

## **Curriculum to introduce new persons into SCA rapier combat**

This is a basic lesson outline I developed to help facilitate people in teaching roles with new people interested in rapier. The main drive of this is to encourage participation and help develop a safe community that is knowledgeable of the rules while being prepared for the authorization process while not creating anxiety or apprehension. This is that this is not a how to or fencing manual.

This should be used as a tool and it is important that the teacher is knowledgeable in the rules, current conventions, and standards of calibration in your local area. Some valuable questions to ask your student when you first meet them is, how long they plan to stay that night (if they only have 1 hour condense it down to make sure they get to play(on the first night this is of vital importance,) what brought them there, and do you have any experience in fencing (if they have a modern fencing back ground some things will go much faster like foot work and guards but will give you a clue to look for certain bad habits.) Some drills have been included in the appendix to assist the teaching process, feel free to use your own or change the drills as necessary.

This lesson plan was written so that by the time it is finished the student will have the knowledge to pass an authorization and only needs the experience of additional practice to make the attempt.

## Curriculum to introduce new persons into SCA rapier combat

### Week 1 Time: 1 ½ -2 hours

#### Description

- Give new comer a brief introduction to the SCA and rapier combat while facilitating an interest in becoming an active person in rapier and the SCA community as a whole.

#### Expectations/Goals

At the end of this night a new person should:

- Have play fenced with teacher after checking calibration (this is a top priority.)
- Know what the SCA is and what would be expected of them at an event.
- Know how to hold a rapier.
- Know basic safety rules and calibration.

#### Intro to SCA 5-10 minutes

- Living history group focuses of time periods from about 500CE to the year 1601CE SCA is not a LARP, RPG, or Reenactment.
  - People choose Personas from a place and time that interests them.
- Holds different kinds of events to show case several aspects of the times.
  - Tournaments (ex. Anniversaries and festivals.. etc)
  - Courts (ex. Coronation, Yule, 12<sup>th</sup> Night.)
  - Arts & Sciences or A&S (ex. Collegiums, Practicum of the sword, pentathlon.)
  - Wars (ex. Great western, Potrero, Talon Crescent and Pennsic.)
  - Practices are the only non garbed events.
    - Keys is available to borrow garb at events.

#### Intro to rapier and rules 30 minutes

- Simulate rapier combat from the late 1500s in a safe and fun manner.
- Their job to read and know the rules.
- Armor requirements (Puncture resistant, mask, cup for men, abrasion resistant.)
- Explain "Hold," what do when it is called, why it is used, and how everyone is responsible to call if they see something unsafe.
- Acceptable blows (perform these on your student so they can feel and see calibration, then have them calibrate on you (in armor.))
  - Thrust, tip cut, push and pull cut.
  - Describe blade grasping.
  - Explain percussive or excessive blows not permitted.
- Enacting blows, arms, legs, hands, and death.
- Blow calling, they are to call blows to their person.

## Curriculum to introduce new persons into SCA rapier combat

### Intro to the sword and how to use it 5 minutes

- Parts of the sword.
  - Pommel
  - Grip
  - Guard
    - Quillions, rings, knuckebow/knuckle guard.
  - Blade
    - Strong, mid, weak, ricasso, and tip.
    - True and false edge.
- How to hold the sword.
  - One or two fingers on ricasso, pommel under wrist or hand. Should be able to let go all fingers but pointer and still hold sword.

### Fencing 30 + minutes

- Get student armored up if not already make sure they are signed in.
- Calibrate both ways, teacher first.
- Play fence, give them a basic defense but let them hit you it is also important to hit them as well.
  - **Be sure to make this fun without being one sided.**
  - Call hold randomly see if they remember what to do.
  - Address safety issues.
  - Turn up the dial everyone in a while.
  - Enact blows, if someone gets legged cover the things required to say.
    - Where is your 120, are you comfortable, are you ready?
- When finished let this evolve into a basic fencing lesson.

### Basic fencing lesson 30 minutes

- Position of the arm.
- Guards/ how to block/counter an attack.
  - To the inside or outside and to the hand.
- Footwork/how to move with weight on pads/ball of foot.
- Explain options of historical masters to study, if desired.

### Homework

- Read the rules go to <http://marshal.sca-caid.org/pubs.php> scroll down to Rapier and click Rapier handbook.
- Practice what has been gone over.

## Curriculum to introduce new persons into SCA rapier combat

### Week 2 Time: 1 ½ -2 hours

#### Description

- Reinforce lessons from previous week and give a more in depth lesson on fencing.

#### Expectations/Goals

- Have play fenced with teacher after checking calibration (this is a top priority.)
- Know basic safety rules and calibration.
- Fence a controlled bout with another (experienced) fencer, if student is safe.
- At end of the night student should be able to pick out the required gear from the loaner bag so they may fence at practice.
- They know to sign in when they arrive.

#### Has the student read the rules

- If not point them to it <http://marshal.sca-caid.org/pubs.php> scroll down to Rapier and click Rapier handbook.
- If so answer any questions.

#### Give brief description of differences of tournaments and melees 10 minutes

#### Give brief description of authorization process less than 5 minutes

- Is to ensure everyone knows the rules and can follow/demonstrate safe behavior on the field while maintaining a standard of calibration and blow calling.
  - Let them know that it is designed to be simple and everyone wants them to complete it
  - Don't spend too much time here the bigger deal you make of it the more nervous people become.

#### Attacking 30 minutes

- Show what each attack is and ask them to demonstrate. Explain what each attack is used for and drill the attacks.
  - The thrust of the arm.
  - The thrust with the body.
  - The lunge.

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### Guarding from a attack and hitting your opponent 10-30 minutes

- It is important that when your opponent attacks and you counter-attack at the same time. If you try to parry and then attack your opponent will have enough time to change the situation.
- Explain what the guards are and what they are used for.
- Do a brief drill on guards, see appendix for ideas.
- Do a drill of attacks, see appendix for ideas.

### Fencing 30 + minutes

- Get student armored up if not already make sure they are signed in.
- Calibrate both ways, teacher first.
- Play fence, give them a basic defense but let them hit you it is also important to hit them as well.
  - **Be sure to make this fun without being one sided.**
  - Call hold randomly see if they remember what to do.
  - Address safety issues.
  - Turn up the dial every once in a while.
  - Enact blows, if someone gets legged cover the things required to say.
    - Where is your 120, are you comfortable, are you ready? Explain which is required and just being nice.
  - Find an experienced fighter for them to fight if they have proven to be safe. Brief the fighter so they know what they are getting into.

### Homework

- Read the rules if they have not. They are expected to read them by next practice.
- Practice lunging making sure to complete each step before continuing.

## Curriculum to introduce new persons into SCA rapier combat

### Week 3 Time: 1 ½ -2 hours

#### Description

- Reinforce lessons from previous week and give a more in depth lesson on the actual art of fencing.
- See that they are safe for sparring the other authorized fighters.

#### Expectations/Goals

- Fence a controlled bout with another (experienced) fencer.
- The student should pick out the required gear from the loaner bag so they may fence at practice.
- Sign in when they arrive.
- Have read the rules.

#### Encourage fencer to go to an event to see what it is like

- Let them know they will not be fighting but meeting people and seeing what it is like.
- If they don't know where to look to see where and when events are show them.
- If they don't have garb point them to Keys so they may borrow it.

#### Has the student read the rules? 0-15 minutes

- If not give them a printed copy to read right then and there.
- Answer any questions they may have.

#### Fencing 30 + minutes

- Get student armored up if not already make sure they are signed in (should know to do this already.)
- Play fence, You should have turned up the dial several times from when they started.
  - **Be sure to make this fun without being one sided.**
  - Call hold randomly see if they remember what to do.
  - Address safety issues.
  - Turn up the dial every once in a while. They should have to work for each touch at this point.
  - Enact blows, if someone gets legged cover the things required to say.
  - Find an experienced fighter for them to fight if they have proven to be safe. Brief the fighter so they know what they are getting into. Find a different fighter than last week.

## **Curriculum to introduce new persons into SCA rapier combat**

### **Offhand items 15 minutes**

- Cover basic use of buckler, dagger, baton, cloak (if one is available,) Etc.

### **Drills 30 minutes**

- Go over attacks and guards again, step up the difficulty as necessary.
- Add in some offhand items near the end.

### **Additional fencing rest of the evening**

- Have them fence other experienced fighters, make sure they know this is a new fighter.
  - Encourage them to ask questions and use what lessons they have been given.
  - Encourage them to start using an offhand.
- If time allows have them fight a mock tournament round with all of the heraldry as usual.
  - Answer any questions they may have.
  - Make sure to do an armor inspection, have them explain what you're doing and why.

## Curriculum to introduce new persons into SCA rapier combat

### **Week 4** Time: 1 ½ -2 hours

#### **Description**

- Reinforce lessons from previous week.
- Introduce cover basic rules of melees if not done before.

#### **Expectations/Goals**

- Fence with (experienced) fencers using off hand.
- Demonstrates understanding of the rules during fencing.
- New fencer should work with offhand items.

#### **On baiting and feinting 30 minutes**

- Explain and show how baiting is used. Have them demonstrate some baits and coach them. Make sure to add in offhand items.
- Explain and show how feinting is used. Have them demonstrate and coach them. Make sure to add in offhand items.

#### **Basic Melee rules 15-60 minutes**

- Discuss 180° degree engagement.
- Discuss death from behind show and have them perform it.
- Discuss the no running rules and fleeing from engagement.

#### **Melee 30+ minutes**

- Rustle up some people for some melee fun.
  - Start slow with a line battle and move to more complex things as their understanding grows.

#### **Fencing with offhand rest of evening**

- Have them fence other experienced fighters, make sure they know this is a new fighter.
  - Encourage them to ask questions and use what lessons they have been given.

## Curriculum to introduce new persons into SCA rapier combat

### Week 5 Time: 15 minutes

#### Description

- Reinforce lessons from previous week.
- New fencer should participate in a tournament.

#### Expectations/Goals

- Fence with (experienced) fencers using off hand.
- Demonstrates understanding of the rules during fencing.
- New fencer should work with offhand items.

#### Drills 15 minutes

- Ask them if they would like to do any drills. Suggest drills on things they are having trouble with.

#### Mini tournament 30-60+ minutes

- Get some people together for a tournament and run it with all the pomp and pageantry you can. Make sure the student (and everyone else) follows the rules and conventions. Coach them as they go.
  - Consider doing something other than a double elimination so they can get some fighting in. This would also be a good time to describe the different tournaments.

#### Fencing with offhand rest of evening

- Have them fence other experienced fighters, make sure they know this is a new fighter.
  - Encourage them to ask questions and use what lessons they have been given.

## Curriculum to introduce new persons into SCA rapier combat

### **Week 6** Time: 15 minutes

#### **Description**

- Reinforce lessons from previous week.
- Fencing practice.

#### **Expectations/Goals**

- Fence with (experienced) fencers using off hand.
- Demonstrates understanding of the rules during fencing.
- New fencer should work with offhand items.

#### **Drills 15 minutes**

- Ask them if they would like to do any drills. Suggest drills on things they are having trouble with.

#### **Fencing with offhand rest of evening**

- Have them fence other experienced fighters, make sure they know this is a new fighter.
  - Encourage them to ask questions and use what lessons they have been given.

## Curriculum to introduce new persons into SCA rapier combat

### **Week 7** Time: 15 minutes

#### **Description**

- Fencer free fences using off hand.

#### **Expectations/Goals**

- Fence with (experienced) fencers using off hand.
- Demonstrates understanding of the rules during fencing.
- Is prepared for a mock authorization.

#### **Drills 15 minutes**

- Ask them if they would like to do any drills. Suggest drills on things they are having trouble with.

#### **Mock authorization prep 10 minutes**

- Go over some things you think they need to know to pass an authorization.

#### **Free fencing with offhand**

- Fencer should be able to take care of them self at this point let them get in as much practice as they can.
- Keep lessons short and sweet this week let the focus be on practice.

## Curriculum to introduce new persons into SCA rapier combat

### Week 8 Time: 1 hour

#### Description

- Fencer free fences using off hand.
- Perform a mock authorization.

#### Expectations/Goals

- Fence with (experienced) fencers using off hand.
- Demonstrates understanding of the rules during fencing.
- Perform a mock authorization.

#### Free fence/warm up 15-20 minutes

#### Mock authorization 15-30 minutes

- Try and find someone the new fencer has not fought and run through the authorization process.
  - Explain each step and why it is being done.
  - Make sure to ask questions as you would in an authorization
  - Make sure to pull the dummy fencer to “discuss” the new fencer and give them instruction to see if the new fencer is unsafe. This will happen in an authorization so make sure to do it several times so they think this is normal.
  - When finished ask the new fencer leave so you can discuss them. Decide if they would have passed or not.
  - Discuss with new fencer how they did and what they need to work on, or some things they need to be aware of before they would be able to pass if they did not.
  - Let them know they did a good job!
- If they would have passed and you think they are ready encourage them to authorize.
  - Help organize when and where, another practice is best but you can do it at an event if it is arranged beforehand and they arrive on time.
- If they would not have passed wait a few weeks and try another mock authorization.

#### Free fence rest of the evening

## Appendix

### Drills

- These drills are here to give teachers ideas. Teachers should feel free to use, change, or not use them as they see fit. Also worth noting these drill are not in any particular order.

#### Attacking 30 minutes

- The thrust of the arm.
  - Remembering the stance learned from last week, have them extend their arm. Let them do this a few time on a pell or tree to learn their distance from here. Close measure.
- The thrust with the body.
  - Have them thrust with the arm and lean with the body from the waist and slide their hips forward. Make sure the hand, arm, and shoulder all move before the body. The head should lean towards the forward shoulder. Medium measure.
- The lunge.
  - Have the student thrust with the body sliding the hips forward, when they can go no farther have them pick up their foot and drop it landing on the pad/ball area of the foot. Pull the tip if student has trouble doing this in the correct order. Long measure.

#### Distance/measure 10-30 minutes

- Face the student and have them keep the same distance from you as you move.
  - Move forwards, back and side to side. Make sure to include circling movements as well.
- One they get the hand of it put on armor and grab your rapiers and do the drill again.
  - Every so often stop and ask them what attack they would need to hit you and have them do it. Make sure they are not trying to lunge when you are too close and they should be able to tell you when you are too far away to attack as well.
  - Have them do the above drill while guarding themselves from your sword, throw an attack every so often to be sure they are guarded.

## Curriculum to introduce new persons into SCA rapier combat

### On guards/defenses 10-30 minutes

- Guards are used to counter the stance or attack of your opponent
  - First: true edge up with hand above shoulder. If you think of drawing the sword from its scabbard and when the tip is free you point it at your opponent you should be close to first.
  - Second: hand level with shoulder true edge may point anywhere between up and to the outside. Or from First rotate your hand clockwise (for a righty) until the sword hilt is level with your shoulder.
  - Third: hand is below the shoulder and inline or outside the front knee, true edge is down. Still continuing rotating the hand and arm.
  - Fourth: the hand is below the shoulder as with Third but is inside the knee. As before continuing rotating the hand and arm.

### Controlling your opponents options/constraining 30-45 minutes

- Get into a guard and ask the student to get into a counterguard or a guard that will not allow you to hit them with a straight lunge or thrust. This is in a basic sense a constraint.
  - A constraint limits the options of the opponent and forces them to make a big action to hit, such as a disengage.
  - Drill this by choosing several guards and asking the student to constrain you. Once they can do this move on.
  - Now have them constrain you and hit you with a lunge without breaking the constraint. Once they can do this move on.
  - Have them constrain you, you will now disengage to hit them on the other side of the sword. They must turn their hand to regain the constraint and hit you. Note that if you are lunging they will not need to (lunge.)
- Have them practice getting out of a constraint.
  - Using foot work and timing show them how to get out of a constraint. Have them constrain you, and you get out of the constraint do this several times then switch.

### Distance Game 10-20minutes

The object of the game is to use footwork and distance control to be able to hit your opponent in the chest with the glove with one step and one lunge. This game is good for teaching distance and tempo with some direction changes.

Rules:

- Fencers take turns being the attacker.
- On the attack, you are allowed one advance and one lunge.
- On defense, you can use any footwork that you want.
- No parries are allowed.
- (And play nice )

## Curriculum to introduce new persons into SCA rapier combat

### Execution:

- Fencers begin in advance-lunge distance.
- Fencer 'A' begins with a step and a lunge.
- As soon as Fencer 'A's lunge is complete, Fencer 'B' may begin their advance-lunge.
- Attack/Defense roles switch until a fencer hits their opponent on the attack.
- Loser is the first attacker for the next point.
- We generally play it as a bout (5 points.)