

Attackers can pick particular targets, or work at hitting with a minimum of wasted distance (i.e., hitting with a minimum of bend in the blade--just at the end of their attack).

About teaching the Riposte

There is the strong temptation to teach the Riposte along with the parries: I find that combining the instruction in both usually results in the development of bad parries. Spending a little time getting good, solid parry positions is well worth the extra time this separation takes.

About teaching the openings

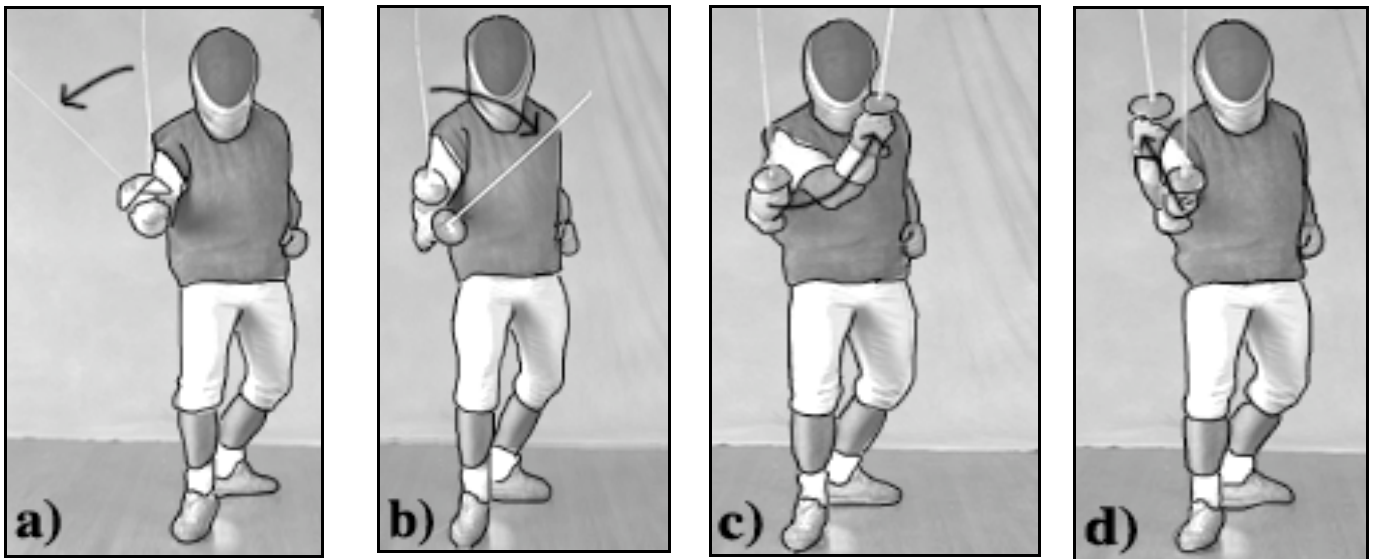
I find teaching the notion of the “coach’s position” useful: sword hand a couple of inches to the inside of where the on guard position ought to be with the thumb on top (held in what we think of as a bad on-guard position). From here it’s easy to open any of the four lines with just wrist motion for the high lines and a slight lift with the wrist motion for the lower lines. In addition, if the object of the drill is actually the drill-giver (as in the parry drills) the position allows for the opening of lines without getting the student too far out of position to make an efficient parry.

Expand on the “A opens line, B executes attack” by introducing the openings for attacks into each of the four lines. Practice executing attacks into each of the four lines on cue.

Coaches Signals for Openings

Procedures for class drills with partners were discussed in Chapter III.

To practice parries for the four lines, the coaches’ signals for attacks into those lines are as follows:



Coaches’ Openings for a) inside high, b) outside high, c) inside low, and d) outside low lines (BIG BOOK 177)

These should be quick, clear “snaps” of the arm and/or blade.

Drills

For their very first parries against actual blades (that is, after practicing “air parries” for correct position) I initially use the “circle around the coach” configuration. Everyone is on guard, and everyone executes the various parries on command -- I go around from student to student, extending into the command line and checking for correct response. Usually a couple of times around the circle is enough to have everyone on track.

As the students don't have the control of their distance yet, I begin initial parry drills with the fencers at extension distance -- no foot motion

At *extension* distance, both fencers on guard:

Fencer A quickly opens a line

Fencer B responds with an extension into that line at a moderate tempo

Fencer A waits until the last moment, executes the appropriate parry

Begin with only the parry Quarte drill -- sometimes it takes several weeks to comfortably go through all four parries (adding in low line parries as part of the riposte drills in the following lesson).

At *advance* distance:

Fencer A opens the line

Fencer B extends and advances; the front foot should be delayed until the arm is nearly fully extended (if students cannot delay their front foot until the extension is nearly completed I have them do full extensions before stepping -- at all costs I try to avoid the arm-and-foot as one move syndrome all students initially come to).

Fencer A retreats and executes the appropriate parry--ideally this will be made so that the actual blade contact is made commensurate with the landing of the front foot in the retreat. Care should be taken that the retreat is small enough that Fencer A is still in extension distance.

The same drill is done at lunge distance.

Remember to reverse roles between the lines; remember to rotate and repeat the drills frequently.