



Fencing: Safety Activity Checkpoints



Derived from the word “defense,” fencing is a sport and martial art that involves using swords called foils (practice swords), sabers, and *épées* (a fencing sword with a bowl-shaped hand guard). The object of fencing is to touch the opponent with the tip of a sword without getting hit by the opponent’s sword. A fencing game (or bout) is typically three minutes—the first fencer to score five touches (or hits) wins; if neither reaches five within the designated time period, the participant with the most touches wins. If performed correctly with the proper equipment, fencing is a safe activity with a low injury rate. Most fencing clubs provide students with a full kit of equipment. Girl Scout Daisies learn about fencing games and the rules of fencing but should use only foam mock swords.

Know where to participate in fencing. Beginners learn about fencing from fencing member clubs. Connect with your Girl Scout council for site suggestions. Also, to locate fencing clubs and camps, visit the [United States Fencing Association](#).

Include girls with disabilities. Communicate with girls with disabilities and/or their caregivers to assess any needs and accommodations. Learn more about the resources and information that organizations such as [Wheelchair Fencer](#) provide to people with disabilities.

Fencing Gear

Required Gear

- Fencing mask made of wire mesh, with a thick protective bib
- Fencing sword (typically a foil, *épée*, or saber). Girl Scout Daisies use foam mock swords only.

Recommended Gear

- Fencing glove
- Chest protector
- Plastron (underarm protector worn on fencing arm)
- Fencing jacket
- Fencing knickers or pants that cover knees
- Long socks that go up to knees (soccer socks are recommended)
- Sneakers or court shoes

Prepare for Fencing

- Communicate with council and parents.** See *the Introduction to Safety Activity Checkpoints*.
- Girls plan the activity.** Keeping their grade-level abilities in mind, encourage girls to take proactive leadership roles in organizing details of the activity.
- Arrange for transportation and adult supervision.** For the recommended adult-to-girl ratios please see *the Introduction to Safety Activity Checkpoints*.
- Verify instructor knowledge and experience.** Ensure that the fencing instructor is certified by the U.S. Fencing Coaches Association or an equivalent international fencing association.
- Select a safe fencing location*.** Ensure that the location of fencing instruction or event is an open space free of obstructions. The fencing floor is even and non-slippery; a wood floor or sport court is recommended.
- Compile key contacts.** See *the Introduction to Safety Activity Checkpoints*.
- Dress appropriately for the activity.** Make sure girls and adults avoid wearing dangling earrings, bracelets, and necklaces that may become entangled in equipment.
- Prepare for emergencies.** Ensure the presence of a first-aid kit and a first-aider with a current certificate in First Aid, including Adult and Child CPR or CPR/AED. See *Volunteer Essentials* for information about first-aid standards and training.

On the Day of Fencing

- **Use the buddy system.** *See the Introduction to Safety Activity Checkpoints.*
- **Safeguard valuables.** *See the Introduction to Safety Activity Checkpoints.*

Fencing Links

U.S. Fencing Association: www.usfencing.org

U.S. Fencing Coaches Association: www.usfca.org

International Fencing Federation: www.fie.org

Fencing Know-how for Girls

- Learn basics of fencing. Go to [USA Fencing, Fencing 101](#) to learn about weapons, competition, fencing terms and more.
- Go for the gold. Mariel Zagunis, who won gold medals in the individual saber at the 2004 and 2008 Summer Olympics, is only the second American ever to have won a gold medal in Olympic fencing. Read about Mariel and other Fencing athletes at [USA Fencing, Athlete Bios](#).
- * These checkpoints must be reviewed with the vendor and/or facility as appropriate.