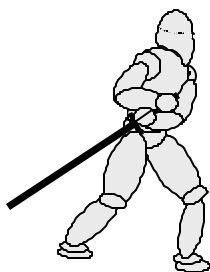
Delivering the horizontal strike from this position will transition through a **high guard** position and project incorrect information to the opponent, into believing a downward vertical strike is eminent. An important skill is to "project" to the opponent the intention to deliver perhaps a downward vertical strike ("*feint*") and then deliver the horizontal strike.

Hanging Guard



As described previously, it is imperative that while cocking the sword to deliver a horizontal cut, that the sword remain centred on the opponent to maintain proper range and prevent the opponent from moving in to deliver a counter. Imaging the sword in a cylinder such that as you rotate your grip and hilt to position your arms for the horizontal strike, the point remain relatively oriented towards the opponent.

Tail Guard



Again, a most deceitful and treacherous guard to begin with when considering deploying a horizontal strike. Two manners of deployment: a) raise your grip upward and behind your shoulder transitioning through a **guard of the woman**, and finally pass through the high guard, drop the point behind the back and swing out to deliver the horizontal strike; b) step forward while swinging forward and from the side and raise to the **high guard** and deliver the horizontal strike.



3.4.4: Oblique Upward Strike

Italian: *Fiore de' Liberi: ridoppio* (angled cut from below)

German: *Hans Talhoffer: unterhau/unterhieb* (cut from below)

(Note: The target for this strike is the inner thigh, knee or the outer part of the lower leg. The intent is to momentarily debilitate your opponent so that you can come in for the kill before the opponent is able to recover.)

1. from the **middle guard** stance as illustrated below, raise the sword overhead to assume the **high guard** stance
2. while you are doing this, begin to move your right leg forward to prepare to "plant" it forward
3. when the high guard has been achieved, *feint* a downward vertical strike and then immediately drop the point dramatically behind you down the right side of your back
4. begin to arc upwards for a strike of about 45 degrees from the vertical towards the lower left leg/inner thigh/knee of the opponent

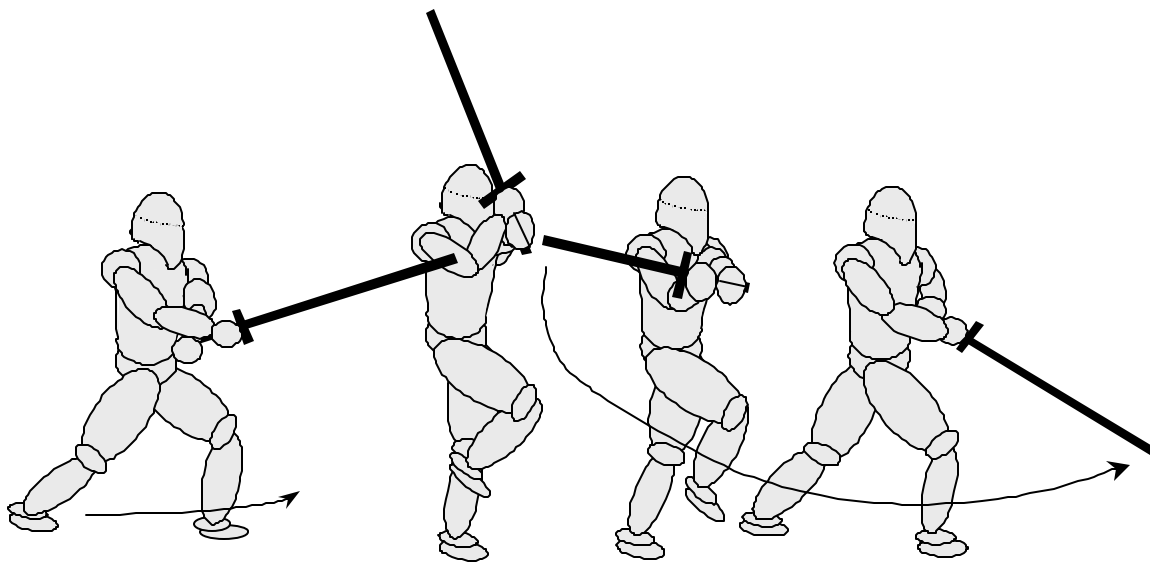


Figure 22 the oblique upward strike

Note: The figure above illustrates the movements involved in the ridoppio strike. This strike must be executed with swiftness to take advantage of a lower strike. When this strike is deployed, one has to be careful with not exposing the head to a strike in response.

Variations of this form include roverso ridoppio to strike from the left side to the right and dritto ridoppio which is the strike from the right to the left. A brief explanation of each follows.

Variations of the Oblique Upward Strike

roverso ridoppio (delivered from the left side to the right)

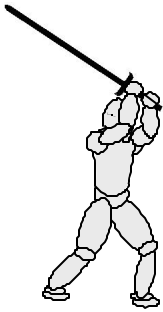
1. from **middle guard** stance with right leg forward, raise the sword overhead to temporarily assume the **high guard** stance, and begin to step forward with the left foot
2. when you have achieved the highest “potential” of the sword position, when the high guard has been achieved, *feint* a downward vertical strike and then immediately drop the point dramatically behind you down the left side of your back
3. begin to arc upwards for a strike of about 45 degrees from the vertical towards the lower right leg/inner thigh/knee of the opponent
4. remember to choke the grip by sliding your left hand forward on the grip to come in contact with the right hand to reduce the cross-wrists problem when deploying the strike

(Note: This form is similar to the dritto ridoppio, except, that it is delivered from the right.

Alternative starting guards for the oblique upward strike

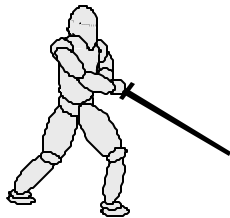
Given the previous descriptions of alternative starting guard stances, why stop? An oblique upward strike is deployed in two manners: a) with the true edge, b) with the false edge. The edge used to deploy the strike is dependent upon the starting stance and orientation of the blade. Other parameters include the height of the target that is going to receive an oblique upward strike (i.e. a raise elbow or chin? or knee or crotch?). Also, in general, delivering an upward strike with the false edge is typically a weaker of the upward strikes.

High Guard



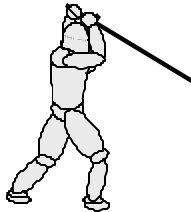
Delivering an oblique upward strike from this **high guard** stance projects to the opponent, alternate objectives, i.e. will the strike come from overhead or from the side? Assuming **the high guard** stance to deliver an oblique upward strike is best considered for those upward strikes that are targeting upper targets, such as the chin, or extended elbow. However, it is not impossible to deliver an oblique upward strike that targets the lower extremities of the body. In order to deliver an oblique upward strike, essentially, the sword point is dropped behind you, and your grip passes very closely to your forehead as you bring the sword about and upwards.

Low Guard



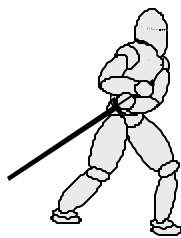
Once the **low guard** stance be acquired, and the target is the lower leg or inner thigh area of the opponent, there are two delivery movements that can be considered: a) simply raise the blade with force striking the target with the false edge of the blade, b) dropping the point and passing it by either on the right or left, hilt passing by the head and transitioning through the **guard of the woman** and then delivering the oblique upward strike.

Hanging Guard



As mentioned previously, when delivering the oblique upward strike from the **hanging guard** position is to maintain the point of the blade centred on the opponent while transitioning from the **hanging guard** to delivering an oblique upwards strike. This will ensure that while you are "cocking" yourself to deliver the strike, the opponent is kept at "bay" and therefore reducing the opportunity to receive a strike.

Tail Guard



This guard position is most effective starting stance with when delivering the angled cut from below when the strike is on the same side as the **tail guard**. There are two delivery approaches: a) swing the sword forward and strike with the false edge, b) transition through a **high guard** position again to deliver this strike from the opposite side (from the left side) of **the tail guard** (right side) which will "*feint*" your opponent into believing you will deliver a downward strike, and continue with the cocking by delivering an angled cut from below.



3.4.5: Upward Vertical Strike

Italian: *Vadi: montante* (cut from below)

(Note: *The target for this strike is the inner thigh, lower knee, elbow, chin, any unprotected body target that is protruding and that is undefended.*)

1. from the **middle guard** stance as illustrated below, raise the sword overhead to assume the **high guard** stance
2. while you are doing this, begin to move your right leg forward to prepare to “plant” it forward
3. when the high guard has been achieved, *feint* a downward centre strike and then immediately drop the point dramatically behind you down the right side of your back
4. begin to arc upwards for a vertical strike towards the inner thigh of the opponent

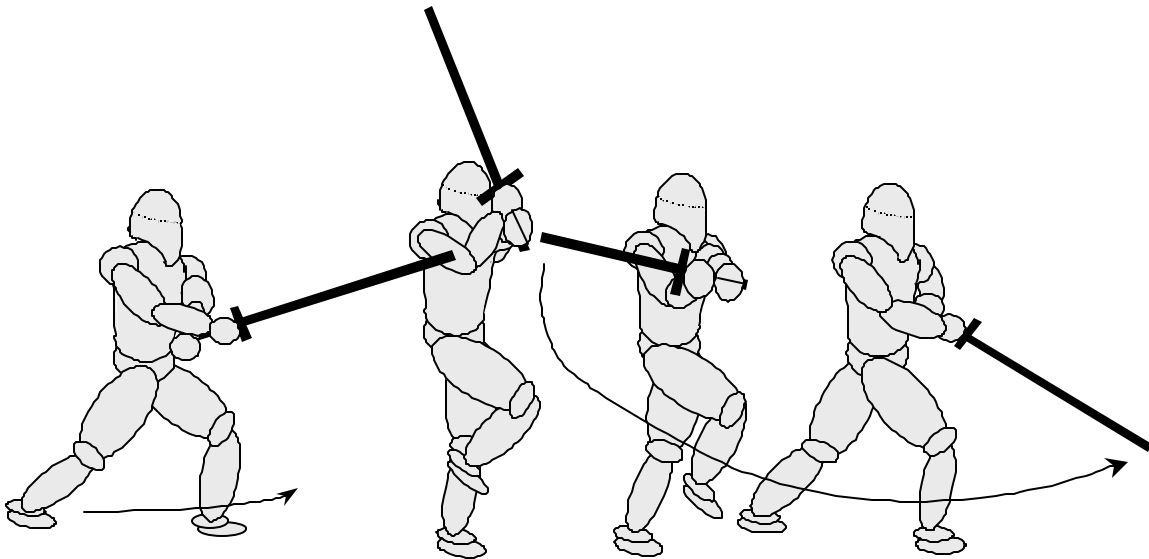


Figure 23 the upward vertical strike

Note: *The upward strike is deployed similarly to the ridoppio. The vertical strike can be deployed from either the right side or the left side, in combination with proper footwork.*

4.0 Solo Training Exercises

4.1 Sword control - "the pipe"

Pells have been used in training for literally hundreds of years as a tool to enhance the strength and precision of the warrior. The opportunity with this training at this early stage of development allows the student to "feel" the real "thing". Under close and strict supervision, a student is able to strike the vertical pell and develop rudimentary skill in an offensive strike with a true weapon. To enhance the training of pell usage, it is advisable that marks be drawn on the vertical pell as a target for the strike. This introduces a degree of difficulty for the student to address.

(Note: This exercise enhances your control of the sword. The objective is to deliver a horizontal strike with full speed and power, and pull the strike just short of the hanging pipe. This must be a repeatable execution.)

1. from the **middle guard** stance, deliver a **horizontal strike** as you would normally do and target the hanging pipe
2. you must deliver the **horizontal strike** with full speed and power
3. just short of striking the hanging pipe, pull the strike immediately
4. variations can be introduced including the *sgualebrato* and *fendente* (a horizontal pipe must be in place to allow for practicing stopping the *fendente*)

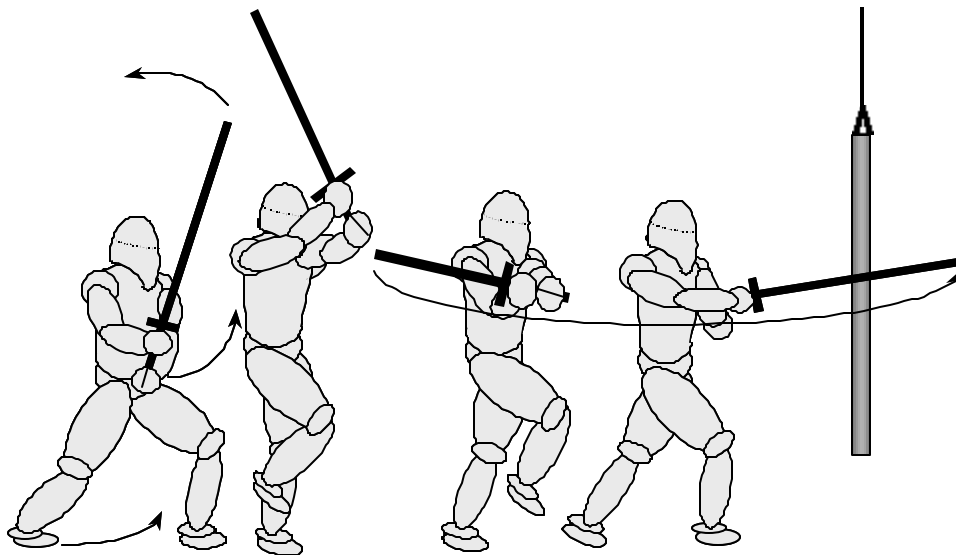


Figure 24 sword control - horizontal strike and the "pipe"

Note: It is not known if this exercise was part of the medieval training repertoire, however, the Academy is continuously researching both exercise forms and sword forms and introduces these forms into this document. It was determined that this particular exercise form, promoted the necessary qualities that makes one efficient and effective with the use of the sword. This exercise is critical in achieving total sword control. This will be a requirement in order to participate in future tournaments. Occasionally, if students are available, a partner can grasp the sword with one hand, extend his/her arm outwards, and use the sword as the "pipe" for practice.

4.2 Cutting exercise with sharps and pell

(Note: The purpose of this training is to introduce the student to experiencing the cutting action of a steel sword with the intent to elevate the appreciation of the sword as a deadly weapon. This training will use cutting targets, such as a pell, and will be conducted under close supervision of the instructor.)

1. starting from the **middle guard** position and armed with an edged steel sword, deliver a downward strike to the horizontal pell
2. ensure that proper footwork and sword form are employed

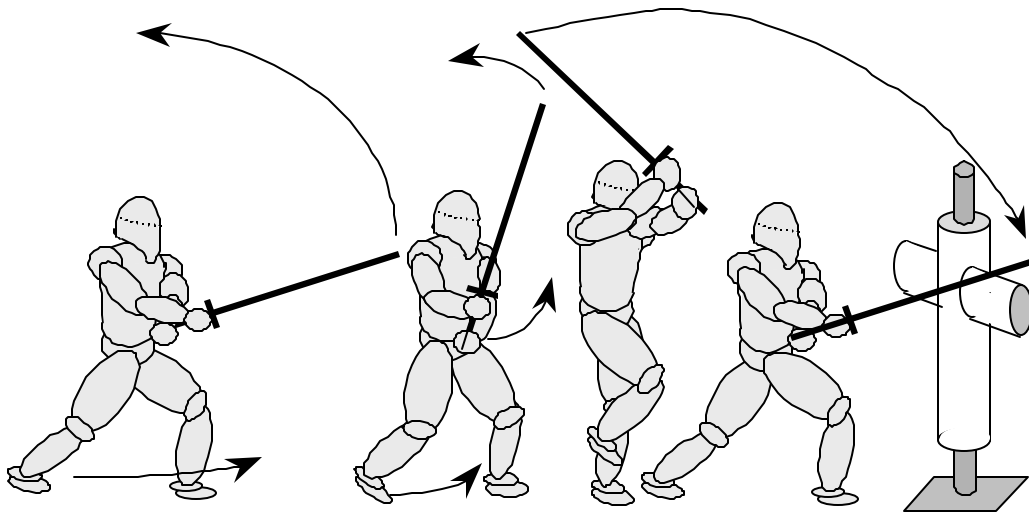


Figure 25 cutting exercise with sharps and pell

The design of the pell may vary. The illustration above depicts a pell made of sonotubes, tough cardboard cylinders used in forming cement. The components are replaceable as the tubes get significantly damaged during training. The horizontal pell can simply be supported by rope at each end or stretched across carpenter horses or similar supporting structured. It is critical that the pell is secure to the floor in order to reduce accidents.

4.3 Horizontal test cutting using a pell

1. starting from the **middle guard** stance and armed with an edged steel sword, deliver a horizontal cut from the right to the vertical pell
2. ensure that proper footwork and sword form are employed

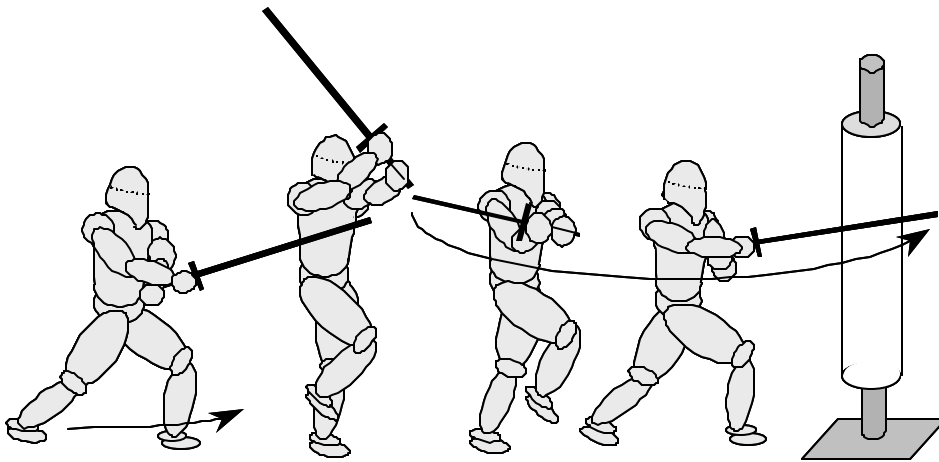


Figure 26 introduction to side cut with steel sword

Note: Initial strikes should be done slow and deliberate. Safety is paramount, especially in this early stage of training. This will allow the student to develop his/her focus on the target and deliver an effective strike.

4.4 The “Moulinet”

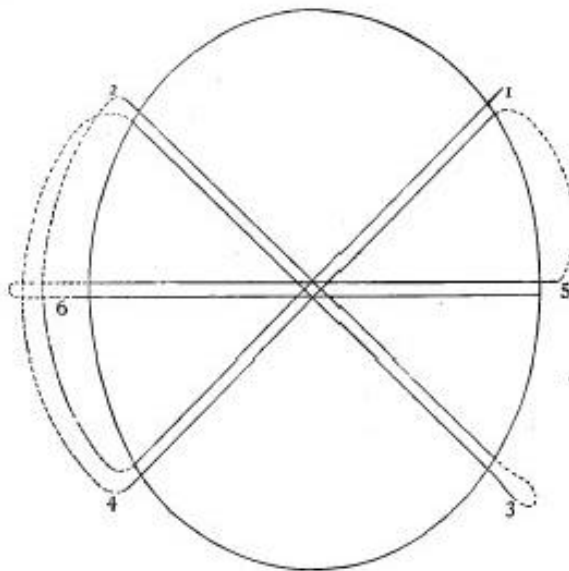
The following text is an excerpt from “Old Sword-play” written by Capt. Alfred Hutton, 1892. The text is un-altered to preserve the “spirit” of his instruction.

“The six moulinets are absolutely necessary for the acquirement of dexterity in wielding the two-hander; and in practicing them great care must be taken to keep the hands well advanced, in order to avoid the accident of entangling the arms with the long quillons of the sword. They are as follows:--

Moulinet 1.

- Motion 1. Extend the arms with the sword pointing to the front a little above the diagonal line 1 on the target, the right hand holding it close to the quillons and the left hand close to the pommel.*
- Motion 2. Bring the sword down, true edge leading, with a circular sweep from right to left along the line, causing it to pass close to the left side, and completing the circle bring it again to the front.*

PLATE VIII.



THE TARGET—AFTER RO-WORTH, 1798.

This moulinet, as likewise all the others, must be performed at first quite slowly in order to ensure precision of movement; and afterwards the speed must be increased, and the circle repeated continuously ten or twelve times. (this paragraph from “Cold Steel”, A.Hutton)

Moulinet 2.

- Motion 1. Extend the arms as before, the point of the sword being just above diagonal line 2.*
- Motion 2. Describe a similar circle, the point traversing the diagonal line from left to right, and passing close to the right side.*

Moulinet 3.

- Motion 1. Extend the arms and sword with the point directed just below line 3.*
- Motion 2. Make the cut diagonally upwards, and, after the sword has passed through the target, complete the circle close to the right side.*

Moulinet 4.

This must be performed as the last, save that the sword describes its circle close to the left side and passes diagonally upwards from left to right.

Moulinet 5.

- Motion 1. Extend the arms and sword with the point just outside line 5.*
- Motion 2. Describe the circle horizontally, the sword traversing the line from right to left, and in the rearward half of the circle just clearing the top of the head.*

Moulinet 6.

This must be executed similarly to the last, the sword describing the circle from left to right."

The moulinet is intended to be practiced on one's own without a partner. This drill will enhance one's strength and flexibility in the wrist and arms. This training drill has been recommended in one form or another by swordsmasters of the past such as Giacommo di Grassi (1570). The drill is comprised of six cuts, beginning with position #1 in the upper right point. The pattern in the illustration is obtained from a reference to Roworth in Hutton's book.

4.5 Spatial Awareness Training

A critical attribute, necessary for survival in any combat situation is the awareness of things happening around you, without the need to physically look at it or direct your attention to it. In a combat situation, your focus will be the enemy in front of you, receiving your blows in your attempt at victory in this engagement. However, surrounding you are other combatants, friend and foe, and one must be aware of what is happening around you at all times to guarantee survival.

This exercise is designed to "re-awaken" certain sensory capabilities that have long been nullified by our modern existence. The exercise is also structured to be humorous and fun.

The Gauntlet

The first exercise utilizes a leather gauntlet (do not use a steel gauntlet, as it may damage the floor!). Gather your students at one corner of the training room. Now toss the gauntlet somewhere into the room so that it lands on the floor some distance away from the students. One by one, the student will concentrate on the position of the gauntlet on the floor, then, closing their eyes, carefully walk towards where they expect the gauntlet to be. When the student believes he/she has reached the location of the gauntlet, crouch down, with eyes closed, and slap the floor with the hand. Open the eyes to gauge the accuracy of their ability to locate the gauntlet blind-folded¹⁷.

The second exercise is similar to the first, however, the students, with eyes closed, is required to spin, somersault, zig-zag, hop, skip, jump, and any other creative movement as he/she moves in on the gauntlet. Still, the student has his/her eyes closed during this entire exercise.

The end result of this exercise is that students come to realize that a) this isn't an easy thing to accomplish; b) that this is something that is critical to survive in combat situations. One of the purposes of such exercises is to enhance the student's appreciation of relying on other senses or that "feeling" to aid in surviving an engagement. When one wears a full helm, visibility can be reduced to approximately 15% of one vision, therefore, other senses become important to gauge the range of the opponent and timing for the attack or defense.

¹⁷ Of course, during this exercise, if the blind-folded student is walking towards the wall, it is recommended that the instructor or students yell out instructions to prevent the student from striking the wall!

5.0 Pairs-oriented Training – Folgen (drills)

Introduction

The purpose of the *folgen* is to introduce the student to a structured process of striking an opponent with the sword to which the opponent will reciprocate with an appropriate defensive action (parry). Each student will take turns in progressing through an offensive and defensive drill. The drills are not meant to be the end point of fighting technique. Rather they build muscle memory and teach students the basics so that later, more advanced techniques can be taught.

Parrying is a critical element of good swordsmanship. Effective parrying may provide the swordsman with ample opportunities to parry and counter often times at the same time. Through the *folgen*, the student will learn the importance of a good parry, and the importance of evading and good footwork. A key element of this training is to ensure the student does not remain linear during defense ("deer in the headlights") and offensive maneuvers. The best defense is to be where the sword is not, and that typically means to move out of the way.

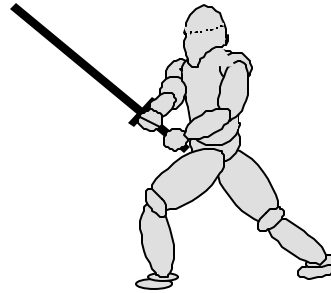
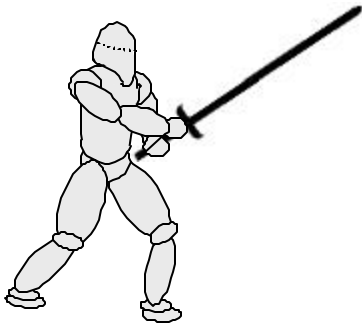
Another point that the student must understand is that parrying is done most often with edge on flat. There has been no shortage of debate in the historical fencing community as to whether the parrys should be deployed edge-on-edge or flat-on-edge or a variation. It is thought that edge-on-edge parrys may have originated during the 17-19th centuries with military sabres and small-sword duellists. The main physics behind flat-to-edge parry is that it enables the wielder to deflect or redirect the oncoming strike quite effectively. If the parry is edge-on-edge, there is a moment of binding occurring, resulting in the energy of the weapons to suddenly dissipate. The objective of any swordsman is to achieve a parry that will set him/her up to immediately reciprocate with a killing strike. Ultimately, the student will learn the techniques that involve single-time parry-and-attack, leaving the opponent very little time to react to the reciprocating strike.

The last point of these exercises is to ensure the student appreciates the importance of good footwork. Gathered, passing and traverse steps will be employed during the drills. The student will also learn that with good footwork, the ability to move offline (**evading**) should ultimately become internalized providing the opportunity to reciprocate with a deadly strike.

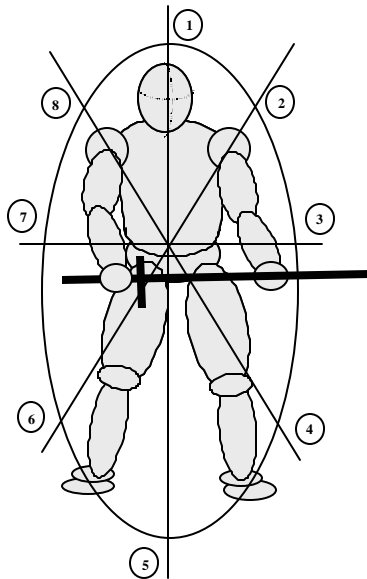
The ultimate objective of the drills is to achieve full free-form *fechten*. The drills in later levels of competency can include practice with steel swords, however, in this level of training, the students are limited to wooden wasters only.

The drill sequences will be illustrated with the following format:

1. student "a" will be illustrated as:
2. student "b" will be illustrated as:



In order to reduce the risk of injury, the drills will originally be executed in a clockwise direction, from the top of the head (position #1) to the base of the neck on the right side (position #8). There must be no deviation from the direction nor the pattern of practice at this level. The figure on the left illustrates the numbered points of the body.



The circle as illustrated demonstrates the angles of the strikes and their relative targets. In later training, the student must be aware that the entire circle and their angles can be reduced in size and focused on a particular body part, for example, the circle can be reduced to focus on the chin. Therefore, all strike angles can be applied to the chin.

For this level of training, the drills do not include thrusts. This form of strike will be introduced in the next level.

5.1: Phase 1 (single strike → single ward – with reset)

This drill is performed such that the student, who is on the offensive, will complete an entire circuit (starting from point 1 → concluding with point 8). The circuit or circle is considered "single-dimensional", that being the strike is delivered, followed by an appropriate parry only and no other techniques, strikes or parries are to be deployed. The "reset" comes into play at the conclusion of each strike, placing both partners into a middle guard stance. This is an effective mechanism to keep the speed down to a safe and practical level.

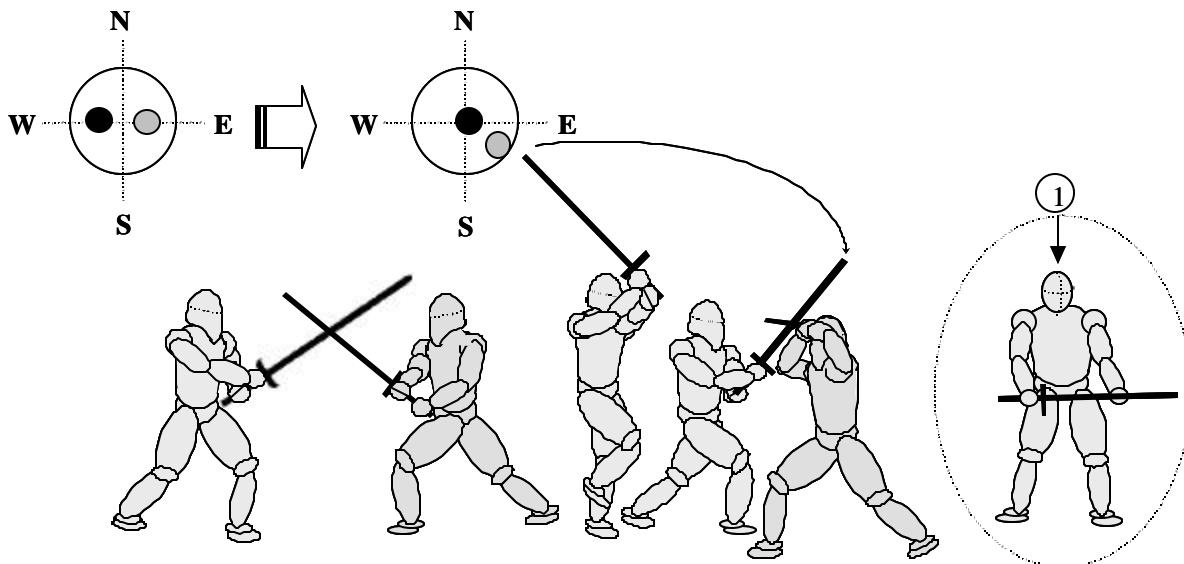
When the student on the offensive (initially the "a" illustration - agent) reaches point 8 (the agent's completion of the circuit), they exchange their offensive with defensive orientation, and the defensive student (initially the "b" illustration - patient agent) now becomes the offensive.



Downward vertical strike (1) - guard of the window left/right

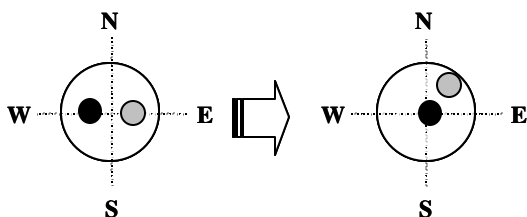
The student must review the proper offensive and defensive techniques and demonstrate this to the instructor before proceeding with the drill. The students will both assume the **middle guard** (*posta breve*) stance and proceed with this drill as described below.

1. Students “a” (agent) & “b” (patient agent) both assume the **middle guard** stance, both with left foot forward.
2. The agent steps forward with the right foot, and delivers a **downward vertical strike**.
3. At the same moment, the patient agent steps to the left and forward with the trailing right foot (traverse left), and delivers a **guard of the window left** - the end result is the patient agent's sword point is oriented towards the agent,
4. Both students return (“reset”) to the **middle guard** stance.



The students must be cognizant of two important points of this exercise: a) the agent delivers a technically correct offensive strike (power and speed is not important at this

stage of training) and b) the patient agent deploys the appropriate parry and does this while moving offline from the agent using a traverse step. *The patient agent can practice an alternative stance, right foot forward, left back, and deploy the same guard with a traverse to the right with the left foot.*

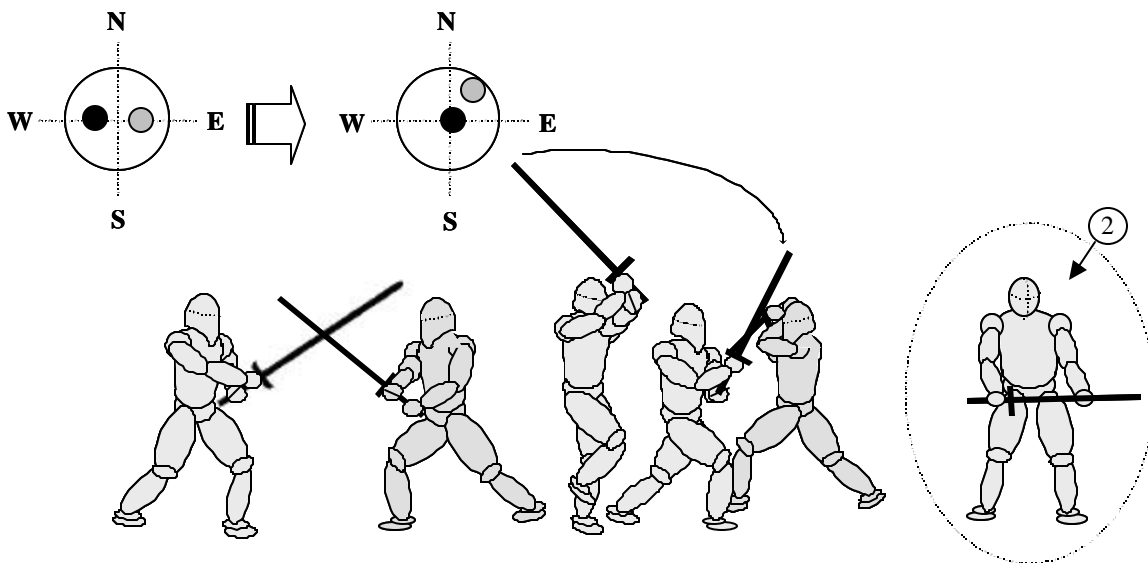




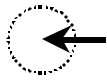
Oblique downward strike right (2) - guard of the window right

This drill is similar to the previous one, in which the agent from the middle guard stance assumes the high guard stance in preparation to deliver a downward strike, except it is targeted to the base of the neck of the patient agent's left side. The patient agent will deploy a guard of the window again (a variation of the hanging guard) and move in towards the agent's left side via a traverse step.

1. The agent assumes the **middle guard** stance, left foot forward, the patient agent assumes the same stance, with right foot forward.
2. The agent raises the sword and passes from the **high guard** position and steps forward with the right foot, and delivers an **oblique downward strike** targeting the patient agent's left side of the base of the neck.
3. At the same moment, the patient agent steps to the right and forward with the trailing left foot (traverse right), and delivers a **guard of the window right** - the end result is the patient agent's sword point is oriented towards the agent and deflects/re-directs the agent's strike.
4. Both students return ("reset") to the **middle guard** stance.



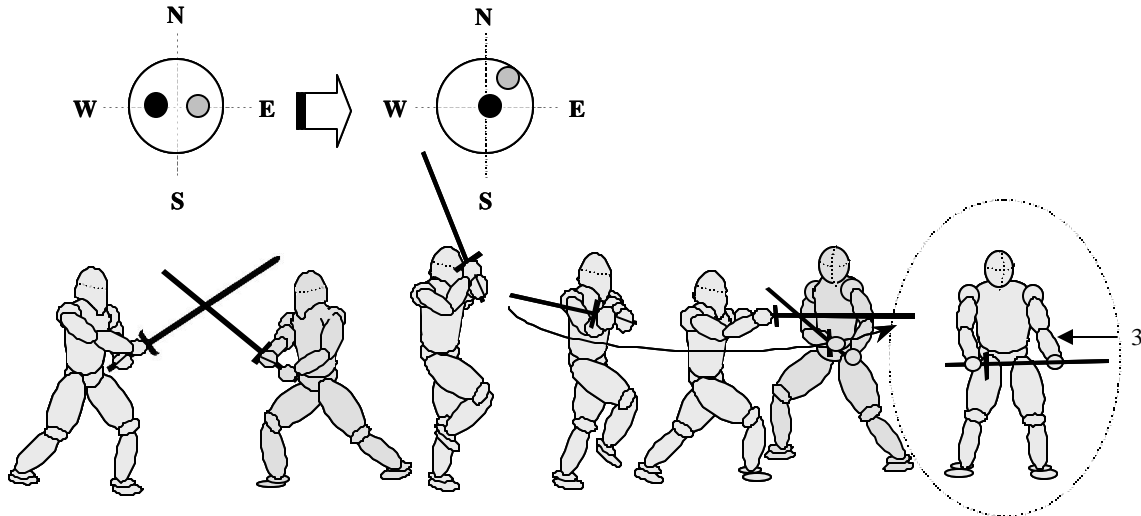
The illustration above depicts the patient agent deploying the guard of the window left to parry against the **oblique downward strike** (*sgualembtrato*). The defensive maneuver is similar to the previous drill involving the downward vertical strike except for the direction of the traverse. When the agent strikes from his right, the patient agent moves in on the agent's left. The key element in this drill is to evade the attack if possible and move in towards the agent. Moving in onto the right provides the opportunity to deliver at least three offensive types of defense: a) a strike such as a horizontal strike, b) half-sword for a thrust (not included in this level of training, c) close-quarters fight, i.e. grappling.



Horizontal strike (3) - middle guard

The parry deployed for a horizontal strike is the **middle guard** or *posta breve*. The combination of evading the horizontal strike and warding the attack with the middle guard, positions the patient agent to reoste with a thrust.

1. The agent assumes the **middle guard** stance, left foot forward, the patient agent assumes the same stance, with right foot forward.
2. The agent raises the sword and passes from the **high guard** position and steps forward with the right foot, and delivers a **horizontal strike** from the agent's right targeting the patient agent's left side around the waist area.
3. At the same moment, the patient agent steps to the right and forward with the leading right foot (gathered traverse right), and delivers a **middle guard** keeping the point and blade centred on the agent.
4. Both students return ("reset") to the **middle guard** stance.



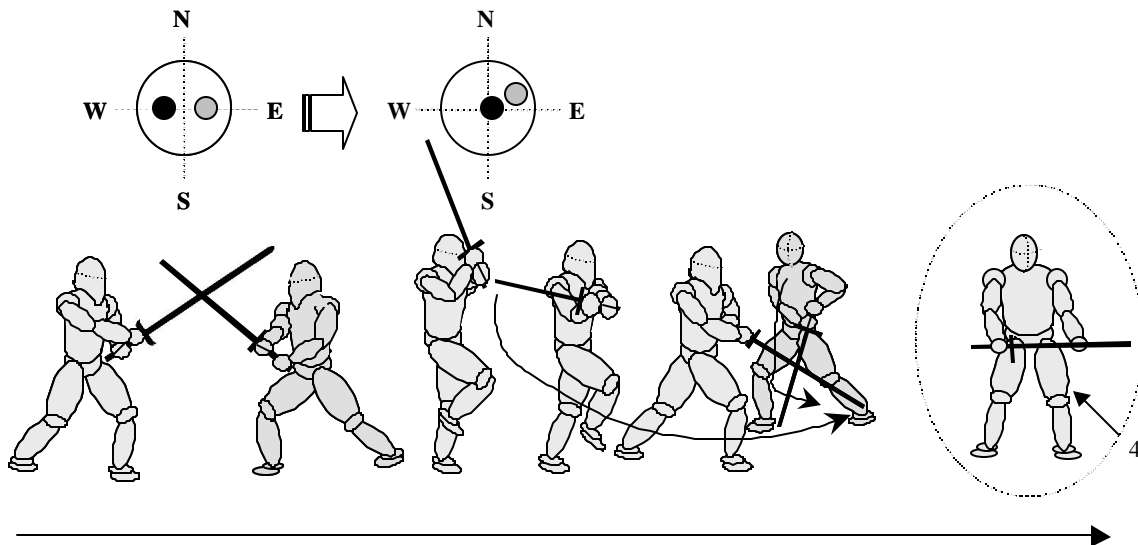
Should the patient agent's feet be reversed (i.e. left foot forward), the patient agent would still traverse to the right, but move the trailing right foot, leaving the left foot grounded. This step is more of a passing traverse step. The main idea behind this form of guard is to position the patient agent close to the agent, resulting in a good position to deploy a close range thrust.



Oblique upward strike (4) – tooth of the boar

This drill will instruct the students to parry an **oblique strike from below** (*denti di cinghiale* – *left side of patient agent*) which will position the patient agent into a good guard stance with which to reciprocate the agent's strike.

1. The agent assumes the **middle guard** stance, left foot forward, the patient agent assumes the same stance, with right foot forward.
2. The agent raises the sword and passes from the **high guard** position and steps forward with the right foot, and delivers an **oblique upward strike** targeting the patient agent's knee of the left leg.
3. At the same moment, the patient agent takes a traverse gathered step towards the patient agent's right-forward and deploys a **boar's tooth guard** - the end result is the patient agent's sword point is oriented downwards and slightly forward,
4. Both students return ("reset") to the **middle guard** stance.

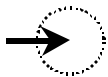
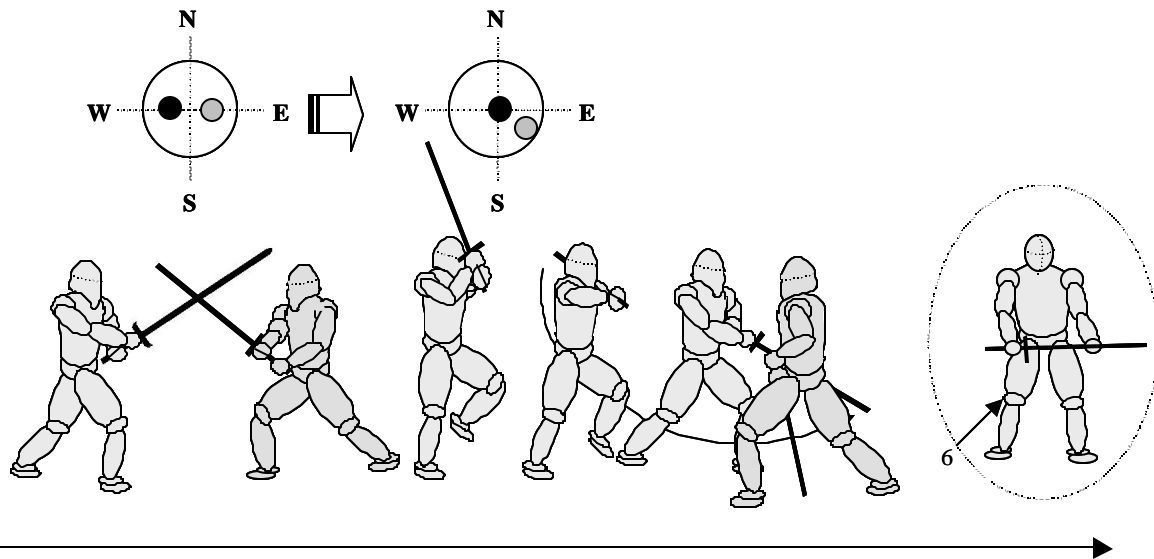


The illustration above depicts the patient agent invoking a **guard of the boar's tooth** to defend against the **upward oblique strike** (*denti di cinghiale*). The resulting stance assumed by the patient agent enables him/her to deploy one or two possible repostes: a) striking the oncoming oblique strike with the false edge, continue with raising the sword to almost the high guard position and return with a *squalemrato* or *fendente*; b) strike the oncoming oblique strike with the false edge, travel down the agent's sword to deliver a thrust.



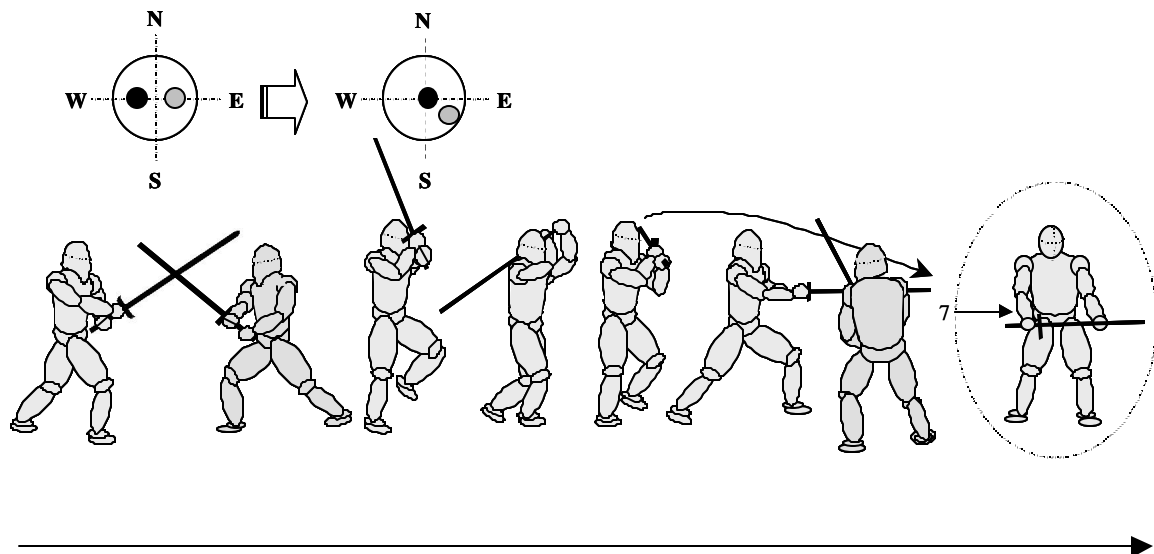
Oblique upward strike (6) – guard of the half iron gate

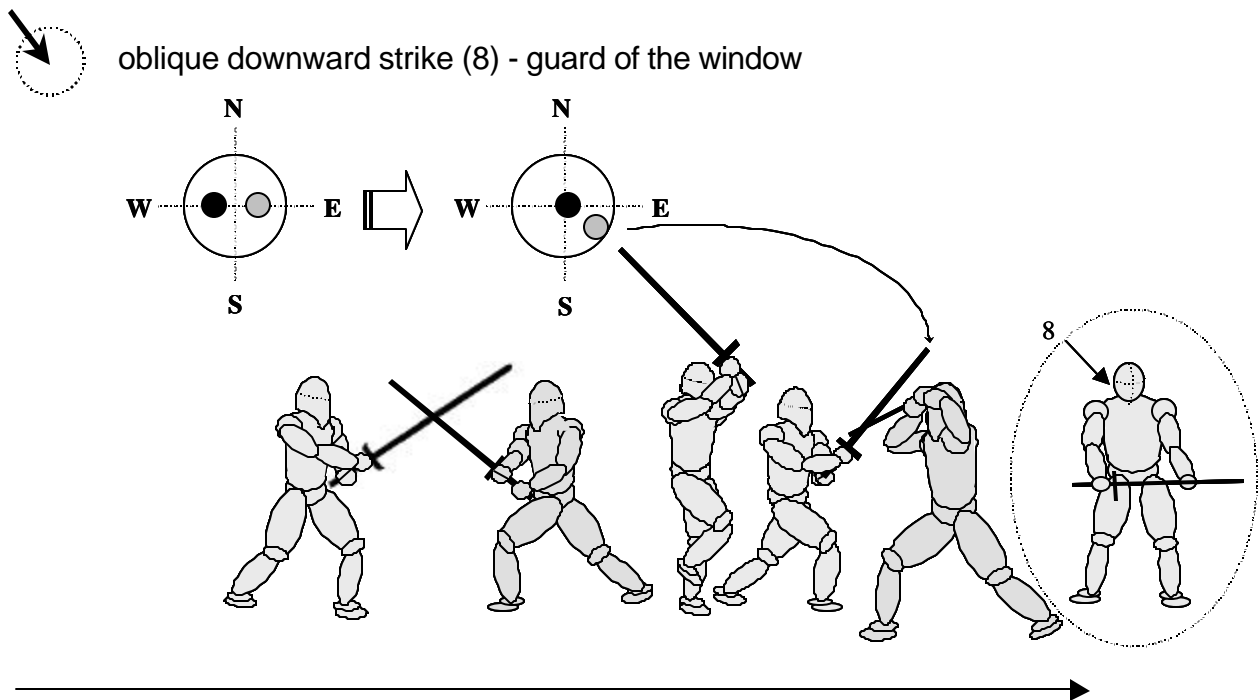
Continuing with the drill, the agent will now proceed up the patient agent's right side upwards towards point 8. The patient agent will deploy the appropriate defensive guards as described in the previous sections. .



Horizontal strike (7) - middle guard

This drill is very similar to the previous horizontal strike, except for the source of the strike being from the agent's left side meaning the left foot would move forward and planted to deliver the strike. The patient agent's response similar to the previous horizontal strike, keeping the sword centred on the agent, and moving off-line towards the agent's right (the patient agent's left).





Similar to the previous oblique strike, the agent targets the patient agent's right collar bone (delivering the strike from the agent's left). The patient agent deploys a guard of the window, positioning the hilt on the left side of the patient agent's head (placing the hands furthest away from the oncoming strike). At the same moment, the patient agent takes a passing traverse step, by moving the trailing right leg forward and to the left. The agent's strike is re-directed away from the patient agent positioning the patient agent will be in a good position for a reposte.

Alternative Starting Guards

In order for the student to practice the delivery of strikes from various guard positions, it is critical that this phase of training drills be practiced with the alternative guard positions. The student must develop a comfort with delivering strikes from any position and must achieve the point in which this becomes natural without thinking about starting from a different guard position. This movement is effective in confusing the opponent which provides the opportunity to take advantage and control of the opponent. The movement must be made crisply and quickly.

The following section describes an example pair of students delivering a strike from a tail guard position. The first is a downward vertical strike from a tail guard, and the second illustration depicts an angled cut from below from a tail guard.

In all of the other guard positions, the delivery of a strike in most cases will pass through a high guard position. The purpose of this is to confuse the opponent into thinking that some other strike will be delivered.

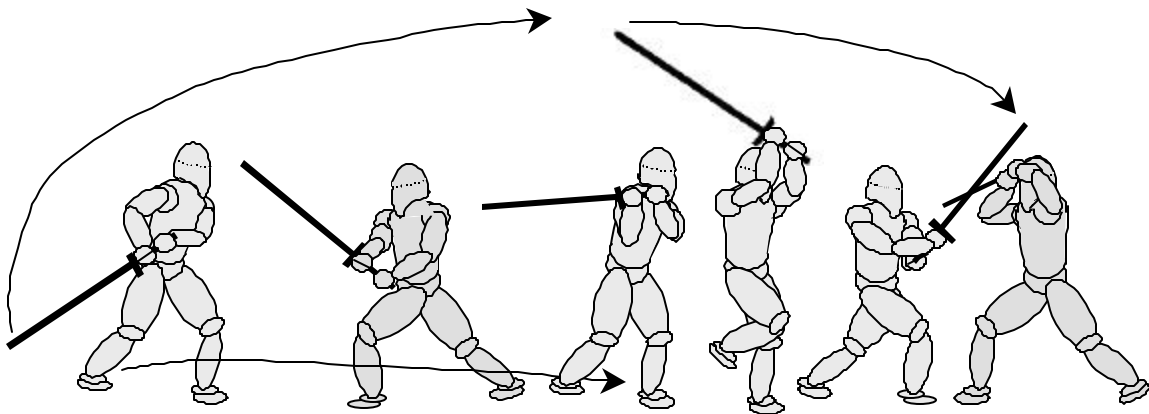


Figure 27 Tail Guard ==> Downward Cut

The illustration above depicts the movement of the sword from a tail guard position, passing through a high guard position and finally delivering the downward centre cut. It is important that regardless of the strike, especially for strikes delivered on the opposite side of the tail guard, you will pass through the high guard. This includes a delivery of an angled cut from below on the left side.

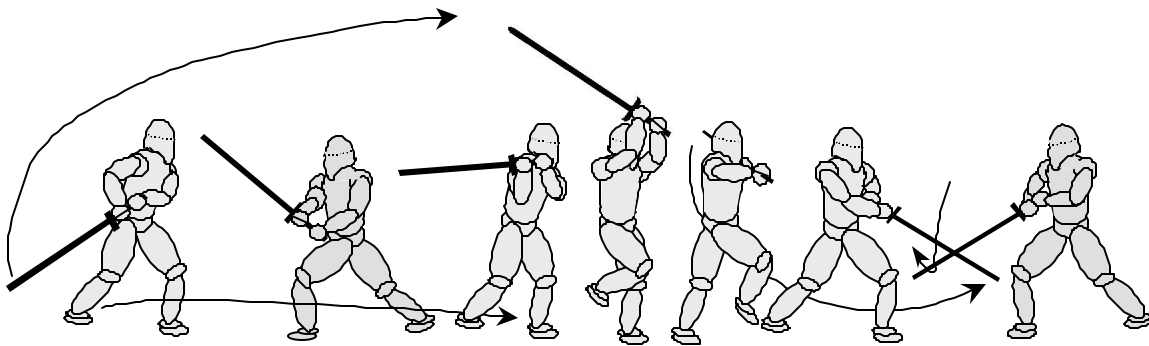


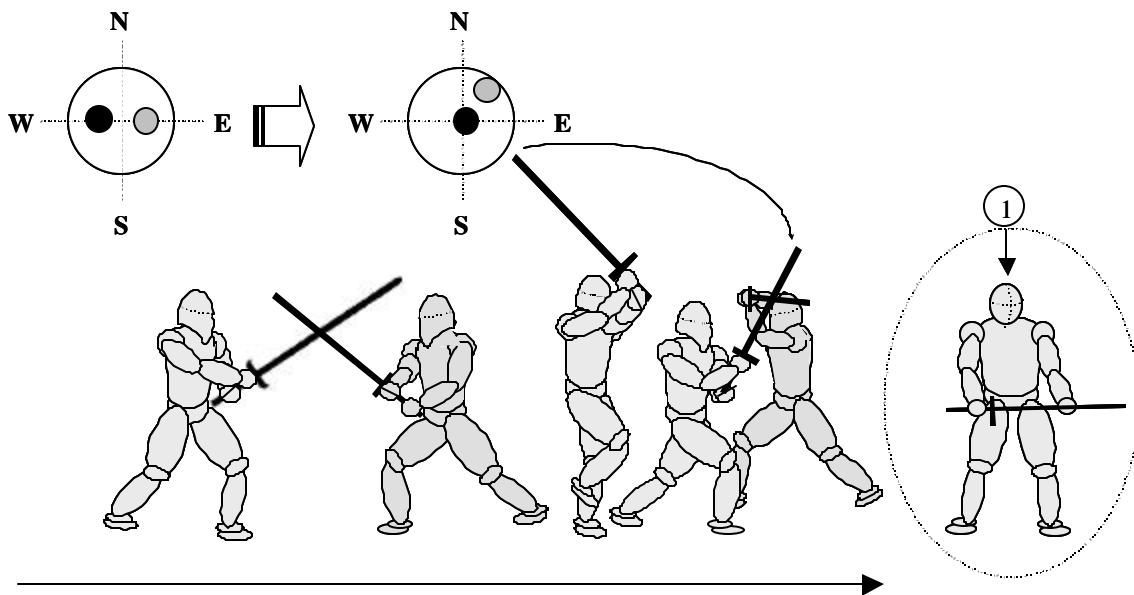
Figure 28 Tail Guard ==> Angled Cut from Below

The illustration above depicts the movements required to deliver an angled cut from below from the opposite side to the guard of the tail.

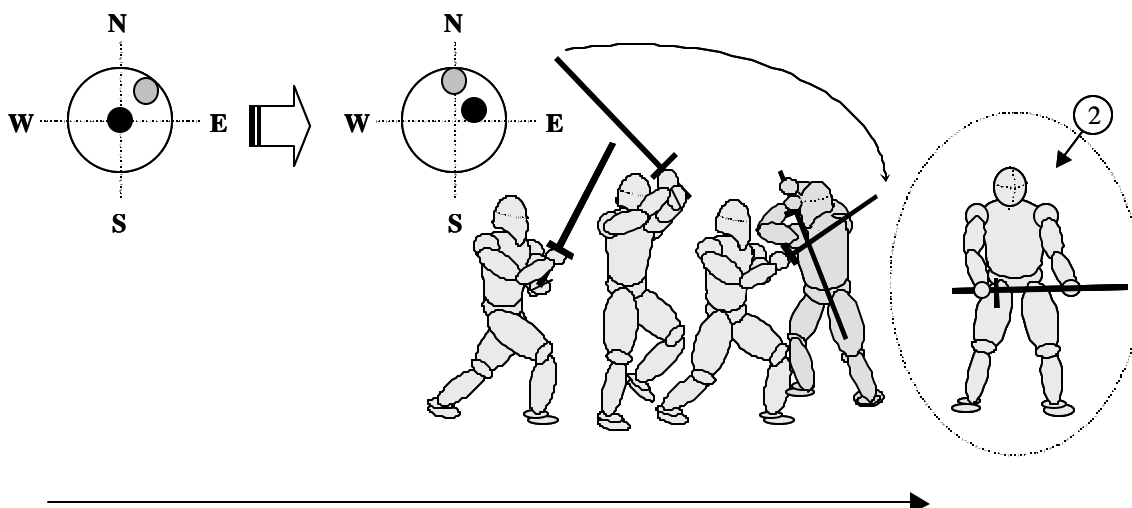
5.2: Phase 2 (double cut → double guard – with reset)

Phase 2 introduces the student to delivering multiple offensive strikes while the partner will invoke the appropriate multiple guard defenses. The student will start with a vertical downward strike, followed an oblique downward strike (squaembrato) followed by a reset. The student then exchanges the offensive with the defensive and repeats the same strikes and defenses. The idea is that the pairs will practice delivering strikes from all possible angles and the defensive positions will defend against all variations of strikes.

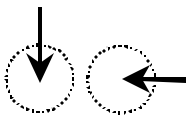
agent: middle guard → downward vertical strike →
patient agent: middle guard → guard of the window →



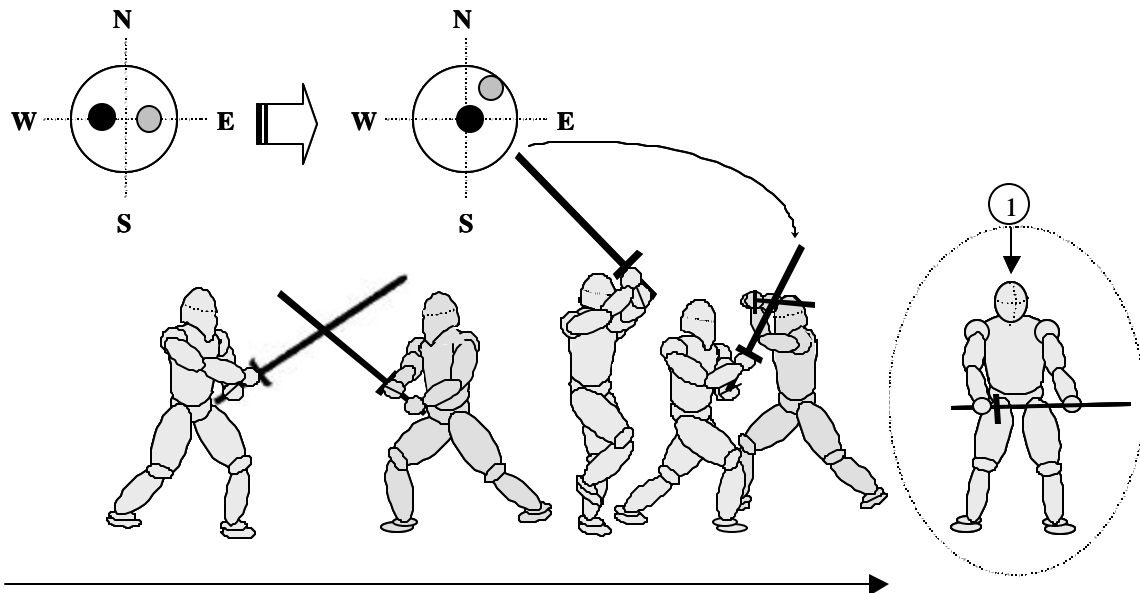
agent: oblique downward strike → middle guard
patient agent: guard of the woman → middle guard



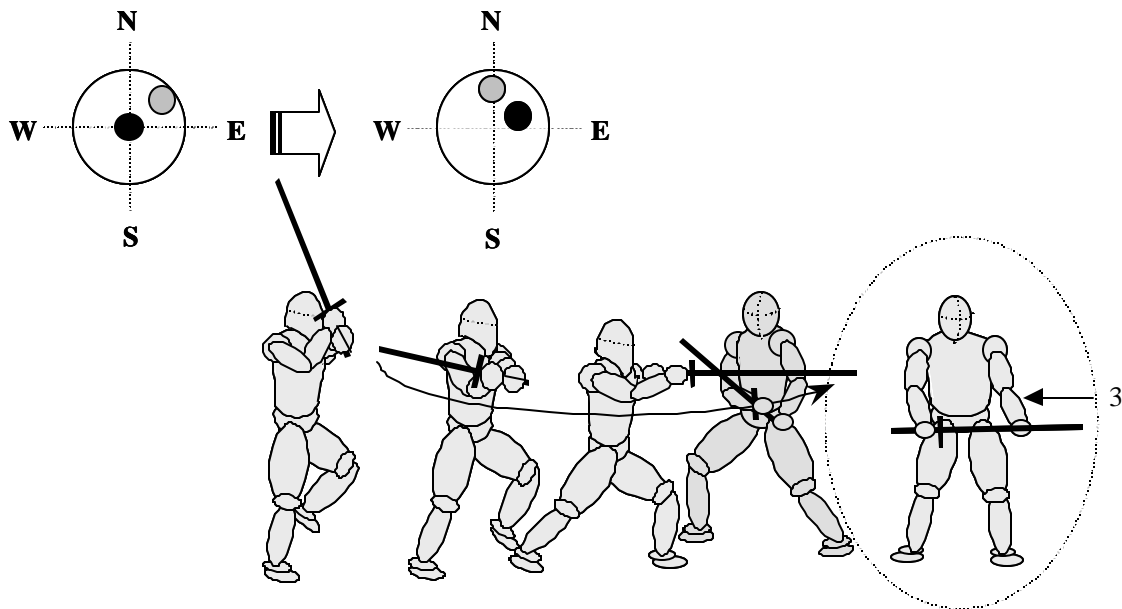
The student returns to the middle guard position, and delivers the downward vertical strike which is then followed by a horizontal strike. This is continuing the training of being able to deliver offensive strikes from variable starting positions, as well as from a defensive perspective, being able to defend against variations of offensive forms.

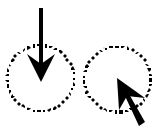


agent: middle guard → downward vertical strike →
patient agent: middle guard → guard of the window →



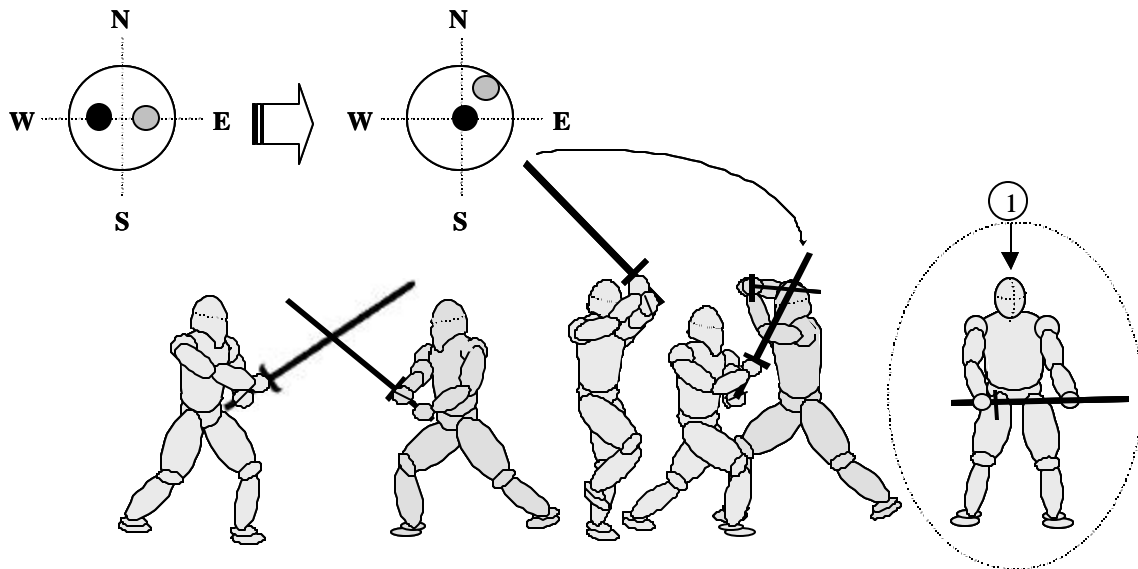
agent: horizontal strike → middle guard
patient agent: middle guard → middle guard



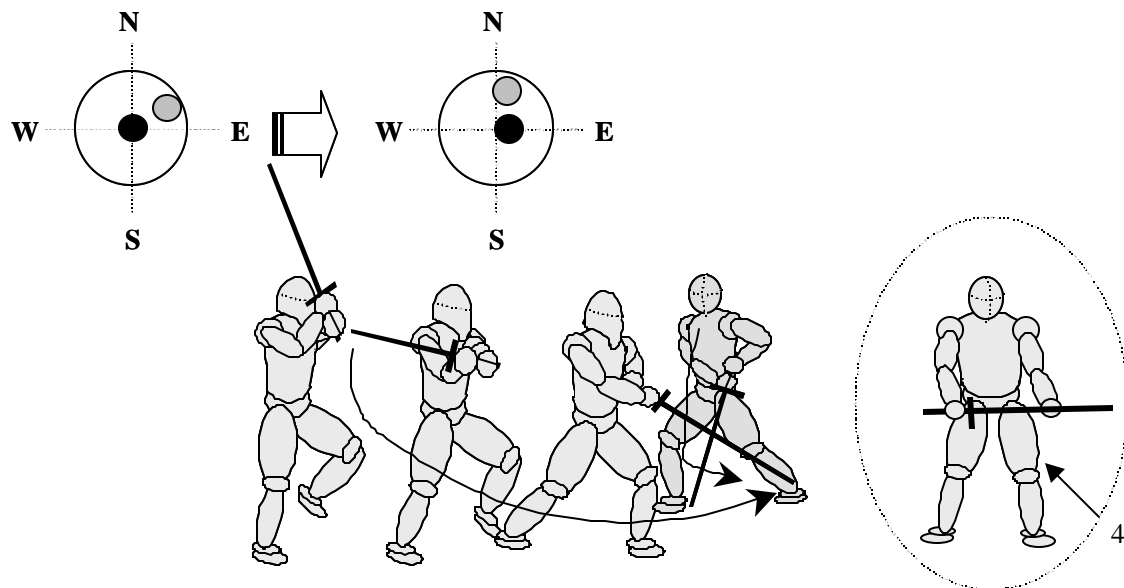


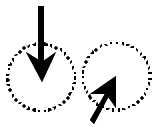
The students return to the middle guard position, and the agent delivers a 4th downward vertical strike which is then followed by an oblique strike from below. The patient agent will deploy a guard of the window to defend against the downward centre cut followed by the tooth of the boar guard.

agent: middle guard → downward vertical strike →
patient agent: middle guard → guard of the window →



agent: oblique strike from below → middle guard
patient agent: tooth of the boar guard → middle guard

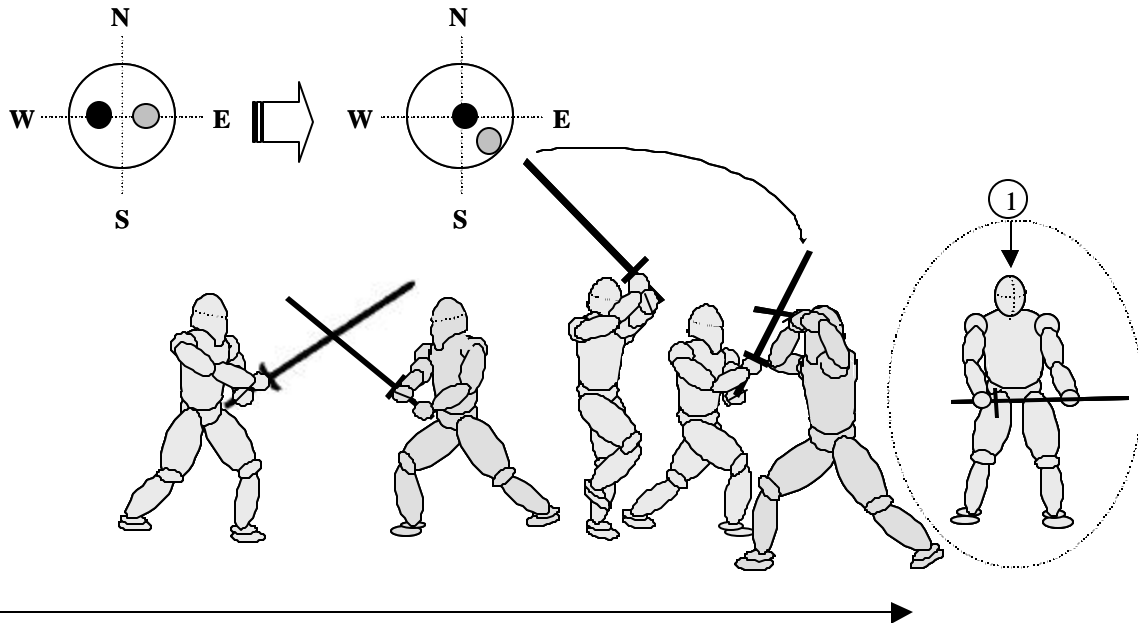




The students return to the middle guard position, and the agent delivers a 5th downward vertical strike, which is then followed by an oblique strike from below from the left. The patient agent will deploy a guard of the window to defend against the downward vertical strike, followed by the guard of the iron door.

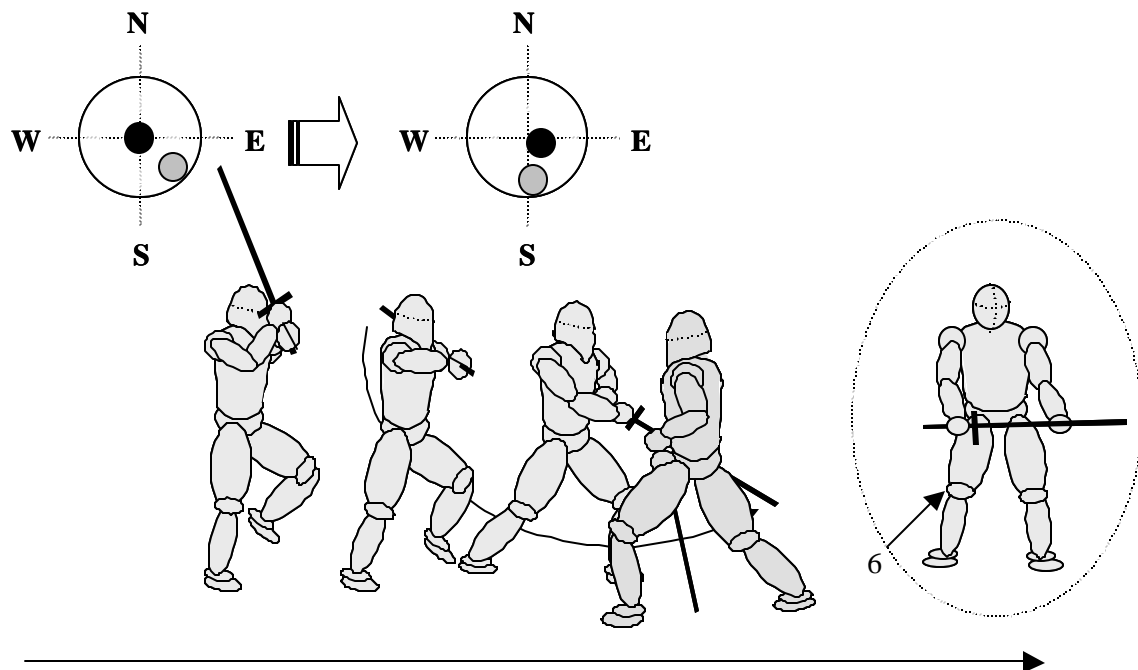
agent: middle guard → downward vertical strike →

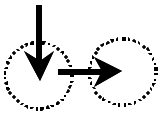
patient agent: middle guard → guard of the window →



agent: oblique strike from below from left → middle guard

patient agent: guard of the iron door → middle guard

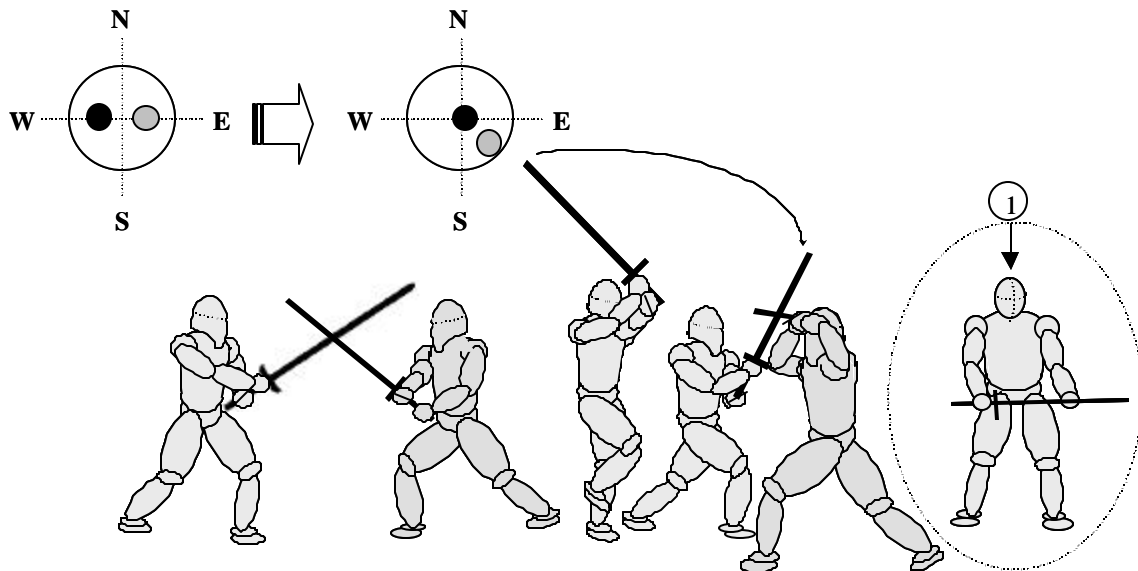




The students return to the middle guard position, and the agent delivers a 6th downward vertical strike, which is then followed by a horizontal strike from below from the left. The patient agent will deploy a guard of the window to defend against the downward centre cut, followed by guard of the window.

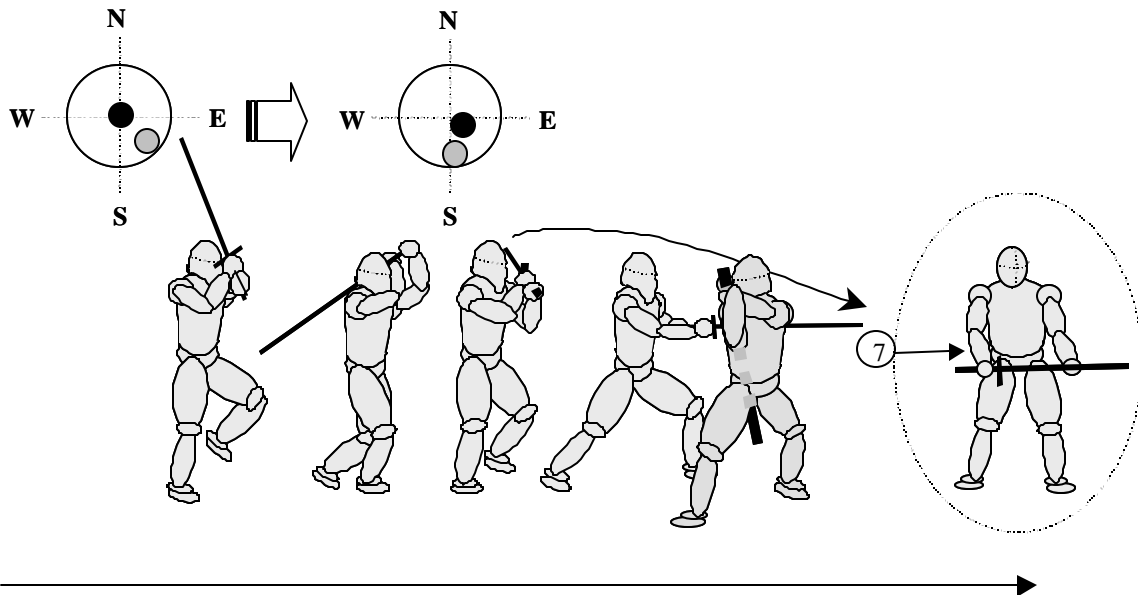
agent: middle guard → downward vertical strike →

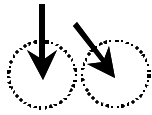
patient agent: middle guard → guard of the window →



agent: horizontal strike from the left → middle guard

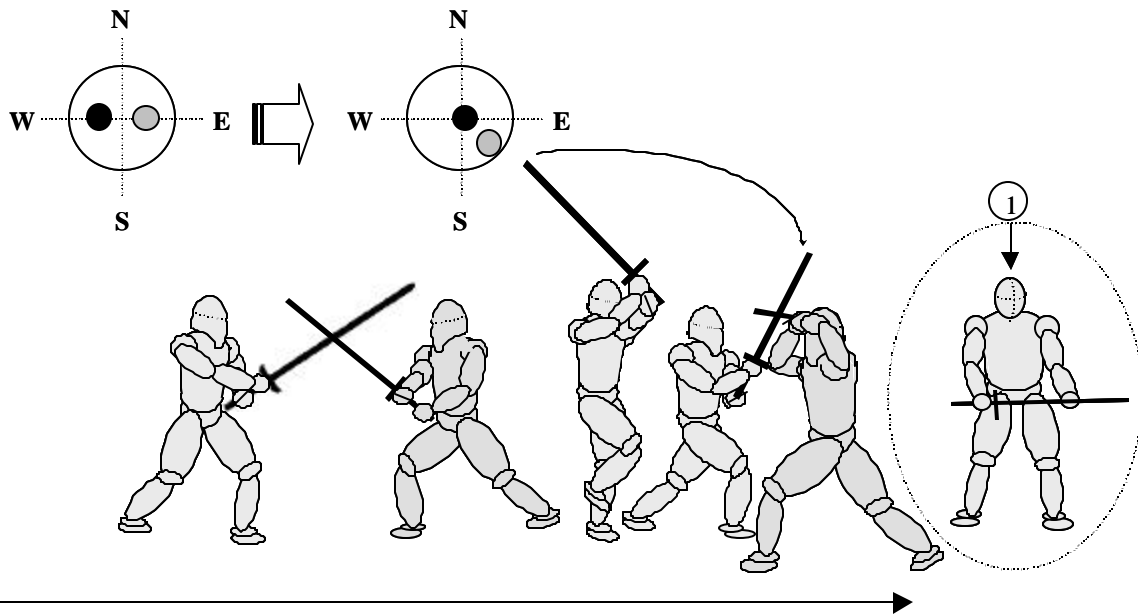
patient agent: guard of the window → middle guard



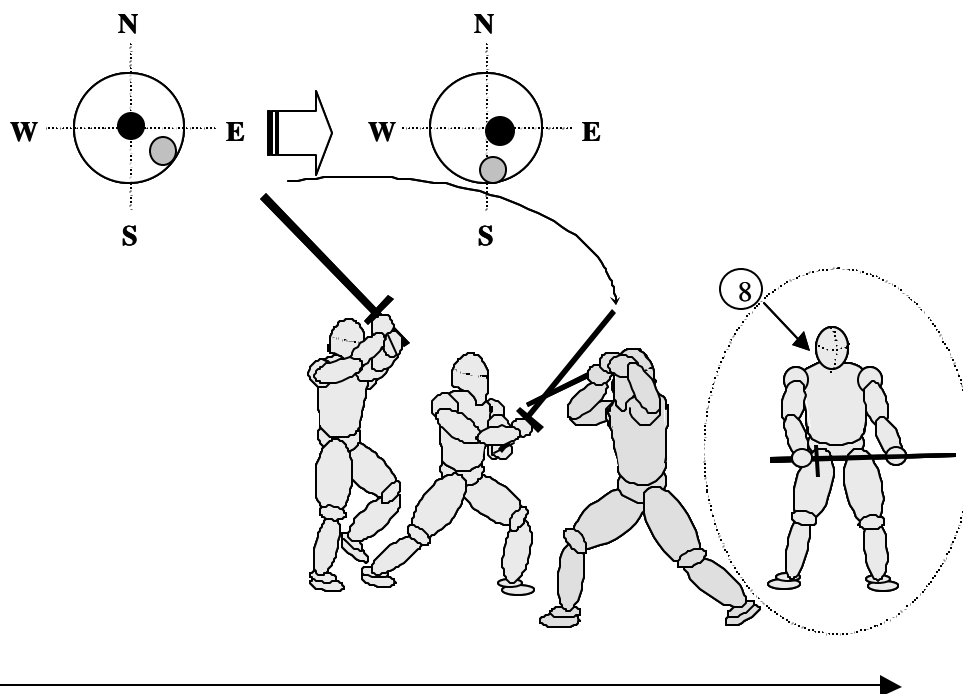


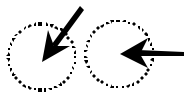
The students return to the middle guard position, and the agent delivers a 7th downward vertical strike, which is then followed by an oblique downward strike from the left. The patient agent will deploy a guard of the window to defend against the downward vertical strike, followed by another window guard.

agent: middle guard → downward vertical strike →
patient agent: middle guard → guard of the window →



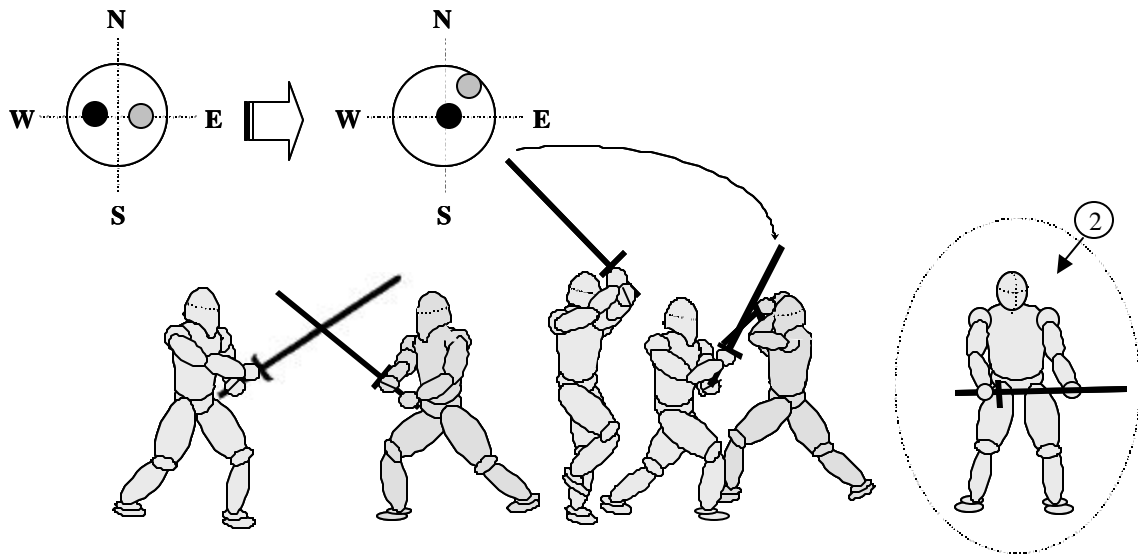
agent: oblique downward strike from the left → middle guard
patient agent: guard of the window(2) → middle guard



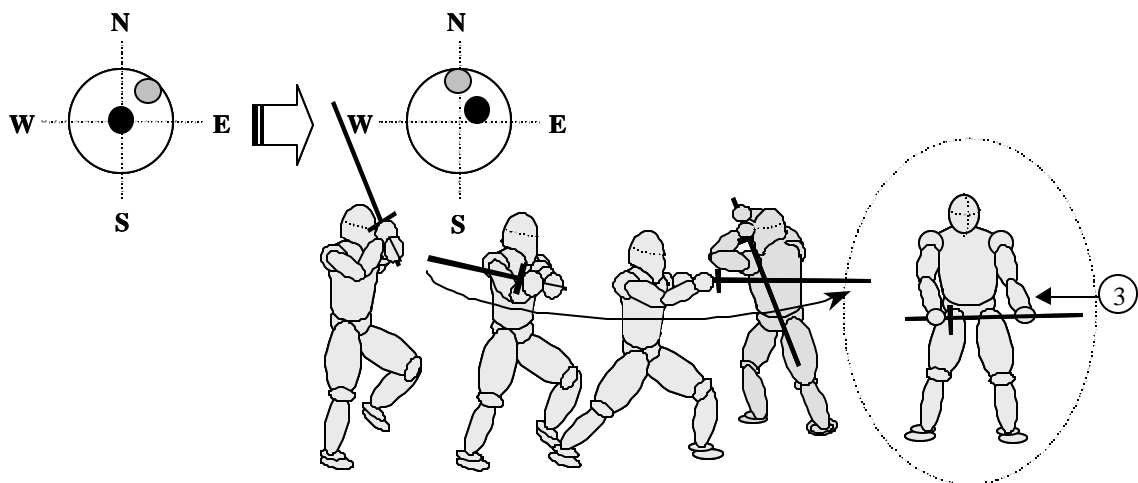
Next Anchor Point

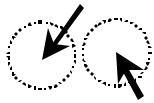
The students return to the middle guard position, and will now anchor the strike at position #2, the oblique downward strike, followed by the second strike in this drill. The rotation of the second strike to all of the body points continues and completes with a downward vertical strike (fendente). The anchor strike then moves again to a position of striking position #3, a horizontal strike, while the second strike completes the circuit of all body points to the last strike being the oblique downward strike on #2.

agent: middle guard → oblique downward strike from the right →
patient agent: middle guard → guard of the window →



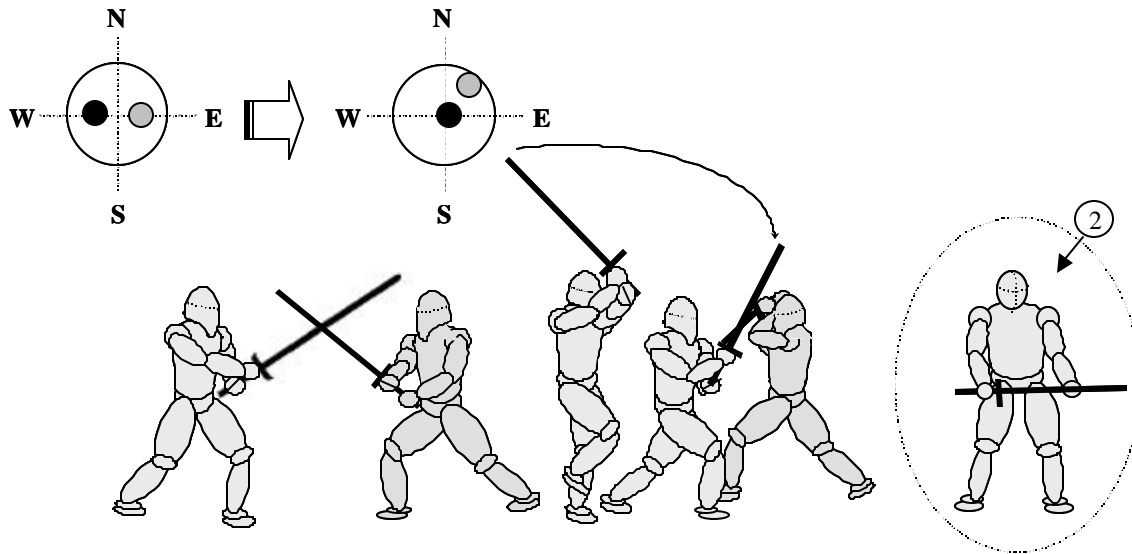
agent: horizontal strike from the right → middle guard
patient agent: guard of the woman → middle guard



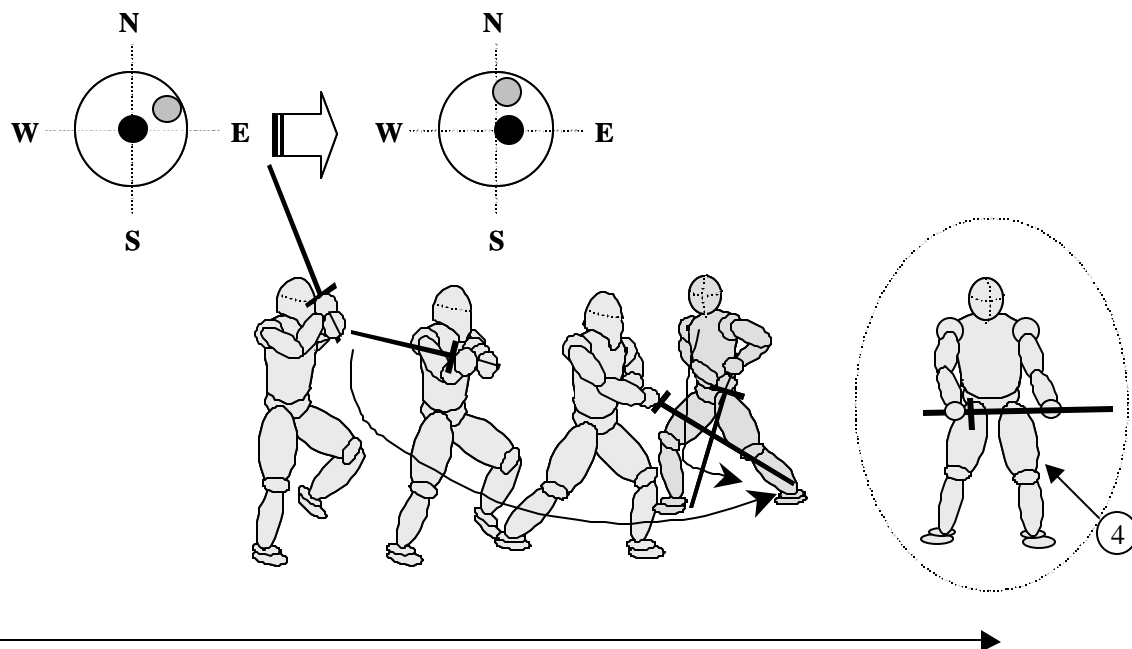


The students return to the middle guard position, and will continue with the anchor strike at position #2 for the second iteration, followed by the oblique upwards strike.

agent: middle guard → oblique downward strike from the right →
patient agent: middle guard → guard of the window →



agent: oblique strike from below → middle guard
patient agent: tooth of the boar guard → middle guard



The pairs of students would continue with each circuit and anchor point until all of the anchor points have been exercised. Continuing with the above exercise, the following would occur:

2 ➔ 6
2 ➔ 7
2 ➔ 8

The students would then move to the next anchor point, that being target #3. Therefore the exercise would follow this pattern:

3 ➔ 4
3 ➔ 6 (recall that the montante, or vertical upward strike is not included)
3 ➔ 7
3 ➔ 8
3 ➔ 1
3 ➔ 2
3 ➔ 3

Following the above, the student would again move onto the next anchor point, that being target #4. Therefore, the exercise would follow this pattern:

4 ➔ 6
4 ➔ 7
4 ➔ 8
4 ➔ 1
4 ➔ 2
4 ➔ 3
4 ➔ 4

And so on...

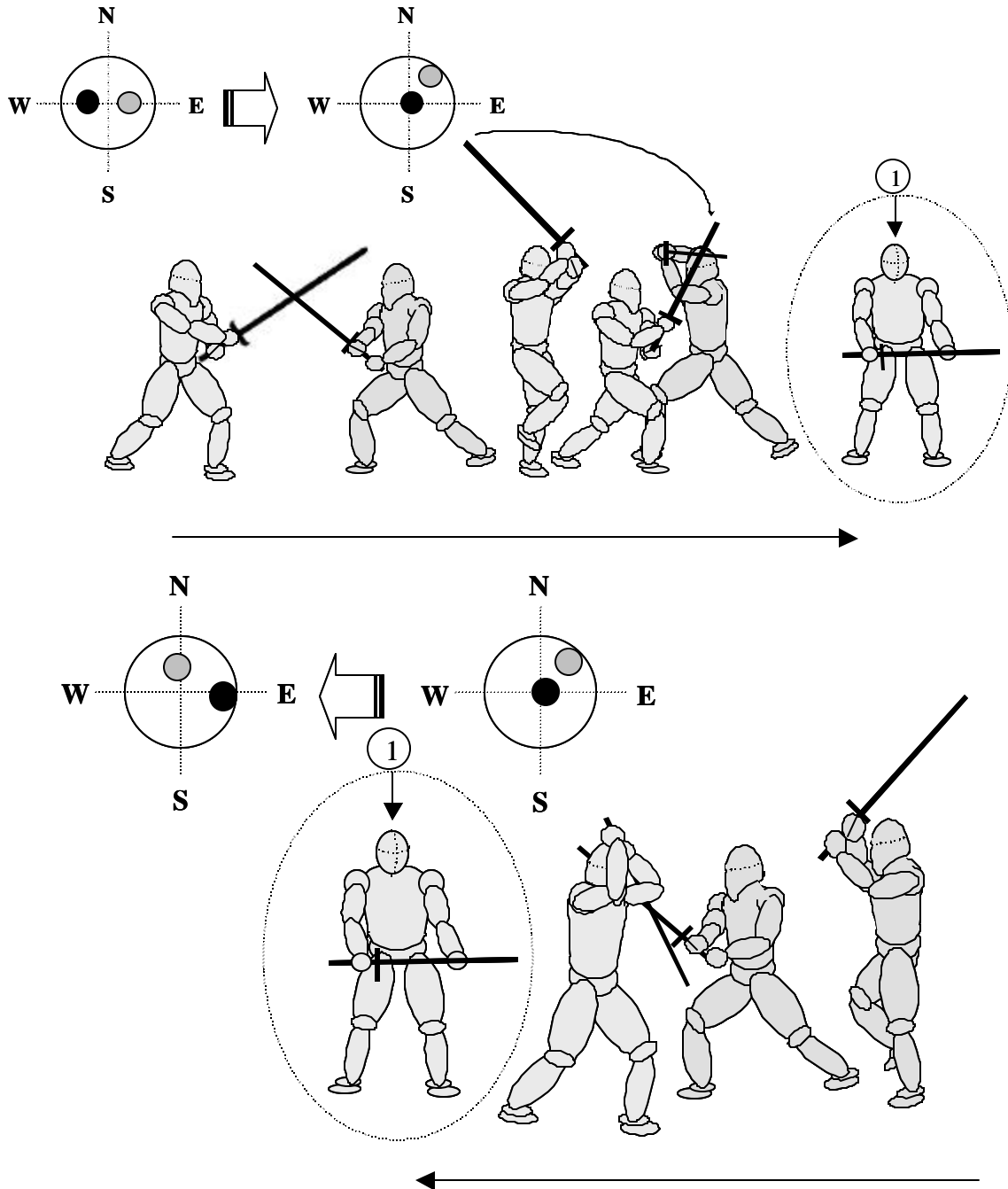
5.3: Phase 3 (reciprocal exchange offense → defense)



Phase 3 introduces the student to reciprocal strikes and wards in a structured manner. At the conclusion each reciprocal exchange, the student must "reset" to the middle guard position as a control mechanism to keep the speed down.

a: middle guard → downward vertical strike → guard of the window

b: middle guard → guard of the window → downward vertical strike

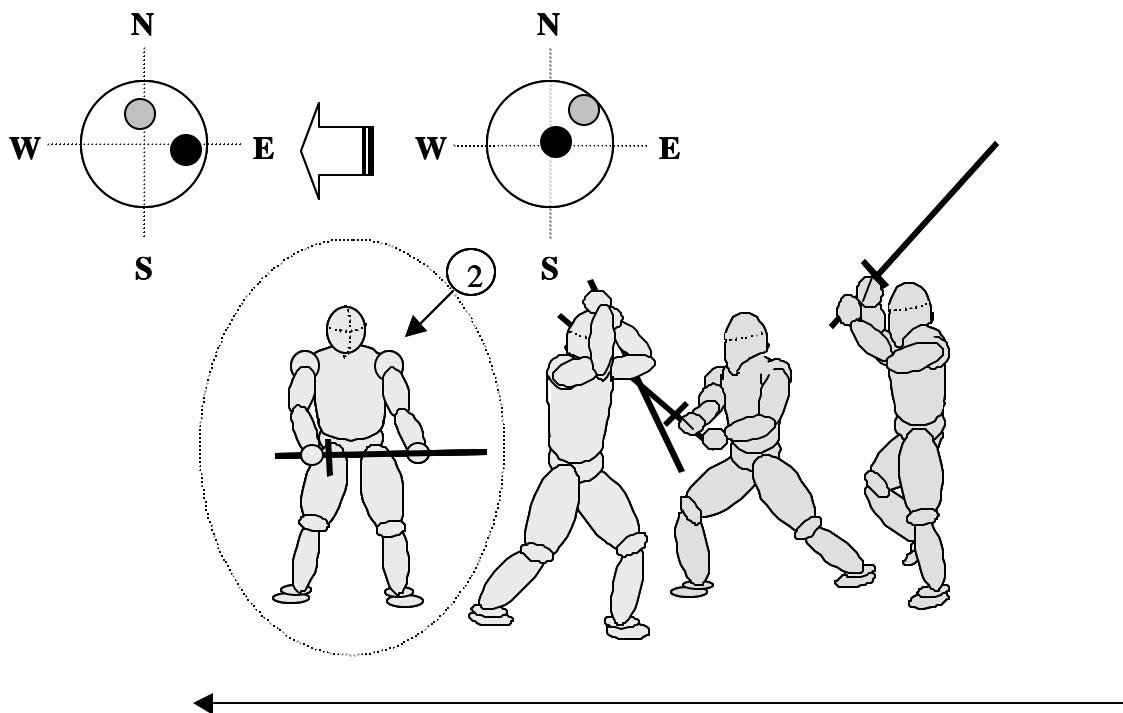
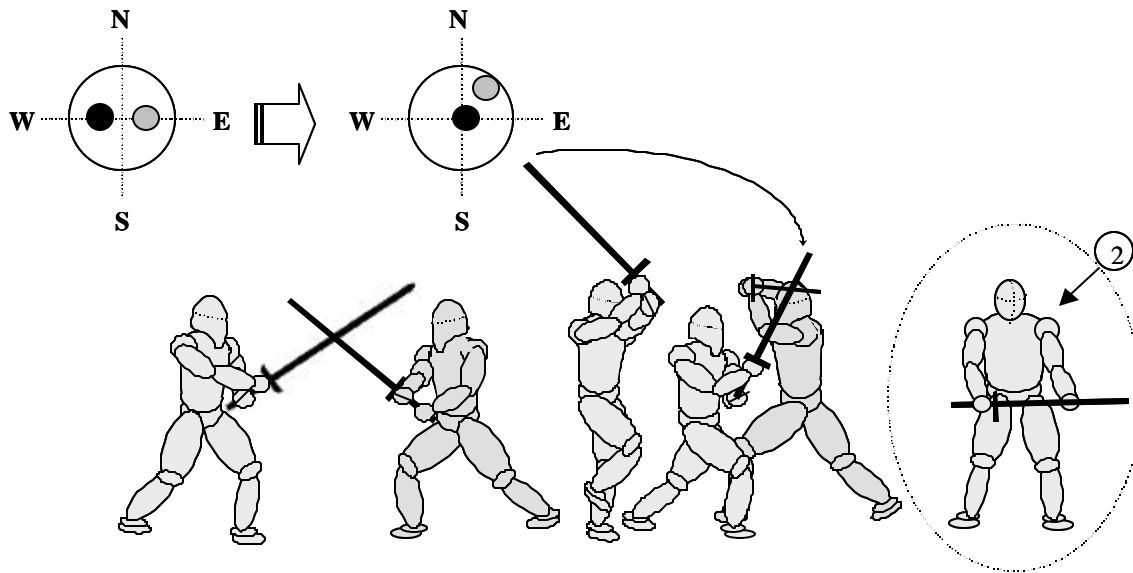


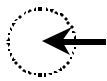


Continuing with the reciprocal exchange, the students now deliver the oblique downward strike and parry with the guard of the window.

a: middle guard → oblique downward strike → guard of the window

b: middle guard → guard of the window → oblique downward strike

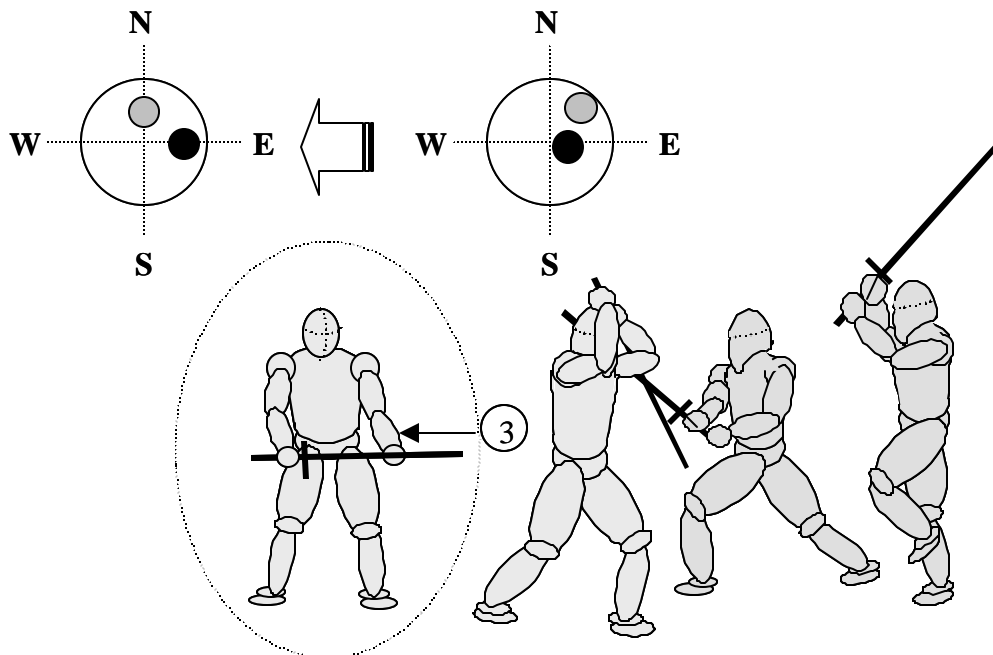
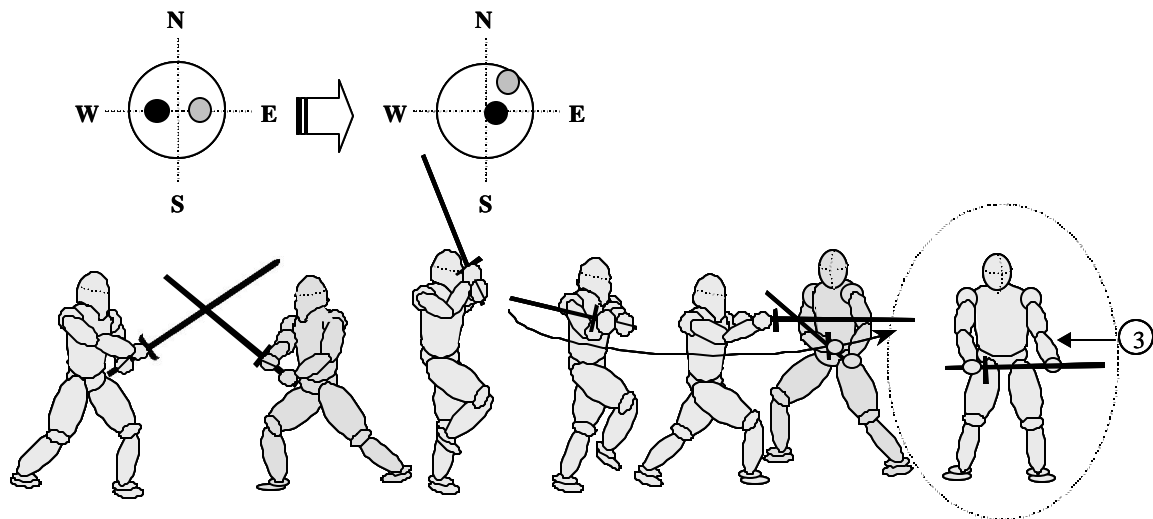




Continuing with the reciprocal exchange, the students now deliver the horizontal strike and parry with the middle guard/guard of the woman.

a: middle guard → horizontal strike → guard of the woman

b: middle guard → middle guard → horizontal strike

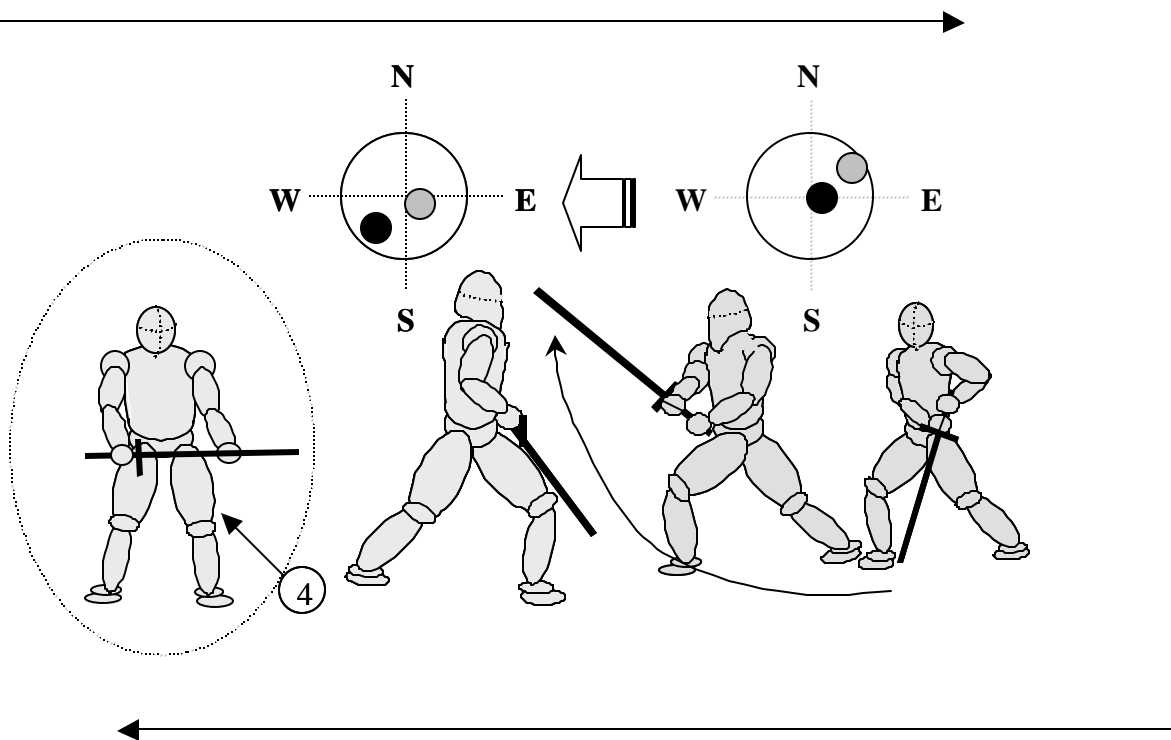
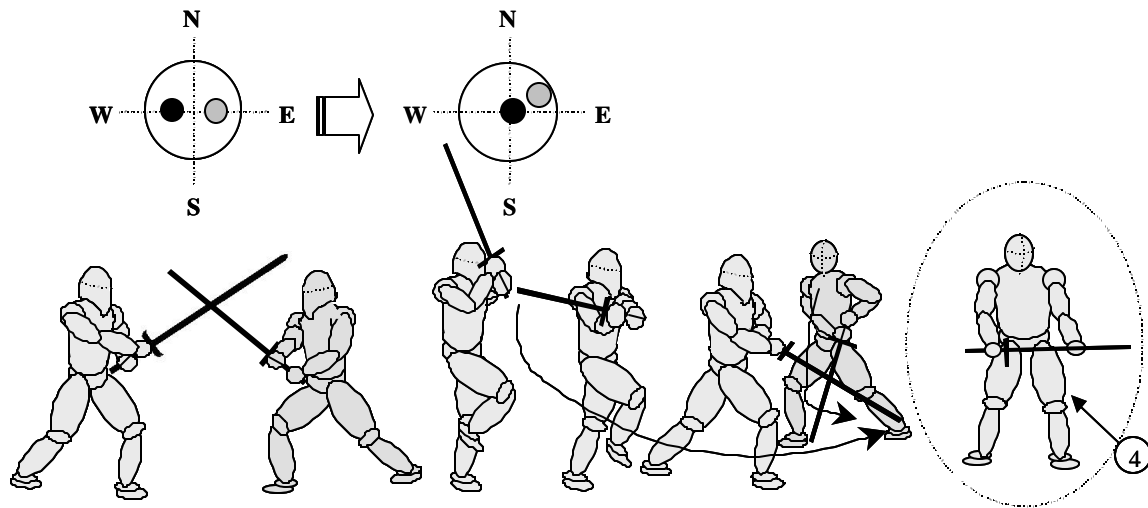




The students now deliver an oblique upward strike and parry with the tooth of the boar and/or evade.

a: middle guard → oblique upward strike → evade

b: middle guard → tooth of the boar → oblique upward strike false edge leading

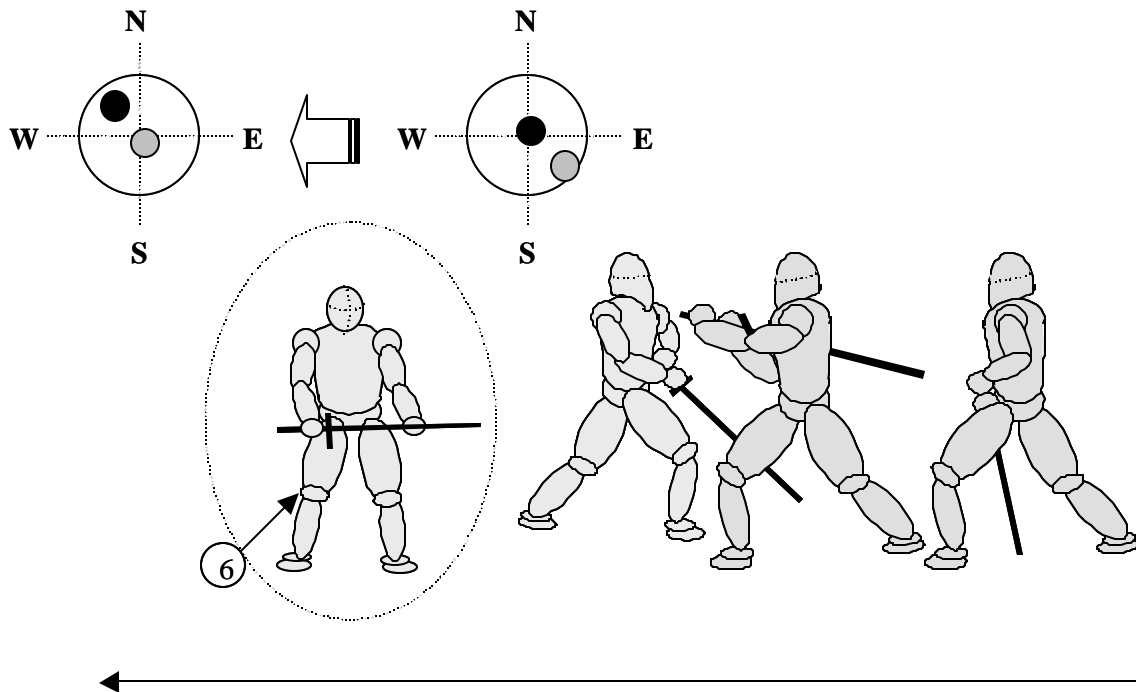
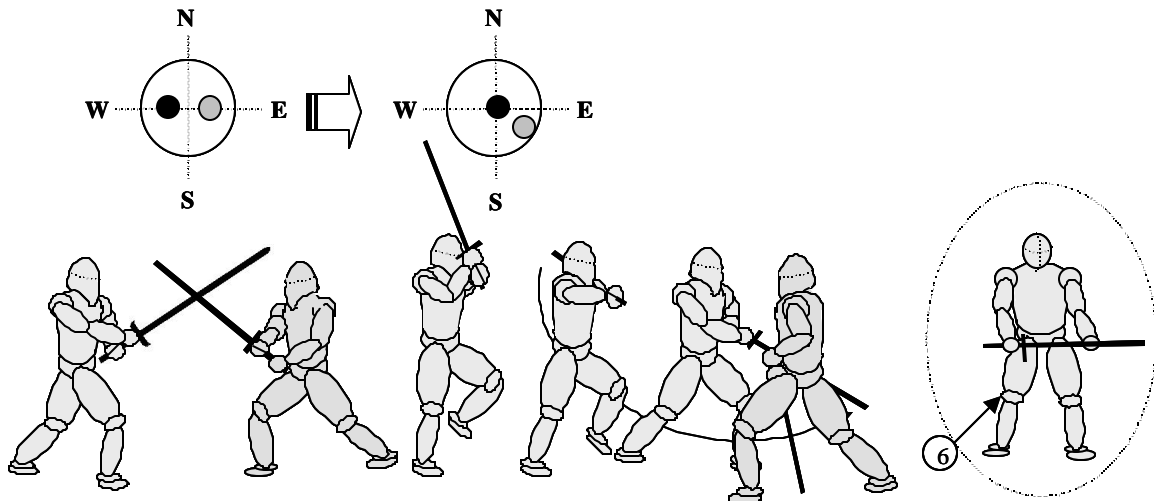


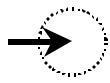


Continuing, the students now deliver an oblique strike from below from the right and parry with the tooth of the boar guard.

a: middle guard → oblique upward strike → evade

b: middle guard → guard of the iron door → pommel to the head

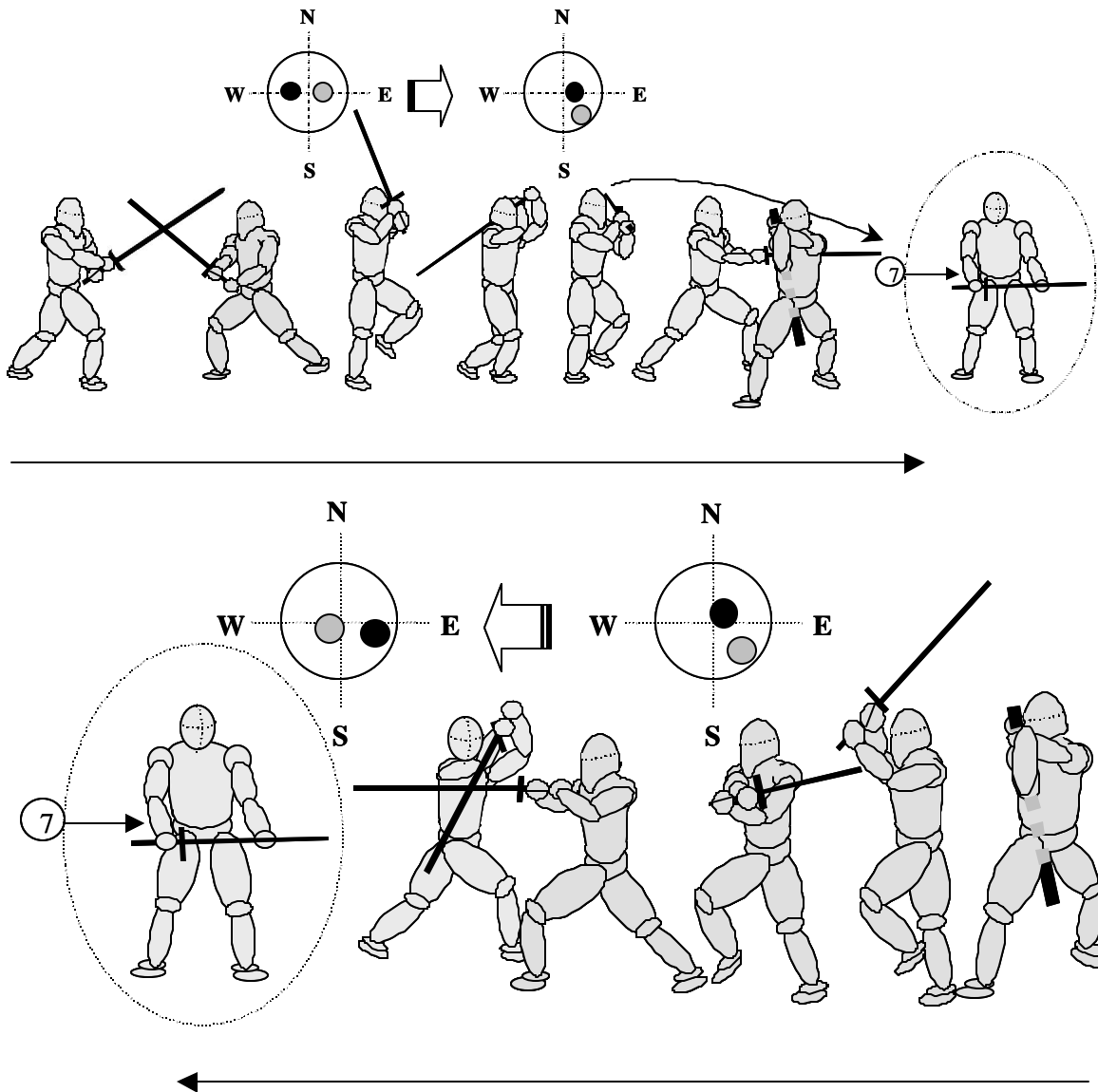




The students now deliver a horizontal strike from the left and parry with the guard of the iron door or guard of the woman.

a: middle guard → horizontal strike → guard of the woman

b: middle guard → guard of the woman → horizontal strike

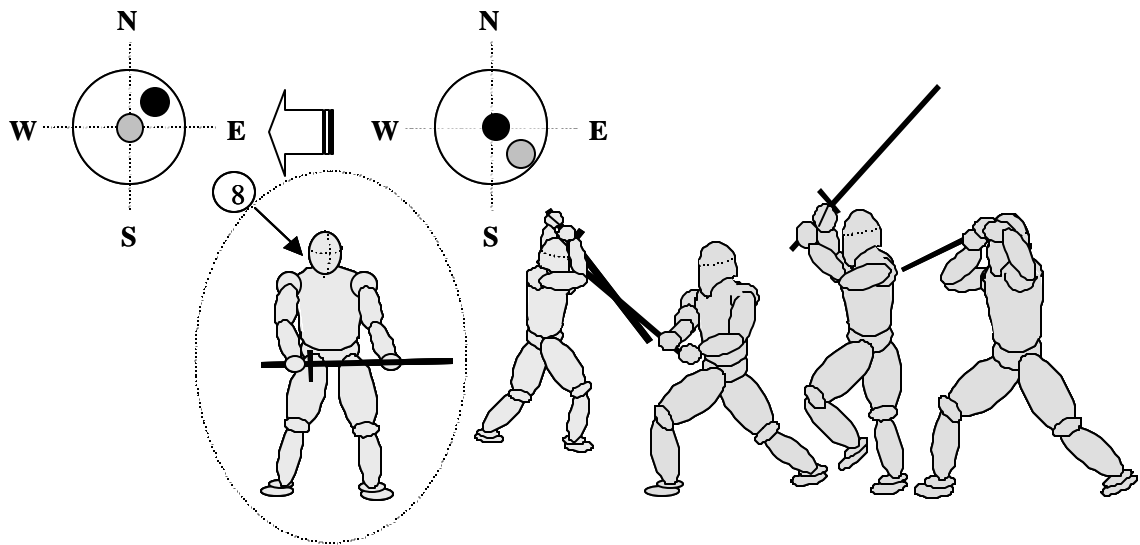
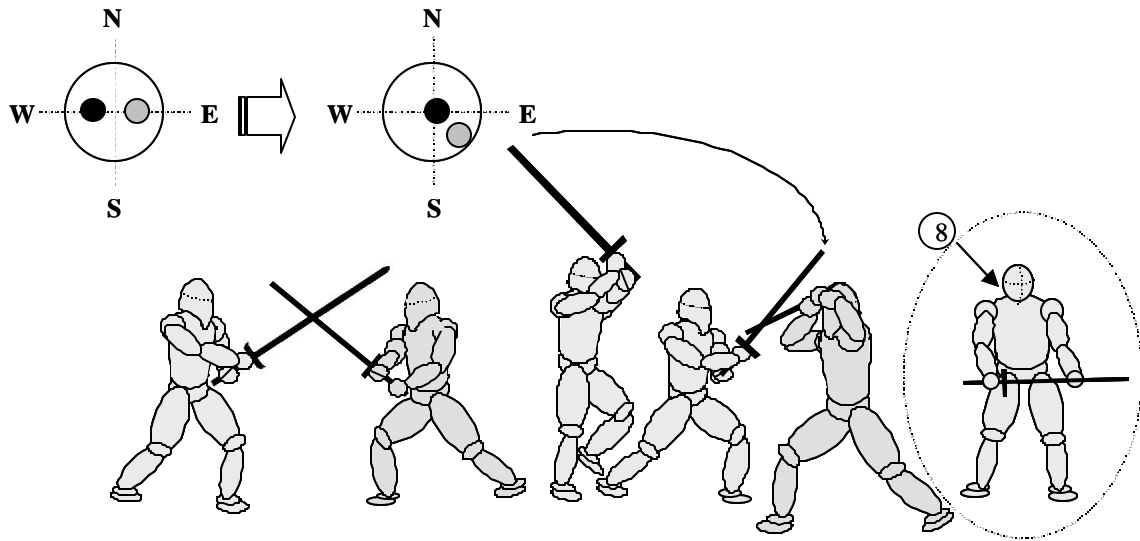




The students now deliver an oblique downward strike from the left and parry with the guard of the window.

a: middle guard → oblique downward strike → guard of the woman

b: middle guard → guard of the woman → oblique downward strike



In Conclusion

This concludes the recruit portion of the training program. The objectives achieved in this training program include:

- sword control and discipline
- understanding of when to deploy and the skill developed to deploy strikes, guards and wards
- demonstrable grappling and dagger techniques
- knowledge of the anatomy of the sword, including the physics behind it
- knowledge of the historical evolution of arms & armour
- knowledge of the historical sources of the forms presented in this portion
- experience with cutting with the sword

The student in order to achieve the rank of scholler, must challenge for the prize of scholler and submit to an oral examination to test the theory and history component of the recruit training, followed by testing the student's skill and technical capabilities developed during the recruit training.

Note from AEMMA

Dear Reader,

It is the desire of AEMMA to provide to the reader and student of the art, information that is valid and credible. Should you discover blatant or incorrect information in this book, we invite you to contact AEMMA by submitting the error, its location within the book and the correction suggested by sending AEMMA an email directed to info@aemma.org. We would appreciate the gesture.

AEMMA



Appendix A - Training Opening and Closure

Formal Training Opening

In order to instill into the student, the respect of the sword, and the culture surrounding training, every training session begins with the sword opening ritual and concludes with a sword closure ritual. The opening is AEMMA's own design and not sourced from any historical manuscript. Following the sword opening ritual, the training session begins with a series of warmup exercises, followed by regular training.

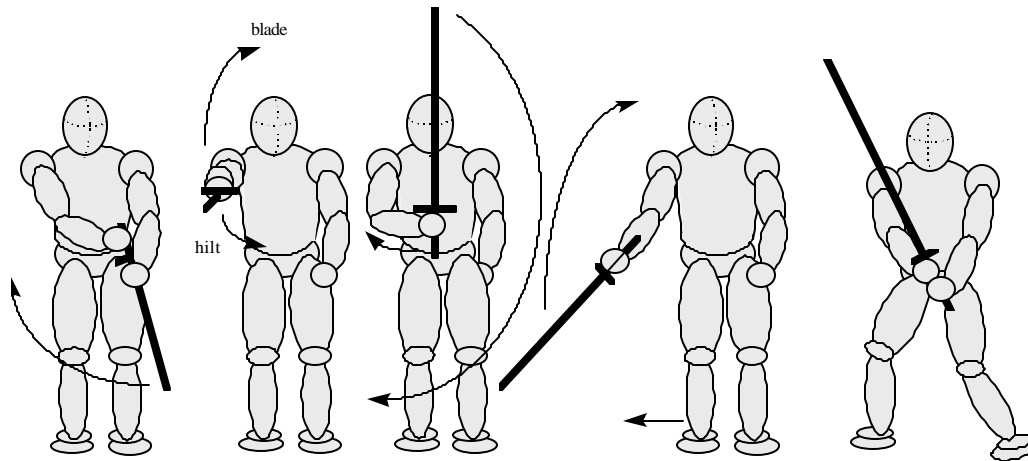


Figure 29 the formal training opening ritual

The figure above illustrates the opening forms. The ending of the opening is an offensive position, namely, the **middle guard** or *posta breve*, in other words, you are now “armed” and ready for combat. This opening form will place you into the combat mind set.

1. standing with feet together, sword in the scabbard position
2. grasp the grip with your right hand, and extend your sword arm straight out in front of your chest, with the blade point forward and nearly parallel to the floor, count to 5,000 in 1,000's (in silence), other arm straight down your side, slightly to the rear
3. bring the sword vertically again, hilt approximately mid-chest, count to 5,000 (in silence), other arm still straight down your side, slightly to the rear
4. slowly rotate the sword such that the point arcs towards the right and continues in that direction in a full arc until it is pointing towards the floor, at approximately 45 degrees off the floor, count to 5,000 in 1,000 increments (in silence), other arm still straight down your side, slightly to the rear
5. from that sword position, with a “snap”, take the sword back to a vertical position, tilted forward to about neck height of your imaginary opponent, grasp the hilt with both hands, arms extended outward and downward, feet shoulder width apart and knees slightly bent (this is a classic “*posta breve*” stance for offensive maneuvers), hold for a moment then relax

Formal Training Closure

1. standing with feet together, sword in the scabbard position
2. grasp the grip with your right hand, and extend your sword arm straight out in front of your chest, with the blade point forward and nearly parallel to the floor, count to 5,000 in 1,000 increments (in silence), other arm straight down your side, slightly to the rear
3. bring the sword vertically again, hilt approximately mid-chest, count to 5,000 in 1,000 increments (in silence), other arm still straight down your side, slightly to the rear
4. slowly rotate the sword such that the point arcs towards the left and continues in that direction in a full arc until it is pointing towards the floor, at approximately 45 degrees off the floor, count to 5,000 in 1,000 increments (in silence), other arm still straight down your side, slightly to the rear
5. in a great graceful arch overhead, return the sword to its "sleeved" position to signify the termination of the sword forms exercises and kneel with your right knee, however, **do not touch the floor/ground with your knee!!** (this is a sign of submission, which is not the "message" desired)
6. exit the circle as described in the initial position in the beginning of this manual

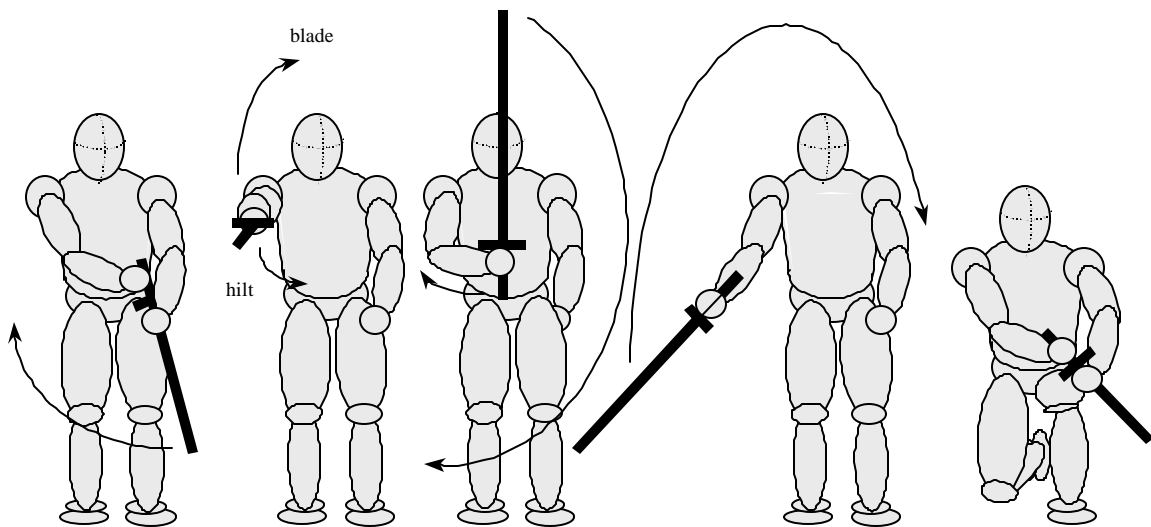


Figure 30 closure of sword forms

Appendix B - Suggested and Example Warm-ups Exercises

B.1 Initialization of the Practice

Part of any effort of an organization focused on the training of medieval martial arts is the culture that develops within any academy or school. At AEMMA, we begin each training session with the sword opening with everyone participating, regardless of rank or skill. The conclusion of training is conducted with the sword closure ritual. More information on these opening and closure can be found in **Appendix A**.

(Note: In order to establish a “connection” between the student with his/her sword, each student is issued a sword that the student will use throughout the practices and the term. Therefore, the student is responsible for the care and maintenance of the sword assigned. Some materials and supplies are available at the Academy for sword maintenance but students are encouraged to purchase their own materials.)

1. check the condition of the metal of the blade, if the blade has some oxidation (rust), use steel wool/sand paper to remove the oxidation
2. if the blade has lost any sheen due to oils/finger prints left on the blade, use steel wool to remove these stains (these will eventually cause the blade to rust)
3. wipe the blade vigorously with an oiled cloth
4. check the condition of the hilt, guard and pommel, and apply maintenance to these components as well (rubbing an oiled cloth on the pommel and guard, repairing the leather wrap of the grip)
5. the student will wipe the blade with the oiled cloth at the end of the practice before storing the sword

B.2 Initial Positioning and Exercise Start

(Note: The placement of the sword at the feet of the student reflects the “readiness” of the student to arm himself/herself in the event of a surprise attack. Historically, training schools, while in session, were occasionally attacked by their enemies, and therefore, the student must always be prepared for battle and remain close to the sword at all times during practice)

1. the students, armed with his/her sword are positioned into a circle, spaced by at least an arm with sword extended
2. the swords are drawn and placed at their feet, at approximately 10 o'clock, hilt nearest the feet, blade point outwards
3. at the end of the opening, everyone leaves the circle, split into two lines, walking the perimeter of this circle (no one crosses the circle) and everyone meets at the bottom (where ever the bottom is defined in the class)

Note: The student must recognize that the training is a serious venture, and that ultimately, training with weapons invites potential injury. Therefore, the student must demonstrate maturity and discipline at all times during the training session.

B.3 Hand/wrist exercises

Exercise 1: Finger-hand flexibility - “finger whip”

1. grasp the thumb/finger with the opposing hand, and “whip” the finger, so that the wave travels down to the elbow
2. repeat for each finger
3. repeat for each hand, **3 times per hand**
4. once both hands are completed, shake the hands with arms bent at the elbows, and hands out in front (shake vertically and horizontally)

Exercise 2: Hand-wrist flexibility - “wrist twist”

1. right arm bent at the elbow against the side, forearm straight up with hand fully extended and rotated at the wrist so that the side of the fifth finger is vertical, and near the face
2. grasp the base of the thumb with the other hand, and force wrist further rotation with this hand while the forearm remains vertical
3. with the other hand, pull the forearm down forward until the forearm is parallel with the floor (at this point, the forearm should be 90 degrees with respect to the upper arm, palm facing to the right if the right hand is undergoing this exercise)
4. from the position in which the palm is facing right and away from you, rotate the hand/wrist so the thumb is point downwards again, but the palm facing to the right, and grasp the base of the fifth finger
5. pull the hand (bent at the wrist) up towards your chin, all the while forcing the rotation of the hand in the direction of the face
6. once this is completed, with the arms bent at the elbow, forearms forward, shake the hands in a circular motion, clockwise up to 6 times, then counter-clockwise for the same number
7. repeat for the other arm/hand combination, **3 times per hand**
8. repeat hand/wrist shakedown again after step #7

Exercise 3: Hand strength enhancement - “5-finger spread”

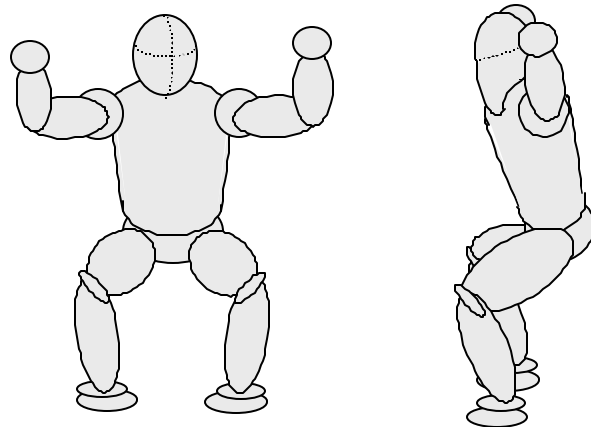
(Note: This exercise and the following hand-oriented exercise focuses on the development and enhancement of grip strength, critical in improved sword control and execution of the forms)

1. position your forearms upwards, bent at the elbow, lower arm straight out from the shoulder
2. hyper-extend your fingers and thumb and then close your hand quickly
3. repeat the extension and closure for up to **50 times**

Note: For this and the next hand exercises, position yourself into a “saddle-mount” stance to combine the hand exercises with leg strengthening exercise. To achieve this position, feet together, then rotating on your heel, toes right and left, rotate on the ball, heels right and left, rotate on heel, toes forward. Then squat. See illustration below.

Exercise 4: Hand strength enhancement - "finger clap"

1. position your forearms upwards, bent at the elbow, lower arm straight out from the shoulder
2. straighten your fingers, have the fingers together, thumb pressed against the side of your index finger, all pointing upwards
3. without doing anything with your thumb, bending your fingers, fold against the palm of your hand
4. re-extend the fingers as in step #2 and repeat for up to **50 times**



Side view

Figure 31: saddle-mount leg exercise**B.4 Head/neck exercises****Exercise 1: Head-neck flexibility - "neck stretch"**

1. with your hands resting on your hips, position the head forward and count to 6,000 in 1,000 increments
2. position the head to the left, tilting the neck and count to 6,000 in 1,000 increments
3. position the head to the right, tilting the neck and count to 6,000 in 1,000 increments
4. position the head to the rear, tilting the neck and count to 6,000 in 1,000 increments
5. repeat **3 - 6 sets**

Exercise 2: Neck strengthening - "neck isometric" - optional

(Note: This exercise is important in the strengthening of the neck muscles and tendons in order to easily support the weight of a helmet. This exercise should be continued off-practice by the student to achieve the desired results)

1. position your head and neck into the "neutral" position (this is where the neck and back are relatively straight, chin somewhat tucked in)
2. with your left hand, place the hand on the left side of your head and push hard with your hand, and at the same time, resist the pressure with your neck muscles to maintain a vertical head-neck position - count to 10,000 in 1,000 increments
3. relax, and then place your right hand on the right side of your head, and repeat as in #2
4. relax, place both hands on your forehead and push hard - count to 10,000 in 1,000 increments
5. relax, clasp your hands behind your head at the base of your head, and pull forward, your neck and head maintaining its vertical position - count to 10,000 in 1,000 increments
6. relax, repeat the above up to **3 times**

B.5 Upper body exercises

Exercise 1: Upper torso flexibility - "torso twist"

(Note: Flexibility in the torso is critical in combat. Swinging the sword, and trying to obtain the most advantageous offensive positions will often require super extensions of the torso)

1. with your left hand in a fist, elbows bent, fist in front of your chest, forearms parallel to the floor, grasp the fist with your right hand and rotate your torso to the extreme left
2. use your right hand to force the rotation to its maximum
3. repeat from left to right, making a fist with your right hand, grasping it with your left hand, and rotate your torso from left to right
4. use your left hand to force the rotation to its maximum
5. **repeat 24 times per side**

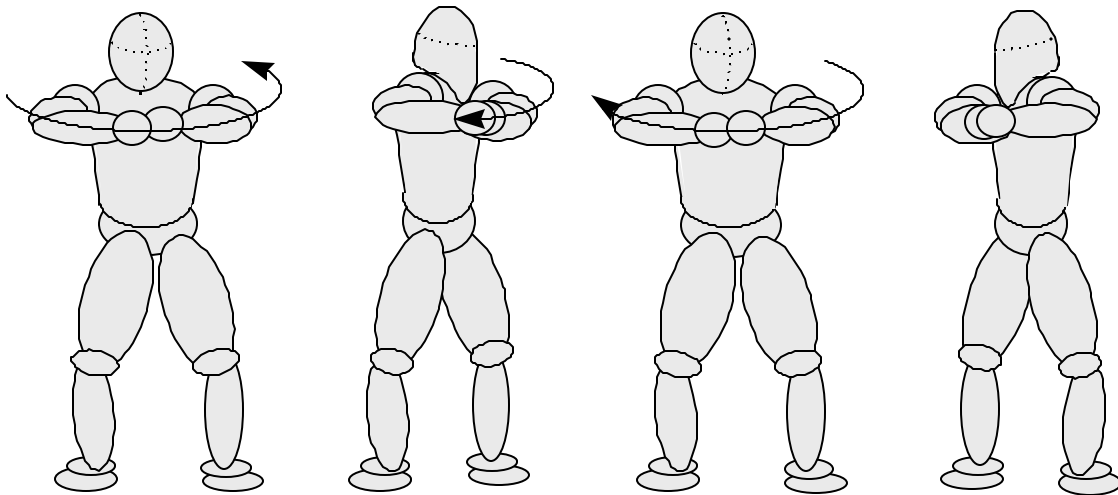


Figure 32 torso twist

Exercise 2: Shoulder flexibility - "windmill"

(Note: The purpose of this exercise is to promote the flexibility and strength in the shoulder area. Full, unrestricted shoulder movement is necessary in the ability to execute the various offensive and defensive movements with the sword)

1. extend your arms straight out each side of the body, and clench your hands into a fist
2. starting with small clockwise circular movements of your arms, continue the circular motions gradually expanding the circular motions until the maximum circular motions are attained
3. reverse the direction at the maximum circular motion, and repeat, all the while the circular motions gradually become smaller
4. repeat #2 but start in the counter-clockwise direction, followed by #3
5. **repeat this 6 - 8 times**

Exercise 3: Shoulder/elbow flexibility - “tarzan”

(Note: This exercise continues with promoting flexibility and strength in the upper body. These forms enhance the student’s ability to control the sword with ease and duration)

1. keeping your arms up and extended straight outwards from each side of the body, clench your hands into a fist
2. bend at the elbows, bringing the fists close together in front of your chest
3. extend your arms again to the outstretched position
4. **repeat this 12 times** at a frequency of about 1 movement/second
5. **repeat this again, 12 times** at double the frequency

Exercise 4: Balance and strength - “partner push”

(Note: This exercise will promote the ability to handle a “load” on the arms and legs by using opposing force from a partner. This exercise will enable one to maintain good balance and posture during offensive and defensive movements in battle)

1. grasp your partner’s hands, bend your right knee, left leg extended relatively straight backwards, back straight but angled slightly off vertical in the direction of your partner (your partner is doing the same, but opposite limbs)
2. now push against your partner’s hands, with your legs and arms in the attempt to knock your partner off balance (count to 6,000 in 1,000 increments)
3. your partner will now do the same to you
4. when switching, shift to the opposite legs
5. **repeat 6 - 8 times**

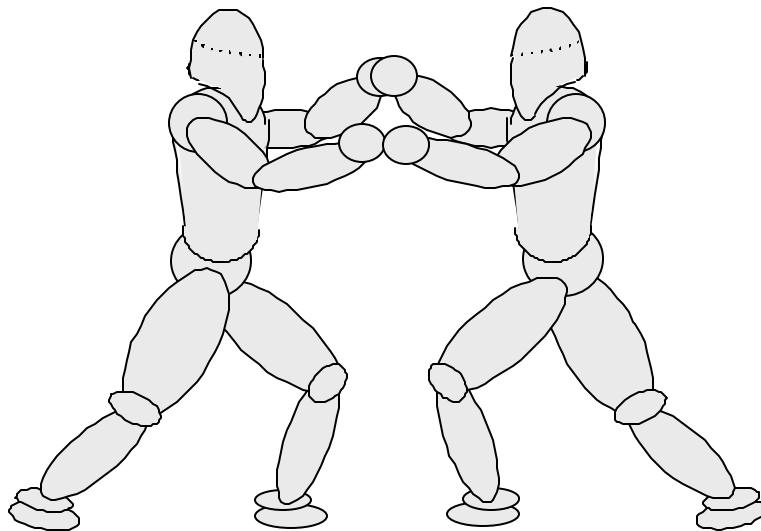


Figure 33 partner push exercise

B.6 Lower body exercises

Exercise 1: Knee/hip flexibility

(Note: Much of successful swordsmanship is good footwork. This requires not only strength in the legs, but a high degree of flexibility. This exercise is similar to what would be considered a warm up for running/jogging)

1. bend your right leg at the knee, and extend your left leg outward
2. drop down on your bent leg, and force the extension of your left leg
3. raise yourself up and then bend your left leg at the knee, and repeat the above on your opposite leg
4. do not use your hands for balance by resting it on the bent knee, the hands/arms must hang freely down which forces you balance properly
5. **repeat 6 times** per leg

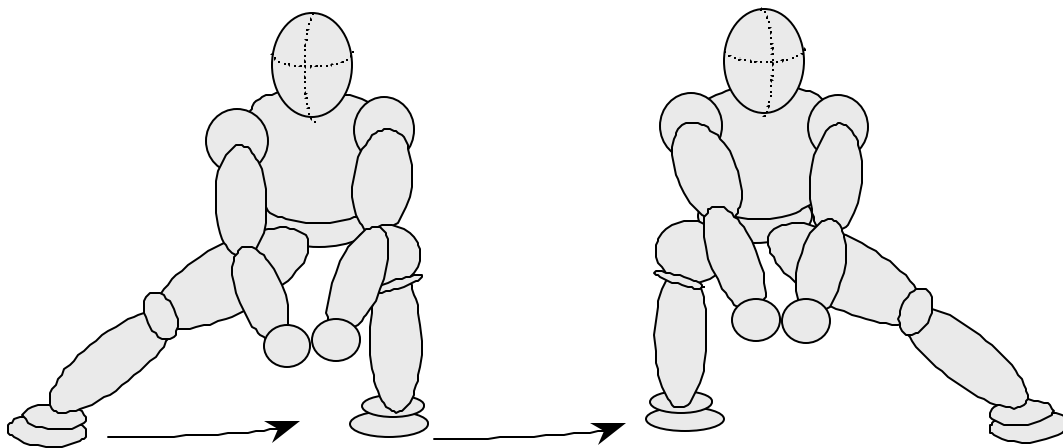


Figure 34 knee/hip flexibility exercise

It is encouraged to perform these or alternative warm-up exercises and that students should stretch all muscles from the toes to the neck. As a precaution, students that are about to begin their training, should consult with their family physician to ensure that they have no physical issues which may result in injury should it not be checked.

The warm-ups frequently vary from practice to practice and therefore, these suggested exercises, including those that follow this section may not necessarily be incorporated into a regular practice.

B.7 Sword-assisted exercises

Exercise 1: Grip and gravity-assist wrist rotation

(Note: In order to promote a firm but flexible grip of the hilt, this exercise is designed to increase the flexibility of the wrist, and place a load on the grip of the hand)

1. feet approximately shoulder width apart, with the right arm extended outwards from the side, and bent upward and forward at the elbow at approx. 45 degrees to the floor, hand grasping the hilt and sword starting position, pointing upwards at the same angle, swing the sword downwards and continue until the blade is approximately parallel to the floor and the sword pointing backwards
2. use the momentum obtained by the sword to facilitate the swinging motion, you will trace the bottom “half” of a circle with the tip of the sword
3. return the sword, swinging it forward from this position, until it reaches the starting position (45 degrees from the floor, pointing upwards and forward)
4. “toss” the sword from your right hand to your left hand, and repeat with your left hand
5. **repeat 12 - 16 times per side**

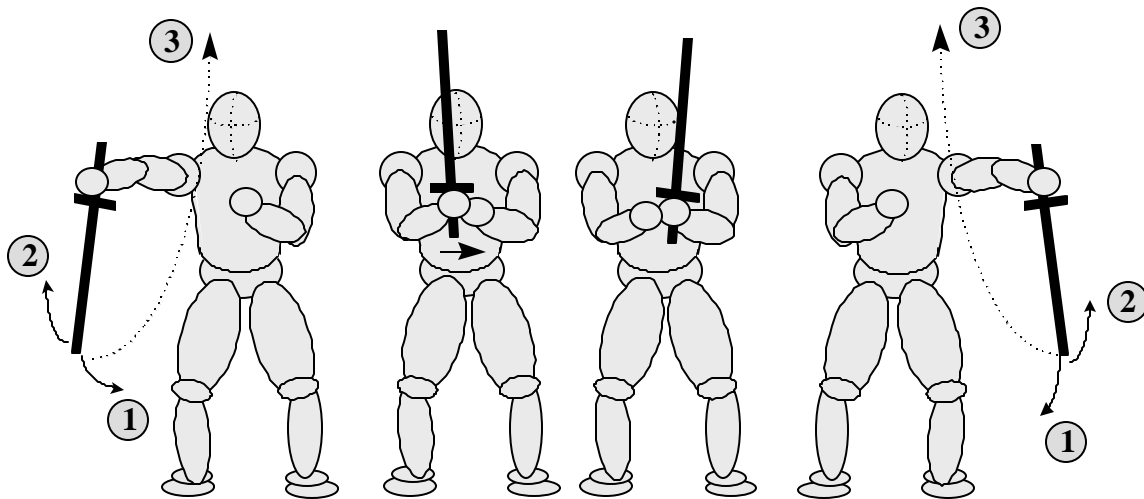


Figure 35 sword-assisted wrist rotation

***Note:** This exercise can be executed with variations, for example, one can simply swing the sword back and forth on the same hand and wrist for up to 6 times, and then transfer the sword to the other hand and repeat. A variation is to swing it towards the rear, and swing it forward and transfer immediately to the other hand and repeat. The quick switching of the hand improves ones confidence in handling the sword.*

These exercises begin with the extremity of the arm, focusing on the grip and wrist. The following move “up” the arm to focus on the lower arm, elbow and shoulder.

Exercise 2: Grip and anti-gravity wrist rotation

(Note: continuing with the focus on grip and wrist strength and flexibility, this exercise is similar to the previous one, except that the upper half of the circle is traced with the tip of the sword.)

1. feet approximately shoulder width apart, with the right arm extended straight outwards from the side, hand gripping the hilt and sword starting in a vertical position, pointing upwards with the edge pointing forward, begin tracing the circle forward until the sword is pointing directly forward, parallel to the floor
2. from this position, begin tracing a complete arc of the upper half of the circle towards the rear until the sword is parallel to the floor, pointing directly backwards
3. **repeat 12 - 16 times per side**
4. “toss” the sword from your right to your left hand and repeat

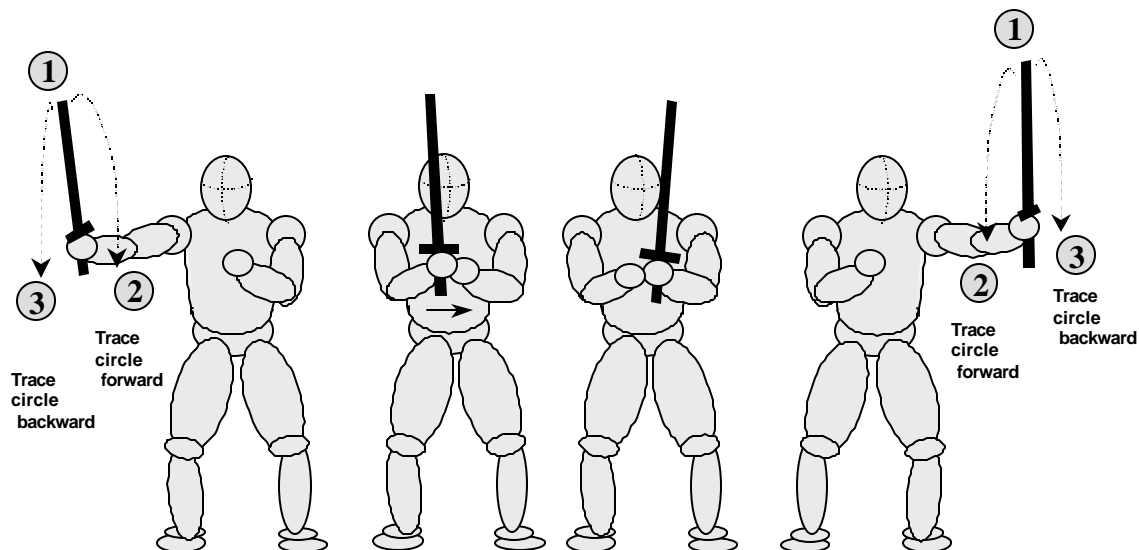


Figure 36 sword-assisted anti-gravity wrist rotation

***Note:** The focus of this exercise is to increase the “stamina” of the arms by keeping the arms extended outwards and elevated during the entire exercise on that arm. It is up to the instructor to prolong this exercise should the students appear capable of performing this with ease.*

One of the purposes of “tossing” the sword from one hand to the other when switching sides, is to raise the level of comfort with sword handling. The switching from one hand to the other should be smooth and crisp.

Exercise 3: Forearm & elbow focus

(Note: Now shifting the focus to the forearm and elbow for strength and flexibility, this exercise is best done with a steel sword.)

1. feet approximately shoulder width apart, with the right arm extended straight outwards from the side, hand gripping the hilt and sword starting in a horizontal position, pointing straight backwards
2. ensuring that the upper arm remains parallel to the floor, using only the elbow and forearm, raise the sword (maintaining its parallel orientation) and “curl” the forearm until it is perpendicular to the floor and the sword remains parallel to the floor pointing directly
3. return the forearm to its starting position, horizontal to the floor
4. **repeat 12 - 16 times per side**
5. “toss” the sword from your right hand to your left hand and repeat

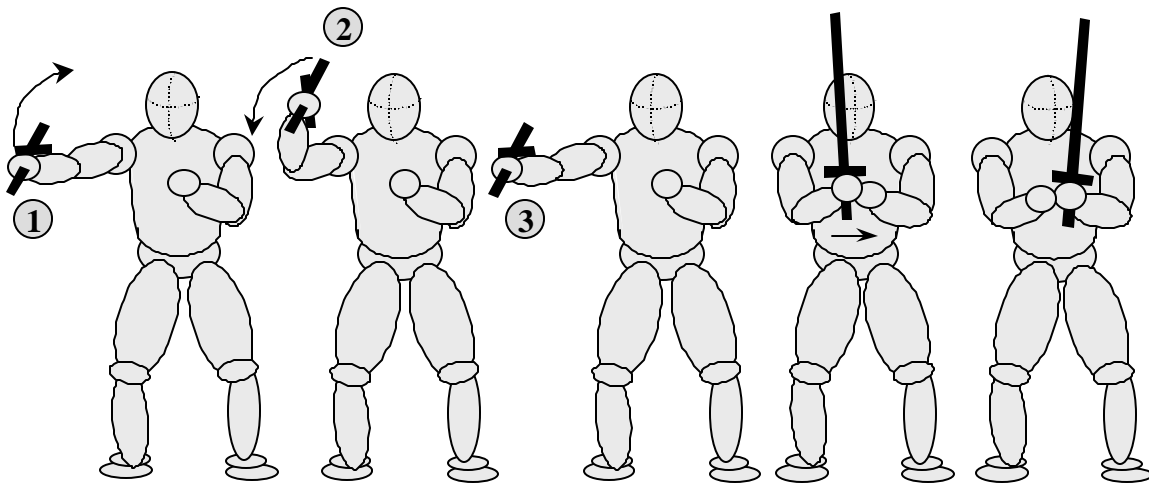


Figure 37 Forearm & elbow focus

***Note:** When conducting this exercise, the sword will have a tendency to swing inwards and it is important that the backward orientation and parallel orientation to the floor remain constant throughout this training exercise.*

***Caution:** when bringing the forearm to a vertical position, given the momentum of the forearm in combination with a sword will tend to continue towards the side of your head.*

Exercise 4: Shoulder and grip focus

(Note: Continuing with moving up the arm, this exercise will focus on shoulder strength and flexibility development. When conducting this exercise, care must be taken not to strike students next to you.)

1. feet approximately shoulder width apart, with the right arm extended straight outwards from the side, hand gripping the hilt and sword starting in a horizontal position, pointing straight forward
2. while maintaining your arms outstretched position, begin tracing circles with your hand, while the sword remains parallel to the floor pointing forward and continue with this for 8 revolutions
3. reverse the direction of the sword, so that it is now pointing directly backwards, and trace 8 more circles, maintaining the parallel orientation of the sword with the floor
4. continuing with the arm outstretched, sword pointing backward, draw a vertical line upward and downwards and repeat this 8 times

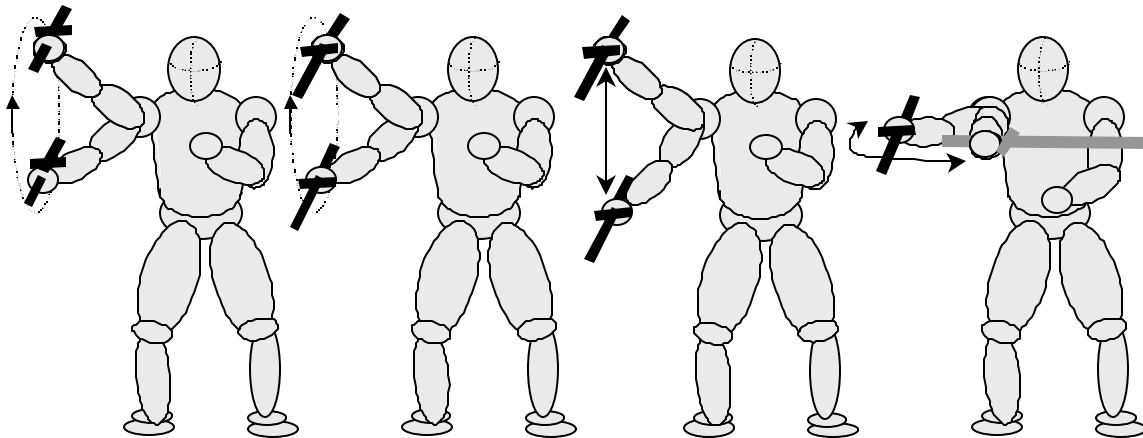


Figure 38 Shoulder & grip focus

5. continuing with the arm outstretched, trace a line parallel to the floor, sword still pointing backwards, arm parallel to the floor, trace it forward until the arm is extending straight outwards forward, and then trace the line all the way to the rear and repeat 8 times
6. repeat steps #4 and #5 with the sword pointing forward
7. "toss" the sword from your right to your left hand and repeat
8. **repeat 2 - 8 times per side**

Exercise 5: Shoulder stamina

(Note: This exercise focuses entirely on the strength and stamina of the shoulder muscles as well as the upper arm and forearm muscles.)

1. feet approximately shoulder width apart, with the right arm extended straight outwards from the side, hand gripping the hilt and sword starting in a horizontal position, extending straight out the outstretched arm
2. while maintaining this position, begin counting to 10, increase count over time
3. while keeping the arm outstretched, reposition the extended arm so that it extends directly forward from your chest
4. while maintaining the orientation of the sword, pointing directly forward, count to 50
5. while maintaining the arm extension, raise the arm straight upwards, with the sword positioned vertically with the point pointing towards the ceiling, count to 50

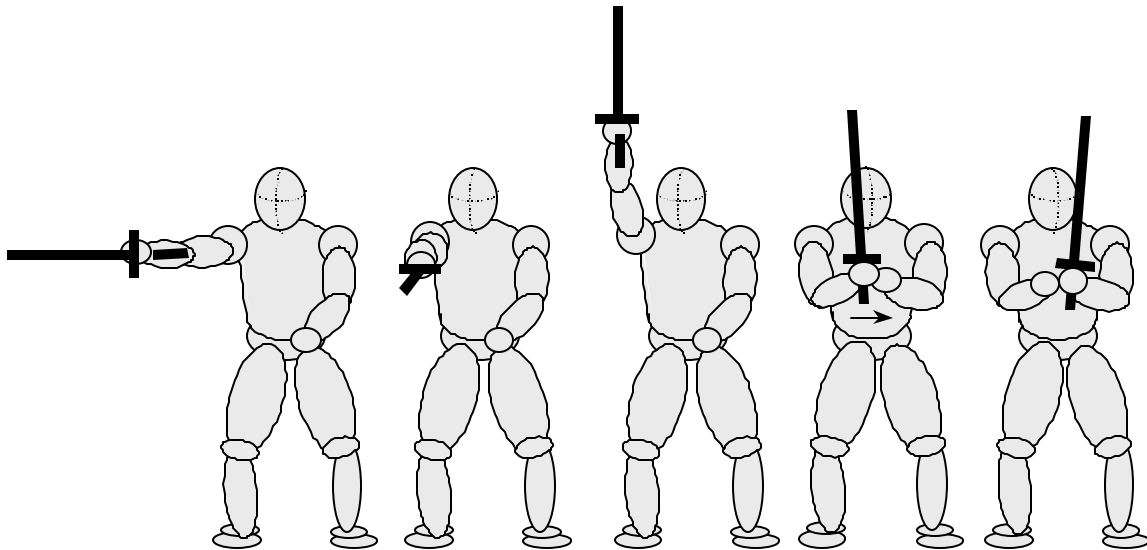


Figure 39 Shoulder stamina

6. “toss” the sword from your right to your left hand and repeat
7. **repeat 2 - 8 times per side**

Exercise 6: Grip and shoulder exercise - "figure 8"

(Note: This exercise must be conducted with caution. The sword is swung over-head and possibility of injury to the student or others nearby exist. This exercise is designed to enhance the control of the sword, strengthen the grip, enhance the flexibility of the wrist and shoulders)

1. feet approximately shoulder width apart, with the right arm extended outwards from the side, and bent upward and forward at the elbow at approx. 45 degrees to the floor, hand grasping the hilt and sword starting position, pointing upwards at the same angle, swing the sword forward and continue the same direction overhead from the rear (keep the "plane" of the circle as vertical as possible, close to the body)
2. when the sword has reached its starting position, transfer the sword to the other hand smoothly and repeat on the other side of the body (from the front, it will look like you are carving out a squat infinity sign " ∞ " or a flattened figure "8" on its side)
3. the circular movements and transfer of the sword from hand to hand must be conducted in a smooth and fluid manner
4. **repeat 12 times per side**

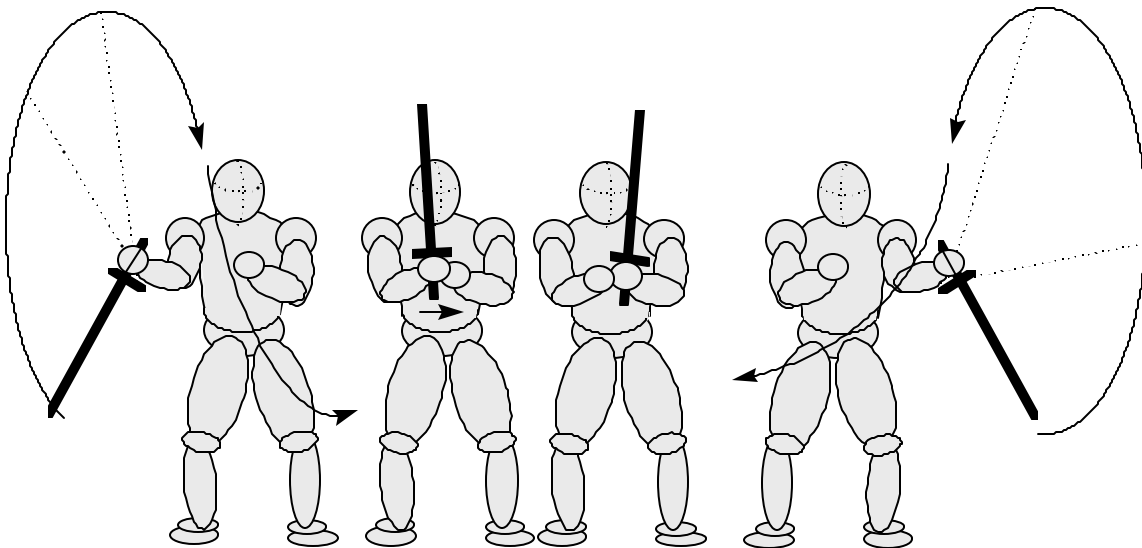


Figure 40 figure "8" sword exercise

Exercise 7: Upper torso flexibility - "sword-assisted twist"

(Note: When grasping the blade with your hand, your thumb will be placed on one side of the blade, and fingers, bent on the other side of the blade. The objective of this hold, is that one should be able to slide another sword down the blade which is grasped by the hand, without striking the hand. This is a critical maneuver in future defensive movements. This manner of grasping the blade must become internalized and natural)

1. from the *posta breve serpentina*, (guard of the short serpent) and with your right hand on the hilt, grasp the blade with your left hand¹⁸ and rotate your torso to the right
2. while you are rotating to the right, drop your hilt end of the sword downwards and raise the point of the blade upwards, so that the final position of the sword is reached in that the hilt is pointing downward, and the point pointing upward
3. begin to rotate the torso in the opposite direction, and at the same time, rotate the sword so that it will point is downward at the end of the rotation on the left side
4. **repeat 24 times** per side

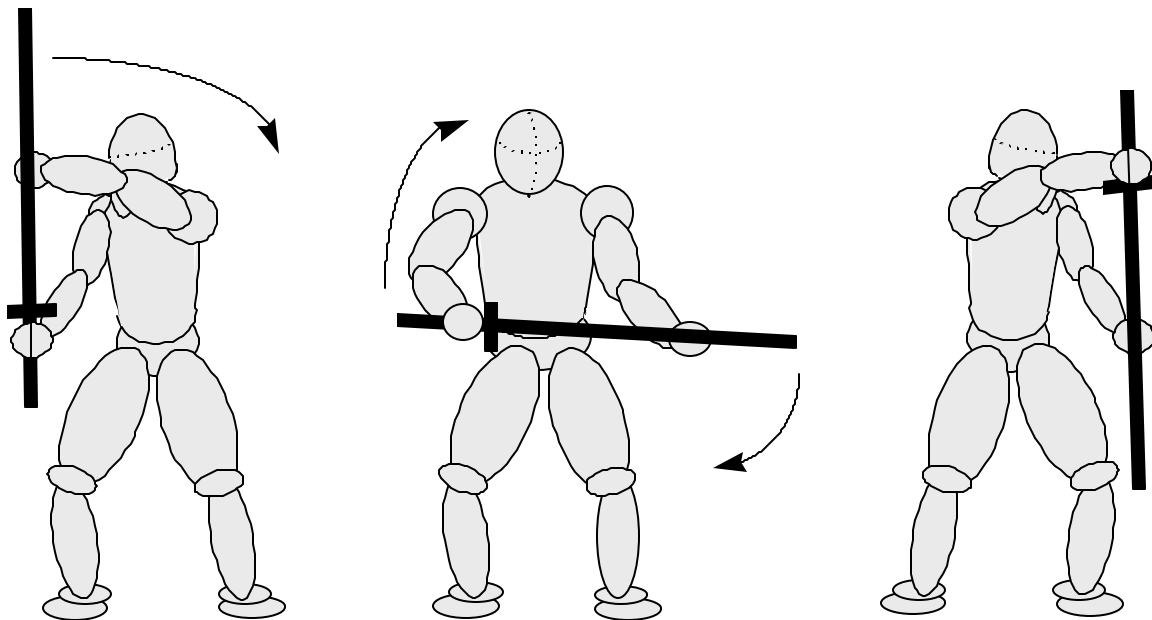


Figure 41 sword-assisted torso twist

Note: The figure above illustrates the three positions of this exercise. The torso rotates from left to right and the momentum of the sword is used to force hyper-extension of the back during the rotation. This forms the basic movement in the future half-sword techniques.

Exercise 8: Sword control - “the baton” (optional)

(Note: This exercise will enhance your control and movement of a rapidly moving sword. The objective is to repeatedly swing the sword in great arcs over and over again, and to preserve the form and precision of the execution of this exercise form.)

1. beginning with the *posta di coda lunga e distesa* (guard of the long and stretched out tail) from a relatively “relaxed” position, with sword in the “scabbard” on your left side, grasp the grip with your right hand with the palm facing upward and towards the left
2. you must deliver the horizontal strike with all of the power of completing the delivery
3. just short of striking the hanging pipe, stop the blade immediately
4. **repeat 12 - 24 times**
5. variations can be introduced including the *sgualebrato* and *fendente* (a horizontal pipe must be in place to allow for practicing stopping the *fendente*)

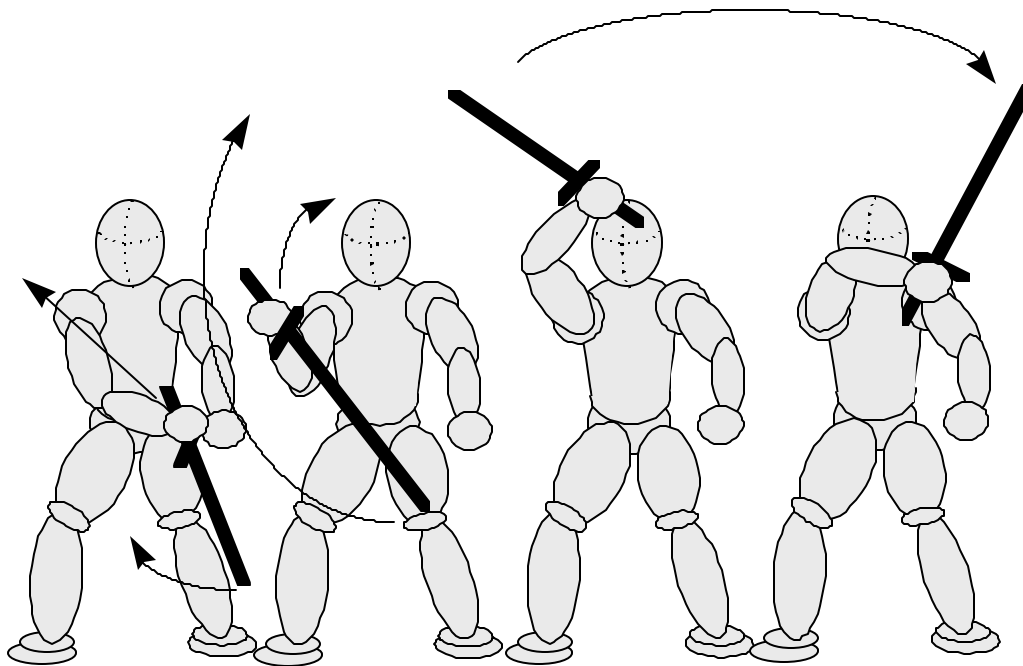


Figure 42 sword control - the “baton”

Note: It is not known if this exercise was part of the medieval training repertoire, however, the Academy is continuously researching both exercise forms and sword forms and introducing these forms into this document. It was determined that this particular exercise form, promoted the necessary qualities that makes one efficient and effective with the use of the sword.

Appendix C - Augmenting Training



Training in European medieval martial arts consists of far more than training with a sword. It is essential that one include training that enhances one's physical stamina, strength and endurance. The medieval martial arts training is a large component of overall training, however, it is important to include other physical training to facilitate and enhance the ability to withstand competition and tournament situations. It is clear that there are three main weapons in any arsenal: a) endurance, b) skill and c) cunning. Augmentation of this martial arts training will address the first of the arsenal. It is important enough that Giacomo DiGrassi stated :

“Therefore let every man that is desirous to practice this Art, endeavor himself to get strength and agility of body, assuring himself, that judgment without this activity and force, avails little or nothing.”

There are two fundamentally different types of endurance: muscular and cardiovascular. Muscular endurance is the ability of muscle to engage a large number of fibres during sword training such that you can do numerous drills and follow without taking long breaks for recovery. For example, while doing a series of phase 3 drills, you fatigue your arms and legs that if you want to get through an entire repeating set you need to be able to bring many additional fibres into play. Aerobic endurance is the ability of the heart, lungs and circulatory system to deliver oxygen to the muscles to fuel further drills engagement.

Aerobic Endurance

In order to enhance one's cardiovascular fitness, a regimen of running programs is required. This does not mean that one needs to be able to run marathons. The running is structured to focus on what is needed to endure long periods of time with full armour, in tournament competition or demonstration events. The thing to remember when training is intensity. The general rule of thumb is the harder you train/work, the more results you will see. The training program suggested below may not work for everyone and may need to be altered to suit your particular needs.

The following is a suggested running program. (*Note: before engaging in any strenuous physical exercise, see a doctor if you have doubts on what your heart can take. A full-blown physical is wise before you launch into training.*).

Phase 1:

Begin a running program (ensure that proper footwear is used). It does not matter whether you run cross-country or on the street. You should target at least 2 miles (3.22 km), 3 – 4 times per week, and running at about 20 – 30 minutes. Make sure you start off with a warm-up, that includes the usual stretching and flexing exercises before any

workout. Over time, once you feel that you can comfortably cover the distance within that period of time, you will proceed to phase 2.

Phase 2:

Apply weights straps to your ankles. These would weigh in at approx. 1 – 1 ½ lbs (.45 kg - .68 kg). These weights are soft, lead pellet filled bands that will attach to your ankles with a velcro strap. Continue running the same distance as in phase 1, achieving a similar time/distance ratio. Occasionally, stop for a moment during your run, and transfer the weighted straps to your wrists, and continue with the run to its conclusion. Once you feel that you can comfortably cover the distance within 20 – 30 minutes, you will proceed to phase 3.



Phase 3:

Increase the weight straps on your ankles to 3 lbs (1.36 kg) per ankle. Continue running the same distance as in phase 1, achieving a similar time/distance ratio. Once you feel that you can comfortably cover the distance within 20 – 30 minutes, you will proceed to phase 4.

Phase 4:

Continuing with the weighted straps from phase 3, attach the weighted straps from phase 2 to your wrists. This will increase the overall load on the body to endure for the distance covered. Continue with this weighted condition until you feel comfortable covering the distance within 20-30 minutes.



The above phases are a rough guide to endurance and cardiovascular training. The duration of each phase is completed dependent upon the individual undergoing the training. The objective of the weighted belts, is to condition the body into supporting additional weight. In full gear, including sword, the kit may weigh upwards of 60 lbs.

If you are experiencing some difficulties as a result of the training above such as persistent or recurring pain, it is advisable that you visit your doctor. A useful resource on the web is Dr. Pribut's Running Injuries Page located at the URL: <http://www.clark.net/pub/pribut/spsport.html> It has useful information on a running training program and advise on many issues faced by runners.

Weight Training

If this is your first foray into weight training, you must set a clear goal in mind. Why begin weight training? Health? (true, this will enhance your health). To improve martial arts capabilities? (true, this will enhance your abilities). This will help in determining your training program. ***If your objective is body building, then you should not read this manual any further...*** you are in the wrong activity. However, if your focus is to enhance your strength, flexibility and endurance for medieval martial arts training, read on.



The weight training program described below, is known as the “vegetable soup” program. It is a general weight training program that addresses most areas of the body. Your genetic disposition will also have a lot to do with how you will respond to training. For some, it may take many weeks or months before anything noticeable is achieved, however, some will take only a few weeks. AEMMA's preference to weight training is free weights (barbells, dumbbells, etc.) rather than machines. Free weights place greater demand on your body, and yet allow your joints and limbs to move in their natural planes, often not possible with the exercise machines available. It is important that wielding a sword, requires great amount of flexibility and movement along various planes. However, if free weights are not available, machines are obviously the way to go.

When you are about to embark on weight training, appropriate gear is important. These include footwear (flat soled training shoes), weight-lifting gloves, weight belt to help support the muscles of the lower back when lifting heavy weights, head straps which will allow you to do progressive-resistance exercises for the neck (after all, you will be wearing heavy helmets, coif and or aventail). Another point to consider, is that one is never too old to begin training. See your doctor if you're unsure.

The general principle of weight training is if you can perform the specific exercise of 8 reps/set, 3 sets/workout and 3 workouts in a row, then you would increase the load by about 10%. The training session is a personal thing, however, the template training program below will provide an idea of what a training program should contain.

Determine what your maximum weight is before you start your training program. To determine the weights to use per set, target 3 sets of 8 repetitions each. Initially, you may appear to be progressing quickly, however, once the proper weight is achieved, you may be able to do 8 on the first set, 6 on the second, and 4 on the third. This is where you want to be. From here, you continue training until you can achieve 3 sets of 8, 3 training sessions in a row. The sequence is not important, however, the following appears to work for our program.

The program outlined below also assumes that you are familiar with weight training. If you are about to begin a program of weight training and have not done this before, there are excellent resources available in the library and online. It is recommended that you begin by joining a local fitness club to receive instruction in person.

1. Warm-up, stretching, loosening up the muscles
2. Bench-press
 - Warmup→Begin with 1/3 of your maximum weights determined (described above), 1 set of 10 reps
 - Warmup→Go to 2/3's of your maximum weights, 1 set of 8 reps
 - Go to your maximum weights, attempt 3 sets of 8 reps each
 - WarmDown→Return to 2/3's of your maximum weights, 1 set of 10-12 reps
3. Arm curls
 - using a preacher bench or similar, do the following with single hand dumbbells with approximately 1/5 to 1/4 of your maximum bench weights
 - right arm 1 set of 10
 - left arm 1 set of 10
 - rest
 - repeat 2 more times
4. wrist curls
 - using the same weights as above, rest your forearm on a bench, and using only your hand & wrist, curl the dumbbell
 - right wrist 1 set of 10
 - left wrist 1 set of 10
 - rest
 - repeat 2 more times
5. seated leg tucks (abs)
 - placing your posterior on the edge of the bench, arms straight down, hands gripping the bench of each side of your posterior for support, stretch out your legs straight out, and bend your torso back to almost parallel with the floor. Then bring your knees and chest together.
 - repeat at least 40 x
 - rest
 - repeat 2 more times
6. parallel dips (pecs & triceps)
 - support yourself above parallel bars, gripping them with your hands lower yourself slowly as far as you can
 - raise yourself back to your starting position
 - set of 10
 - rest
 - repeat 2 more times

7. squats (legs)

- begin with the barbell on the rack, and step under it so that the bar rests across the back of your shoulders
- raise the barbell and step away from the rack
- keeping your head up and back straight, lower yourself until your thighs are just lower than parallel to the floor
- from this point, push yourself back up to the starting position
- set of 25 or more



8. neck curls

- using the head straps, attach a weight plate to the chain/hook and rest it on a bench, and while supporting yourself by gripping the bench with your hands, your back somewhat parallel to the floor, raise the weight plate with your head only
- lower the weight plate back to the bench, and repeat 10 – 12 times
- rest, and repeat the set 2 more times

9. power arms

- using a curling bar (or similar), while standing straight (no swaying), curl the curling bar for 8 reps
- return the curling bar to the rack, and grip the same bar quickly, placing an overgrip and hands close together, and pull the curling bar up to the bottom of your chin for 8 reps
- return the curling bar to the rack, and immediately pick up the bar and let it hang, roll your shoulders forwards for 24 reps
- return the curling bar to the rack
- rest
- repeat 2 more times

Appendix D - Scholler Test

Introduction



A scholler is a student of the arts and who has committed to learning and training in the arts. The scholler recognizes that this is a life-time commitment to achieve the level of excellence that will enrich the student's life. The scholler must abide by the rules and constitutions of the Academy, and be prepared to obtain the relevant historically accurate arms & armour for those weapons type for their respective skills and weapons orientation.

The scholler test will be conducted at a regularly scheduled practice in the presence of the membership and students. The test is roughly scheduled mid-quarter each quarter. The scholler test is open to everyone at AEMMA provided the requirements are met (see requirements described in the scholler page online). Requests can be submitted to challenge for the scholler prize anytime, including the day of the scheduled scholler test, however, those submitted on that day will be scheduled for the next scheduled scholler test.

1.0 Knowledge Base:

(to be administered in the form of an oral exam)

- i. The candidate will be familiar with basic principles of sword techniques and their nomenclature.
 - ii. Foreign language names for various techniques are not required knowledge however there should be an understanding of the modern English names for all basic guards wards and cuts.
 - iii. The concept of "inside", "outside", "high", "middle", "low" pertaining to wards and cuts will be clearly understood.
 - iv. The parts of and significance of each pertaining to the longsword will be known with clear understanding of sword harmonics and center of balance and center of percussion principles.
 - v. The principle primary sources of our training will be known and their historical providence understood.
 - vi. The candidate will be able to describe who Fiore dei Liberi, Hans Talhoffer, George Silver and Giacomo di Grassi were and what they contributed to our art.
 - vii. The student will be able to describe the principles of the true fight (true & false times, four grounds and the four governors) according to George Silver.
-

2.0 Skills Base:

(to be administered as a physical test)

- i. The candidate will know the proper orientation and stance in the middle guard and describe the significant attributes with respect to this guard.
- ii. The candidate will display the ability to move with passing, gathered and traverse steps.
- iii. The candidate will be able to properly demonstrate the longsword guard positions (*posta*).
- iv. The candidate will be able to demonstrate the primary wards.
- v. The candidate will be able to perform all of the offensive strikes.
- vi. The candidate will demonstrate the ability to make the transition between guards and wards and cuts smoothly while making effective cuts. This shall be done with a solo display of the "mirror" cut ward drill.
- vii. The candidate will demonstrate sword handling skill with the first *reihenfolgen*, i.e. the *moulinet* drill.
- viii. The candidate will demonstrate the ability to receive and parry/redirect single and multiple strikes.
- ix. The candidate will be able to perform basic closes and grapples both armed and unarmed.
- x. The candidate will demonstrate the four grappling *posta* of Liberi and the classic grappling and counters leveraging the four *posta*.
- xi. The candidate will be able to perform basic re-direct, evading and disarming techniques as it pertains to dagger techniques.
- xii. The candidate will demonstrate control & discipline of weapons handling and the deployment of learned techniques in up to three bouts with three different individuals who are scholler or above designates.

It is not expected that candidates perform all of the above without flaws or mistakes. It is expected that all of the required skills are resident within the student and can be performed with general effectiveness, not expert ability.

Upon successful completion of the test the candidate may style themselves as a "Scholler" of European Medieval Martial Arts.

Then, of course the "real" training begins...

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