



## 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](http://www.usfencing.org)

U.S. Fencing Coaches Association: [www.usfca.org](http://www.usfca.org)

International Fencing Federation: [www.fie.org](http://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.