



THE ART AND SCIENCE OF
**SWORD
FIGHTING**

A Complete Instructional Guide

JOE VARADY

9 LEVELS

*Easy to
Expert*

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Foreword

by Chris Hall

The sword has a long history. It was one of our earliest weapons, no doubt at first simply a sharpened version of the club, but as humans have gone through a long process of refinement, on and off the battlefield, the sword changed to fit the circumstances. From changes in armor to deployment to an evolution in strategies and tactics, the sword became a specialized tool. Swords that cut, swords that stabbed, swords with range, swords with shapes to amplify their effectiveness, and swords that needed to be used in specialized ways show up throughout the arc of history.

All of these have been wielded by people who had similar physical forms and mental capabilities, and thus the evolution of sword technique: we developed ways to use our tools effectively and efficiently according to our physical strengths and limitations, the needs of the situations we found ourselves in, and the fullness of our lives on and off the battlefield.

In the process, we ourselves were refined.

As a thirty-year student, teacher, and researcher in the martial arts, I've come to realize how vital these particular arts are to achieving a full set of capabilities and capacities in the world. The art and science of the sword represent one element of what used to be called the common art of armament. The common arts in general are the ways that people meet their basic, embodied needs in the world: growing food, crafting homes and tools, navigating, healing, making clothes, and more. Defending one's self and others constitute one element of this larger set of skills, and since the sword and the way that it is used are so universal—almost every culture in the world has its parallel—then the art and science of the sword form a baseline set of competencies and vantages into the heart of what would rightly be called the common art of armament.

As a teacher, leader, and researcher in the Classical school movement, I've had the opportunity to speak and to write about these arts, including my book *Common Arts Education*, for the past decade. From that vantage, I would call to mind that even as the term is defined, it is important to note that training in the common arts is not simply for survival. It could be so at a primitive level, but when the notion of refinement enters the picture, the common arts become the arts of “thrival.” We practice these arts to not only live, but to live well. This is the essence of the “lifegiving sword” mentioned by our forebears: not only do the capabilities developed through diligent training allow one to defend one's self and others, but the mental frameworks of strategies and tactics, plus the formation of prudence, temperance, justice, and fortitude in a student contribute to a refinement of the practitioner, a fullness of capability in the world that benefits not just the swordsman, but everyone.

Grandmaster Joe Varady has done much to propagate the arts of armament in virtuous ways through the past thirty years. He has refined his personal practice in a variety of realms, from empty-handed self-defense to the arts of stick, staff, and sword. As such, he understands not only each art in itself, but the connections and synergies between these arts that lead to sound practice and perspective. His command of the arts of strategy and tactics, physical and mental training, and achievements in the arena testify to his proficiency. Best of all, his students testify to the same: in addition to his personal cultivation of martial skills, his school, Satori Dojo, represents both a flowering and fruiting of a deeply-rooted tree of virtuous practice, shown by the achievements, attitudes, and growth of his students through time.

I highly recommend this book, *The Art and Science of Sword Fighting*, to you, practitioner. If you seek a well-balanced, well-informed, well-written introduction to the common arts of armament, you have found it here. In the spirit of our arts, and the inherited spirit of our forebears who encouraged us to grow in virtuous practice, I encourage you to make this volume a gateway not simply to the art of survival, but to the art of thrival. Let the formation of practice, drill, and refinement work on you as much as the information and enter into the stream of learning that spans the millennia joyfully, and with all seriousness of study.

—**Chris Hall, MEd**, founder Always Learning Education, author of *Common Arts Education* (Classic Academic Press), Shodan, Cuong Nhu Oriental Martial Arts, Master of Arts in teaching elementary education, thirty-year practitioner of martial arts, twenty-four years as an instructor, National-Level Alcuin Fellow, thirty-year veteran educator

Preface

My entire life I have enjoyed the challenge of training and fighting with weapons, including the sword. Like many kids, every stick I picked up, from twigs and branches to my mother's yard stick, became a sword in my hands. My first "real" sword was part of an old fishing rod that I found in the attic when I was less than ten. About three feet long, it made a good improvised rapier, and I still have it to this day. Since then, I have learned from multiple teachers and trained with many sword fighting groups. My unique and wide-ranging experiences, from heavy armored combat with members of the SCA (Society for Creative Anachronism) to historical fencing at Live Steel Fight Academy, to crossing swords with the graceful fighters of the Taiji Fencing League, have given me an unconventional perspective of sword fighting as a whole. Without the constraints of style or affiliation, and in conjunction with my background in the Asian martial arts, including kobudo and eskrima, I strive to discern the many universal principles common to all sword fighting. While my personal style may be a melting-pot of techniques, my ultimate goal is always to distill techniques down to their universal elements, combining the best and most effective ones into an integrated whole.

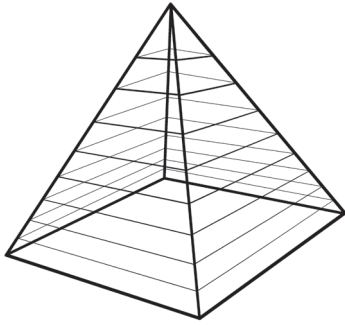
Of no use to the world are those men who study to do exactly as was done before, who never understand that today is a new day.

—Ralph Waldo Emerson

Some Notes Before We Begin

The terms beginner, intermediate, and advanced are relative and can vary between different schools of sword fighting. Techniques categorized as “advanced” here may be taught earlier in other systems. In this guide, I classify techniques as advanced using the lens of a beginner with no experience. Experienced practitioners of historical fencing will no doubt recognize many of the techniques in this book from training in their chosen styles. Rather than adhering to the traditional names of techniques, which vary from style to style and can be confusing, especially to the novice, I chose to use simple modernized terminology to describe the techniques.

It is important to note that practical understanding and proficiency in sword fighting require hands-on training and instruction from experienced practitioners. While this book and video series can go a long way toward expanding your sword fighting skills, whenever possible, it is recommended that you study and train under the guidance of a qualified instructor to ensure safety and properly learn the techniques and concepts.



INTRODUCTION: **Swords and Swordsmanship**

The Art and Science of Sword Fighting

The Art and Science of Sword Fighting is not promoting a style in the traditional sense of the word. It is a progressive, eclectic collection of sword-fighting techniques borrowed from many diverse sources. Most are universal concepts that can be applied easily to fighting with a wide variety of swords. It is, admittedly, a “country doctor” approach to swordsmanship, aimed at creating a general practitioner who is comfortable fighting with different types of swords. I chose this approach for two main reasons. First, it provides a solid foundation in the general art of fighting with swords, a necessity for beginners and experts alike. Later, once you have determined what your strengths are and where your personal interests lie, you may choose to specialize in a particular brand of swordsmanship. Regardless of what style that may be, a strong foundation will serve you well. Second, by not focusing on the historical context of any one particular style, it is my hope that advanced practitioners, regardless of personal style or affiliation, might transcend differences in styles and come together as swordsmen to examine the plethora of available techniques. In the short run, such collaboration will serve to improve our individual and collective understandings of sword fighting. In the long run, such study might lead to a modernized, universal system of swordsmanship, not unlike the development of today’s Mixed Martial Arts (MMA).

The Art and Science of Sword Fighting is divided into two sections. Part 1 introduces the one-handed sword. Part 2 teaches how to use a sword that requires two hands to wield effectively. Each part is further subdivided into offense, defense, fencing, and advanced techniques. The material in Part 2 is presented in a similar fashion as Part 1 in that proficiency is built step by step upon skills learned in previous sections. By training diligently in this intentional manner, your swordsmanship will develop in a smooth methodical fashion.

Traditional versus Progressive Sword Fighting

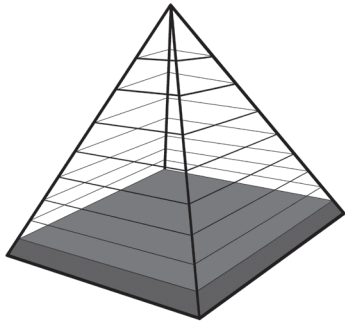
Traditional sword fighting systems exist all over the globe, each with its own unique history and method of formal training. Established schools and styles offer many benefits, such as a formal curriculum, the community created by a group of students learning together, and exposure to advanced practitioners that possess a deep knowledge of their art. However, most sword-fighting styles focus on recreating one particular style of sword fighting as it is represented in historical documents, often requiring its students learn the techniques in the native language of that particular tradition, such as Spanish, German, Japanese, and others. I have the greatest respect for those dedicated to recreating, practicing, and preserving historical traditions. While historical sword study has its place, the fact is not everyone is interested in recreating history. Some just want to learn to fight with a sword. Historical European Martial Arts (HEMA) provides a strong foundation that should not be discounted, nor constrain modern development. This book takes a bold and progressive approach to next generation fencing. While there is still a good deal of history presented within it, this condensed course of study is designed to teach you how to wield just about *any* sword using an eclectic approach to swordsmanship aimed at ferreting out the universal concepts. This novel approach is, admittedly, a very ambitious task because swords come in so many shapes and sizes. However, by taking a fresh and methodical approach to the topic, I think that any student, including you, can quickly and successfully learn the art and science of sword fighting.

What Is Swordsmanship?

Swordsmanship, or fencing, is an art as much as it is a science. Art and science, like the yin and yang, are two halves of a larger whole that speak to the dual nature of combat. On the one hand, art finds its roots in human instinct and displays itself through self-expression, while on the other, science draws from empirical observation, analysis of data, and the identification of patterns. Each of these, both art and science, plays a crucial role in successful combat.

Sword fighting is a vigorous activity that develops strength, speed, agility, and overall physical fitness. It also promotes mental acuity and quick thinking. Once you have developed the requisite skills to the point where you no longer have to think about them to perform them properly, you can focus your attention on outwitting your opponent in an exciting game of physical chess...with swords!

Like the words *human* and *mankind*, the word *swordsman* applies equally to all genders. That said, it is also correct to use *swordswoman* to describe a female fencer. Using your swordsmanship is called fencing, swordplay, crossing swords, or, more plainly, sword fighting. Fighting is a general term that is used to describe everything from light, friendly sparring to uncontrolled mortal combat.



LEVEL 1:

Short Sword Offense

A Closer Look at Single-Handed Swords

We've already examined some of the advantages of a short sword over a long sword, namely accessibility and maneuverability. Short swords are generally more accessible than long swords as they are easier to carry and deploy quickly. They are also more maneuverable since they are small enough to be used effectively in close quarters as well as wieldy enough to feint, faking your opponent out by suddenly changing directions mid-stroke. The disadvantage of the short sword is usually its shorter range; however, remember that "short sword" refers to the length of the handle, not the blade, so there are some exceptions to this rule. The great equalizer when it comes to single-handed swords is that they can be used with a shield or second weapon, allowing you to check an opponent's longer weapon in order to close into striking range, but dual wielding is the topic for another book.

Training Equipment: The Sword

Before you can start training, you are going to need a sword. There is a plethora of swords available on the market and choosing the right one is not merely a matter of personal preference. It is important that you know how to choose a sword that fits your body size and feels good in your hand. It must also be of appropriate construction for the type of training you will be doing.

Materials

Do NOT buy a sharp sword! At least, not yet. A sharp sword can be as dangerous as a loaded gun and should never be used for any kind of partner work. Even at Live Steel Fight Academy, although we occasionally test cut with live blades, we NEVER fought with sharp steel. Buying a sharp sword would be like playing airsoft or paintball with real guns. Keep your sharp swords reserved for test cutting. In fact, you don't even need to buy a metal sword at all.

Since wooden swords are far cheaper and usually safer than their metal counterparts, every culture that has employed the sword has used wooden substitutes in training. In Japan, samurai practiced with the bokken, while in England soldiers trained with wooden swords

called wasters. Wooden swords maintain the weight and heft of a real sword but are far less likely to inflict serious injury. They are also durable enough to withstand the wear and tear of hard training without needing to be replaced very often. They do have to be checked regularly, however, for cracks and splinters. Minor damage can usually be fixed with wood glue and sandpaper.

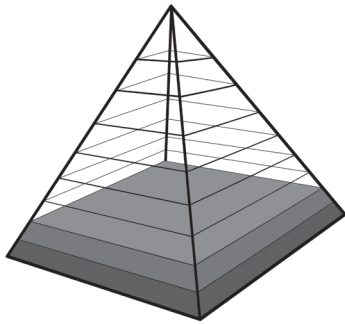
Swords made from polypropylene or other plastics, commonly referred to as “synthetics,” are a modern-day contribution to sword training. Keep in mind, though, that you get what you pay for. Cheap swords are usually either too heavy and stiff or too light and flexible. Well-made synthetics, on the other hand, are designed to be as close to real swords in weight, balance, and size as possible so that they help develop proper form and technique in solo practice, partner drills, and sparring. The disadvantage of synthetics is that they do not simulate real blades when pressed together, an action referred to as a “bind.” Sharp metal blades tend to catch, unlike synthetics that slip when pressed against each other, making it difficult to execute many techniques with realism. Like wooden swords, synthetics are generally less expensive than metal swords, as well as much safer to train and fight. Unlike wood, synthetic swords are extremely durable and do not crack or splinter. Since they can be used for a long time without needing to be replaced, they make a cost-effective investment. Overall, synthetic swords are a great option for regular training.

This is not to say that wooden or synthetic swords are not dangerous. While they are generally regarded as safer than their metal counterparts, wooden or synthetic swords can still hit hard enough to cause serious injury, especially if you are not wearing protective equipment suitable to the intensity of the activity. A waster or bokken, swung with intent and no control, can snap a femur. When thrusting, flexible plastic or modern spring steel swords are safer than a wooden sword because they are designed to bend.

Foam padded swords are good for light sparring with minimal protective gear. However, they generally lack the weight and heft of a real sword and therefore do not make very good trainers. Not only do they lack the feel of the genuine article, but most padded swords are not designed to hold up to intensive training against anything but another padded weapon. Their weaker, often hollow, plastic cores can't stand up to hard collisions against denser and heavier wooden or synthetic swords. The one advantage of foam swords is that they tend to stick together in the bind like sharp blades would, making them good for developing skills for that particular instance.

Training with blunt steel blades is very exciting and most closely replicates using a live blade. However, blunts are costly in comparison to wood and synthetic trainers. They also require more substantial protective gear to be used safely, especially in sparring. Nicks or bends in a blunt sword require maintenance and, even when fixed, can create weak spots where the blade may be subject to future breakage under stress.

Unsharpened training swords made of light, soft metals such as aluminum, are often intended for solo demonstration only and will not hold up under any sort of contact drill.



LEVEL 2: **Short Sword Defense**

Building a Solid Defense

Whereas Level 1 used solo training to teach you the fundamentals of offense with the sword, Level 2 utilizes partner training to apply your newly acquired offensive skills to develop a solid defense. It is no secret that in many sports a good defense is critical to a good offense. Having a strong defense when sword fighting can have a helpful psychological impact on your opponent. It sends the message to your opponent that you are composed, confident, and not easily overwhelmed. A well-developed defensive posture can make your opponent more cautious and hesitant with their attacks, thereby giving you the advantage in the fight.

It's important to note that defense doesn't mean being passive or simply absorbing blows. It involves intentional, proactive techniques such as evading, blocking, parrying, and countering. By actively defending yourself at all times, you increase your chances of staying safe and gaining an upper hand in a sword fight.

Training Equipment: Gloves and Mask

In order to safely practice sword fighting with a partner, it is important to acquire and wear safety equipment appropriate to the activity. Light drilling and sparring require a minimum of protection to ensure against serious injury, while medium and heavy contact require substantially more. Don't worry, though, you don't have to go out and buy a suit of plate. In Level 2, you will be doing light drills with a partner, so you will only need to armor your most vulnerable targets, namely your hands and head.

Hand Protection

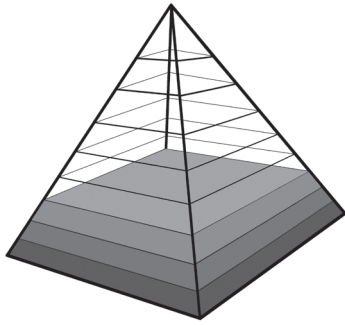
Your hands are one of the most vulnerable parts of your body during sword fighting. Therefore, hand protection is essential. There are several different types of hand protection that can be used for sword fighting. The type of hand protection that is best for you will depend upon the specific type of swords you will be using and the level of intensity you are engaging in. I recommend that you have two pairs of gloves: a pair of light gloves for controlled drilling and light sparring, and a pair of medium or heavy gloves for fighting.

Light gloves offer minimal protection and are only appropriate for controlled practice, such as during drills or when sparring with padded swords. When it comes to light gloves, you have several options. Welder's gloves, available at most hardware stores, are made of leather and are usually heavy enough to ward off the sting of most blows, making them suitable for light contact drills. Motorcycle gloves with plastic finger and knuckle protection also offer enough protection for light contact drills. The best option, however, are padded fencing gloves because they are designed specifically for sword fighting and, therefore, offer better protection. On average, light padded gloves will cost about \$50–\$100.

Medium gloves should protect you against strikes that could otherwise break your hand, but they are not designed to protect you against a sword swung with bad intent. In medium contact, such as in controlled sparring with wooden or synthetic weapons, lacrosse and hockey gloves provide decent hand protection. Though somewhat bulky, these gloves have good flexibility. Be aware, however, that there are gaps in their padding that can sometimes leave your fingers open to hard strikes. Goalie gloves are especially desirable since they are designed with more padding, in particular for the vulnerable thumb. Padded HEMA gloves are probably the best option of all as a medium glove because they are designed to address the weaknesses of the gloves already described. The vulnerable gaps in other glove designs are closed, and plastic plates are added to protect the most vulnerable parts of the hand. While I give some specific examples, when it comes to gear, it is always good to do your own research to see what products are available and highly recommended. Medium-level gloves will usually cost you between \$100 and \$150. If you are looking for better pricing, Red Dragon's sparring gloves offer a reasonable balance of overall protection and flexibility at a relatively inexpensive price, as do Purpleheart Armoury's Dragon Slayer gloves.

Full-contact sparring requires a higher level of protection. When engaging in any sort of competition, it is best to assume someone will lose control and that you will therefore need maximum protection. Heavy gear is meant to protect you against strong uncontrolled attacks or strikes delivered with intent. Heavy gloves should be able to withstand blows that would otherwise shatter hand bones. Clamshell gauntlets consist of articulated plastic or metal plates and offer full protection for your entire hand and wrist. While gauntlets offer more protection than gloves, they can be heavy and cumbersome, affecting your mobility. If you are sparring with long swords, this is the level of hand protection that you will need. Both Black Knight mittens by HF Armory and SPES Historical Fencing Gear's heavy "Lobster" gloves offer excellent protection with a starting price of about \$200.

Once your hands are protected, you might consider armor for your forearms as well. Vambraces, or bracers, are forearm guards that are commonly made of leather, plastic, or metal. While some cover just your forearm, other designs extend to offer elbow protection as well. Vambraces can be worn alone or in conjunction with gloves or gauntlets. Vambraces, bracers, or forearm/elbow protectors usually cost around \$40 to \$60.



LEVEL 3:

Short Sword Fencing

In Level 1, the focus was on solo work and mastering the basics. In Level 2, you practiced with a partner to develop a strong defense and to apply your offensive skills against a live opponent. However, the tactics were simple and incorporated what is commonly referred to as a “hack and slash” approach to sword fighting. While a necessary stage of training and effective method of fighting, it is rudimentary. In Level 3, our focus will shift to more sophisticated strategies and tactics that focus on controlling the centerline. However, you should consider getting some body protection first. You’ll be glad you did.

Training Equipment: Body Armor

You should already have a pair of gloves and a fencing mask to protect your hands and head. It is also important to protect your body and arms during training and competition. A fencing jacket and a gambeson are both types of protective clothing; however, they are designed for different purposes and, therefore, have unique features to meet the specific needs of their intended use.

Fencing jackets are designed for use in modern sport fencing and offer protection against light swords. They are typically lightweight and flexible, made from heavy cotton or synthetic materials, and padded in key areas to provide protection against the force of a sport fencing sword. Compared to the gambeson, fencing jackets have a more streamlined, functional design that is specifically optimized for the sport of modern fencing.



The jacket I wear in this book is Superior Fencing's Thermo Ventilation HEMA Jacket (800n).

Some jackets have a special lining that prevents a blade from puncturing the fabric. N-ratings are the system used to classify the level of protection provided by a piece of fencing equipment, such as a fencing jacket or mask. The ratings are determined based on the amount of force that a piece of equipment can withstand before it fails or allows a penetration.

Light jackets are typically lightweight and flexible, making them comfortable to wear and easy to move in. While suitable for drills and controlled sparring, a light jacket may not provide sufficient protection for more intense or competitive sword fighting.

Medium weight jackets (350n) typically offer a good balance of flexibility, mobility, protection, without a lot of weight, making them a popular choice. The gambeson, a popular medium weight padded jacket, originated in Medieval times. Worn either as a stand-alone armor or as a padded layer under chain mail or plate armor, gambesons are typically much thicker and heavier than modern fencing jackets, and so they offer more comprehensive protection against a wider range of attacks. A medium weight jacket's protection could be increased by wearing an impact vest underneath it for tournament play or fighting with heavy swords.

Heavy duty jackets (800n) provide the most protection, often including rigid plastic or even steel plates. They are typically worn by fencers that engage in high-intensity bouts and those who fight with heavy swords. Additionally, fencers that have had previous injuries or who are particularly concerned about the risk of injury may choose to wear a heavy jacket for added peace of mind. While heavy jackets offer the highest level of protection, they are less flexible than lower-rated jackets, which could affect your mobility and comfort during training or competition. While warm, a heavy jacket with rigid elbow protection is suitable for most fighting.

Rigid chest protection, in the form of a breastplate or plastron, is available and can be worn under a fencing jacket or padded gambeson to offer additional protection, especially against thrusting attacks. It is important to restate the point that your training weapons need to flex if you are going to thrust with anything other than the utmost control, and any kind of real fighting requires that the blades give for safe thrusting.

When choosing a fencing jacket, consider your individual needs, preferences, and level of experience, as well as consult the specific rules and regulations of any particular sport fencing in which you might want to participate. It's always best to do your own research by reading reviews and talking to other sword fighters to find a jacket or gambeson that meets your specific needs and preferences. Whichever type of protection you choose, the fit should be snug enough to prevent it from moving around while fencing, but not so tight that it restricts your breathing or movement.

Neck Protection

In sword fighting, the neck is often a target area for your opponent because it is a relatively exposed target compared to other parts of the body. Unfortunately, a strike to the neck, even with a wooden sword, could cause severe injury or even death. Your neck contains

vital structures such as the windpipe (trachea) and the esophagus. Damage to these structures can impair breathing or result in difficulty swallowing. Furthermore, the neck also houses the upper portion of the spinal cord, which is responsible for transmitting signals between your brain and the rest of your body. An injury to your neck can potentially damage your spinal cord, leading to paralysis or loss of motor function.

To mitigate these risks, sword fighters often wear protective gear called a gorget. The gorget is a collar-like piece of armor that covers your throat and neck, providing protection against attacks aimed at these vulnerable areas. The potential dangers of a strike to your unprotected throat makes a gorget an essential piece of protective gear, which is why it is required to fence at most venues.



This thrust to the throat, from the 2004 LSFA Championships, is a perfect example of 1) how a straight thrust can be faster than a wide, arcing strike, and 2) why you should always wear a gorget when sparring. Luckily, I had good control, and my friend, Joe McLaughlin, was not injured.

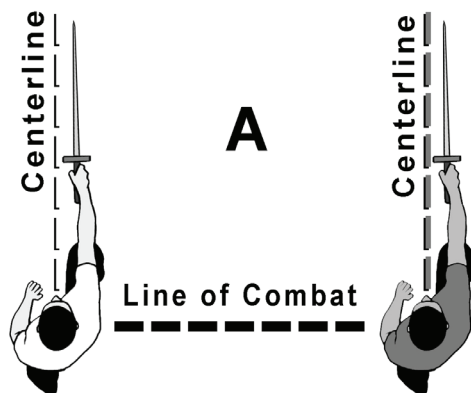
Fencing versus Hack and Slash

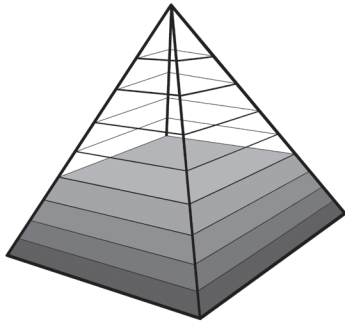
“Hack and slash” is a term used to describe a style of fighting that incorporates pronounced strikes delivered at long range. Picture two armored combatants with heavy swords taking big swings at each other and protecting themselves with strong blocks. All the drills and principles presented to you in Levels 1 and 2 have been focused on this style of fighting to develop the foundational skills you need to prepare you for more sophisticated methods of sword fighting. The moves used when fencing tend to be smaller and more subtle compared to the hack and slash style. When at long range, fighting is performed in absence of the

blade, meaning that the swords only momentarily touch at the moment of impact during a block or parry, then immediately disengage again. Once you are operating at middle range, close enough that you are able to easily touch your opponent with your sword, your opponent is also in range to attack you, therefore it is essential that you engage his sword in order to control it. This type of sword fighting is commonly referred to as classical fencing. Picture two unarmored musketeers dueling with light, fast rapiers. While fencing techniques can be performed with any single-handed sword, the style was developed for and lends itself best to long slender swords such as these.

Center, Centerline, and the Line of Combat

In order to grasp the subtle dynamics of fencing, it is necessary to understand the concepts of center, centerline, and the line of combat. For the sake of this discussion, let's consider the spine as the body's *center*. Your *centerline* is an imaginary line that runs bilaterally straight down the center of your body and extends in a vertical plane in front of you. The *line of combat* is an imaginary line that connects your center with your opponent's center. It represents the most direct path of attack (A). It is usually best to keep your centerline turned toward your opponent. This is because, with your opponent right in front of you, you can make optimal use of both your weapon and your free hand. If you and your opponent are both standing directly in front of each other, however, then neither of you holds a tactical advantage (B). Therefore, your job is to stay off of your opponent's centerline, while keeping your centerline on him. A quick shuffle step to the opponent's left (your right) places you in his deceleration zone, taking away his ability to strike you with maximum force while allowing you to attack him with maximum force. Remember to immediately realign your centerline to the line of combat after your attack to replace and keep your opponent in the middle of your strike zone (C).





LEVEL 4:

Advanced Short Sword

Training Equipment: Lower Body Protection

By this time in your training, your upper body should be well protected. You should have gloves to protect your hands, a mask to protect your head, and a jacket to protect your torso and arms. However, your legs are targets as well. Therefore, it is recommended that you protect your lower body also, specifically by using protective gear for your hips, legs, and groin.

While a long gambeson or fencing jacket can offer some protection for your hips and thighs, you may benefit from additional protective gear specially made to protect your lower body. Hockey pants are a common solution, as are padded breeches specifically designed for HEMA. Both have built-in padding or additional layers of protective fabric in vulnerable areas like the hips, thighs, and knees. However, these short knicker-like pants usually do not protect your lower legs. Therefore, leg guards, also called greaves, are needed to protect your shins and ankles. Leg guards are made from plastic, leather, or metal.

Another lower body protection option is the *tare*, a skirt-like hip protector common to Japanese kendo. The tare is worn around your waist like a belt and has protective flaps that protect your groin and upper thighs.

While the groin is not a legal target in competition, the unfortunate truth is that accidents happen, and the groin gets hit. A direct strike or impact to the groin can cause intense pain and potentially serious injury for both men and women. Therefore, groin protection in the form of an athletic cup should be an essential part of your sword fighting gear. Athletic cups are designed to absorb and redistribute the force of impacts, greatly reducing your risk of injury.

The Outside Game

This offensive long-range strategy is simple: attack by striking the closest available target at your longest range, while maintaining maximum distance between you and your opponent. The first targets to cross into your Circle of Death are usually your opponent's lead arm and leg.

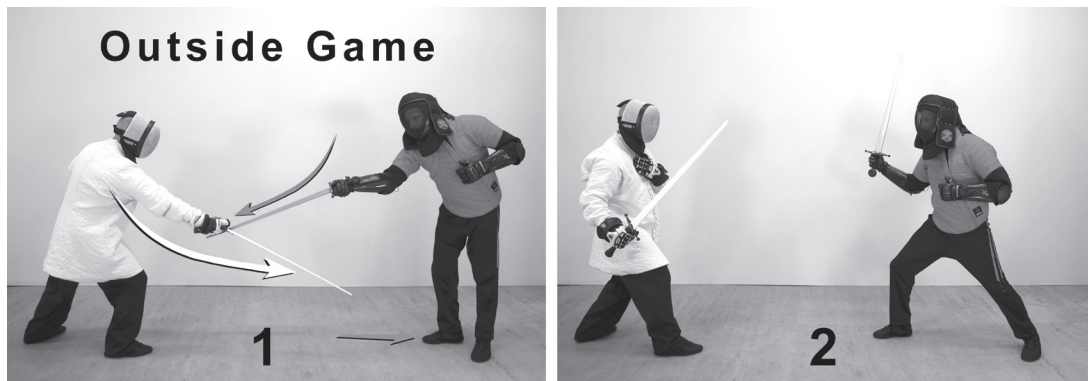
When targeting the leg, aim for the lead knee. Be ready to attack as soon as your opponent moves into your circle. To prevent your opponent from simply stepping back out of range, try to anticipate his advance. If you can catch him mid-stride as he enters, it will be

difficult for him to withdraw his leg before your strike lands. Remember that attacking your opponent's low line leaves your high line open and your head exposed. Therefore, it is essential that you strike from your maximum hitting range to avoid any counter cut. As always, be prepared to capitalize on the success or failure of your initial strike. If your strike misses, be prepared to maintain the initiative by flowing directly into a second attack. If your attack is successful, quickly move back out of range to avoid your opponent's counterattack.

When targeting the hand, full strikes can leave you exposed should your attack fail. Therefore, use half strikes when attacking the hand. Returning quickly to your original guarded position in between your half strikes minimizes the amount of time you are exposed.

A good strategy for a hand-snipe is to aim for the forearm because, if you're slightly off target or the opponent withdraws, your strike will still land. In addition, if your first cut misses, you can use a double strike to make a second, unexpected attack to the same target. If your opponent avoided your strike by pulling his hands back and out of range, compensate by leaning in slightly farther with your second strike.

Keep in mind that merely striking the opponent's weapon hand may not be enough to end the confrontation. Be prepared to either continue striking or quickly move safely out of range.



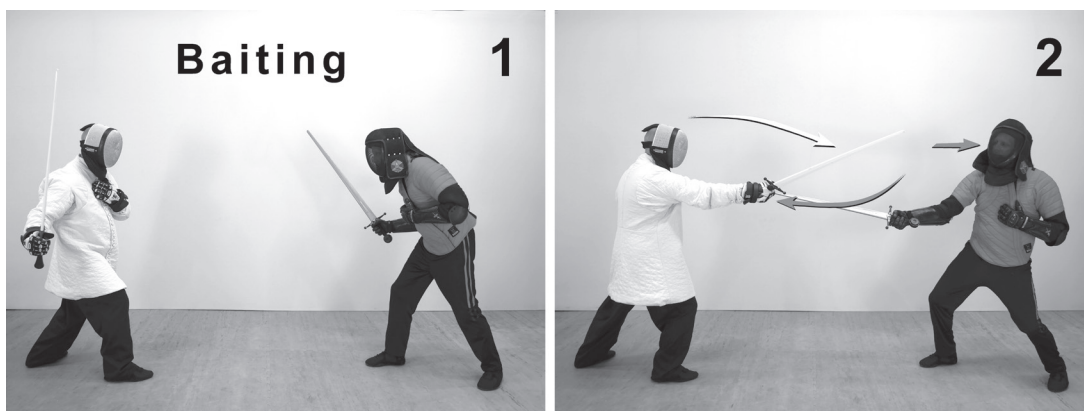
Outside Game: You and your opponent are facing off just out of range. Your opponent notices that your lead leg is extended and exposed (1). As he attacks, pull your lead foot back, out of range of his attack, simultaneously striking his weapon hand (2). This is also a good example of baiting and drawing

Baiting and Drawing

A cautious opponent will not simply enter into your Circle of Death in an attempt to strike you; he must be enticed into making a rash move. Baiting and drawing are strategies in which you purposely leave an opening in an attempt to get your opponent to attack you. While this may seem counterintuitive, it can be useful to create an opening for you to counterattack, and, since you are expecting the attack, you will be prepared to evade or defend.

Control the fight by subtly setting up your opponent. A setup can be done by *drawing an attack*. Begin by readying your mind to set the trap. You must be prepared to retract the bait before you even put it out. Next, leave an opening your opponent can exploit and will find hard to resist. As soon as the opponent makes his attack, retract the bait and hit him where you know he is vulnerable.

For example, since a right-to-left downward diagonal strike is the habitual method of attack, there is a very good chance that you can draw a right high strike from your opponent by leaving your head slightly exposed. Lure your opponent into striking your head using this habitual method of attack by gradually relaxing your guard. If this posture draws no response, try extending your empty hand a little or leaning your head forward slightly. This setup is an easier sell if you can do it while moving. Be careful not to be too obvious, though, as the opponent must believe your deception if you are to successfully draw him into taking the bait and attacking you. Make your motions *look* as though you are being careless and relaxing your guard, when in actuality it is only an act. Know that you are psychologically manipulating your opponent into making the strike that *you* want him to make, allowing you to predict where his hand will be at a particular moment in time before he even launches his attack.



Baiting: Lure your opponent into striking by leaning your head forward slightly (1). As soon as he takes the bait, lean back out of range to avoid his strike, simultaneously striking his hand (2).

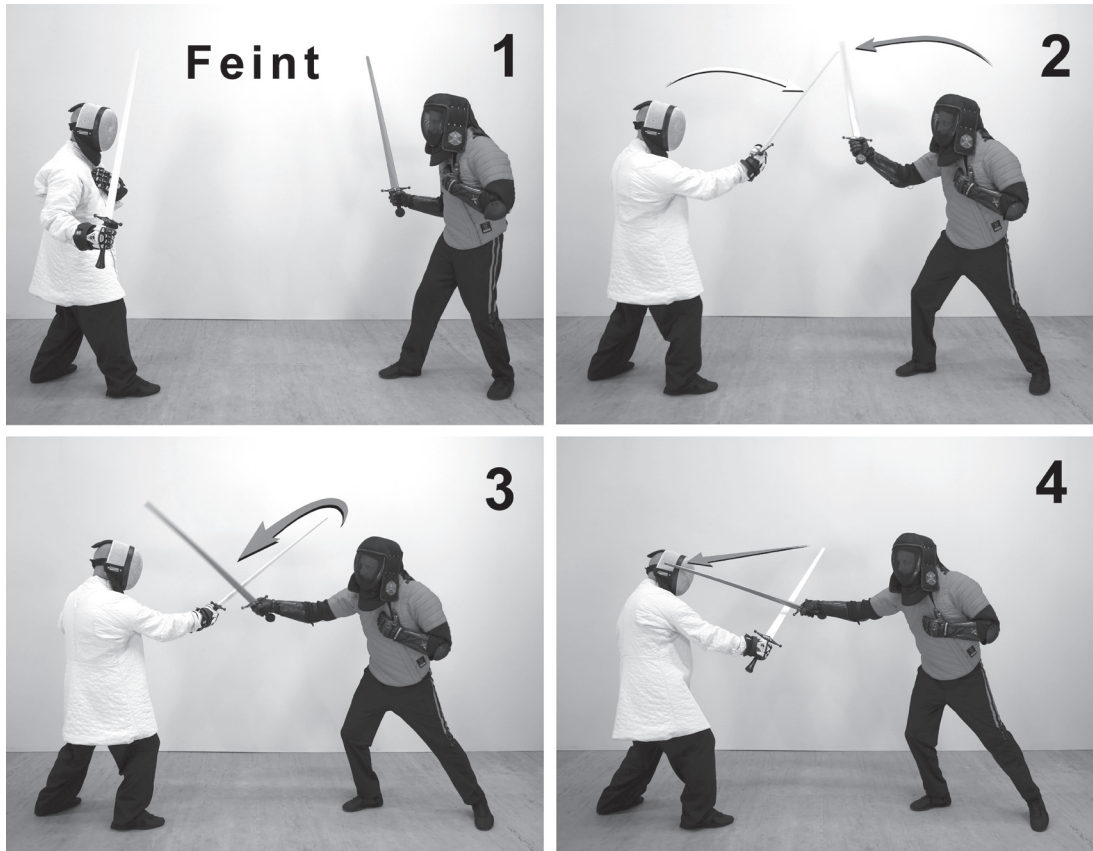
Never forget that when you attempt to draw an attack you are placing yourself in a perilous position. If the opponent takes the bait, he will strike fast and hard, and he may do so the instant you offer it. You must be fully prepared to react to your opponent *before* setting the trap, being ready to block or evade the instant he strikes.

Hold out baits to entice the enemy. Feign disorder, and then crush him.
Pretend inferiority and encourage his arrogance.
—Sun Tzu, *The Art of War*

Feinting

A feint is a fake attack. Feinting is an excellent way to create an open line of attack. It begins with an attack that seems to the opponent like a committed one, causing him to react. As he does, cut your first technique short and launch a second attack from a different direction, while the opponent is still committed to the defense of the first. If your opponent does not defend against your initial feint, then it simply becomes a strike, which is why your first strike must be a real attack. In order for your feint to be successful, your opponent must perceive and be threatened by your initial attack. If your opponent does not understand that your action is threatening him, you will not get the reaction you are looking for.

When feinting, stay committed to your initial attack until you see that the opponent is sufficiently committed to his block and that it will be difficult for him to quickly change his initiated plan of action. Then, quickly and smoothly change your strike to a second target area. If timed properly, your second strike will come in on the half-beat, meaning between the count of one for your first strike and the expected count of two for a typically timed second strike, giving your opponent no time to react.



Feint: You begin facing off against your opponent, each of you in a loaded guard (1). Initiate an attack to the opponent's undefended left highline. He moves to close the line with a high block, as you expected and wanted him to do (2). As soon as you are sure that he is committed to his block, cut around his blade with a flick of your wrist (3). Complete your attack, striking along his now open right high line (4).

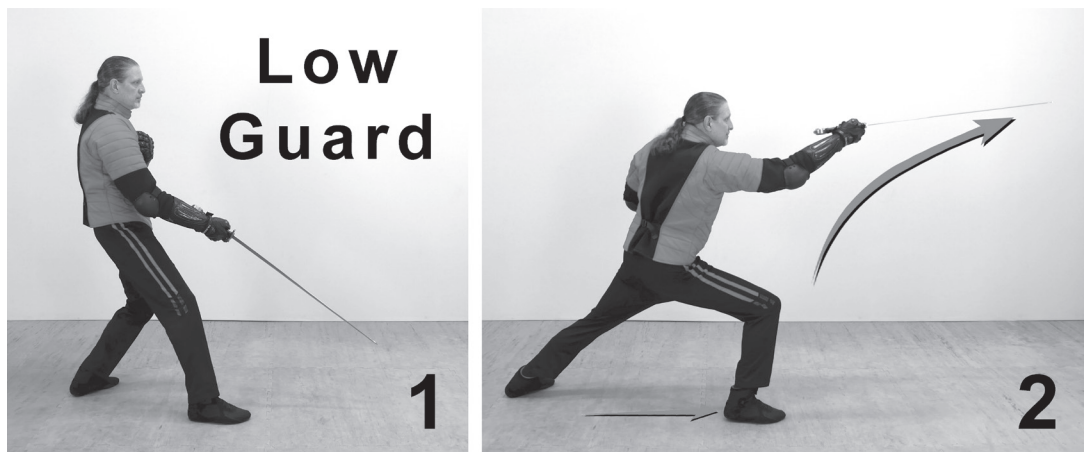
Trick Guards

Up until now, we have worked mainly from the two true guards (middle and hanging) and the six loaded guards (inside/outside, high/middle/low). While these guards are essential standard guards and should be mastered, they are not the only ones available to you. Trick guards are not designed to protect you. Instead, they are traps that deceive your opponent into brashly attacking you, hence the name *trick* guards. Trick guards are also a type of psychological control. You are the one making your opponent attack where and when you want, predicting his movements, and fully expecting him to strike, all the while being ready with your response.

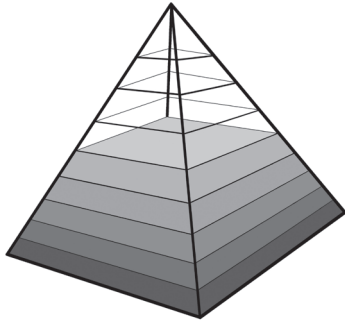
Assuming a trick guard at the beginning of a fight, before your swords engage, makes your intentions obvious. Instead of starting from a trick guard, allowing your opponent to study your position and potentially figure out your plan, it is more effective to adopt a trick guard suddenly, in the midst of combat. Your opponent is far more likely to get greedy and take the bait in the heat of the moment. Even experienced fighters can fall for a trick guard, especially when it is suddenly and unexpectedly interjected into the thick of the fight.

Low Guard

One of the most deceptive ready positions is the fool's guard, so named because while you leave your entire body seemingly exposed to attack, as the saying goes, only fools rush in. In the fool's guard, your sword is held at middle level with the tip pointing down. Strategically, lowering the tip of your sword opens a potential and irresistible line of attack that invites your opponent to strike your now undefended high line. In reality, the tip of your sword is close to your opponent and a mere flex of your wrist can lift the tip of your sword into his path as he moves to attack. Once the opponent begins stepping forward, he is committed to moving in that direction until he can replant his foot. If your timing is good, you can catch him midstride, hitting him square in the face or chest, killing his momentum and disrupting his attack.



Low Guard Practice: Begin standing out of range. Drop your sword to bait your opponent into attacking (1). As soon as the opponent moves to attack, lunge forward as you raise the tip of your sword (2).



LEVEL 5:

Long Sword Offense

A Closer Look at Two-Handed Swords

At the beginning of Part 1, we examined some of the advantages that a short sword has over a long sword, namely accessibility and maneuverability. Likewise, to wield your long sword to its best effect, you'll need to first be familiar with this weapon's advantages and disadvantages, in comparison to the short sword. Before we start, however, let's reiterate that the term "short sword" refers to the length of a sword's handle, not the length of its blade, thereby making the following discussion one of generalities. It needs to be understood that there are always going to be some rare exceptions.

The most obvious advantage of a long sword is usually its greater reach. The longer blade of a two-handed sword allows you to strike from a greater distance than a single-handed sword (keeping in mind that we said this is not always the case). This ability of a long sword has the dual effect of making it easier to attack your opponent from a distance while helping to keep you safely out of his effective striking range. However, having both hands on the handle of your long sword actually restricts the range of your forward thrust to the full extension of your back arm. You can actually thrust farther with a sword held in just one hand because you can twist your torso as you lunge and automatically extend your arm farther. While you may get away with wielding your long sword with just one hand to momentarily get more reach, this can leave you in a structurally weak position should the opponent counter your attack.

A sharp long sword cuts with surprising ease. The greater length and mass of the blade makes the long sword capable of striking harder and more easily than short swords because having both hands on the hilt allows you to generate more power and momentum in a cut than a single-handed sword. This is why you never see a baseball player batting with one hand. In addition to greater power and momentum, this two-handed lever action allows you to maneuver your long sword quickly, despite its greater mass.

Not only are long swords longer and heavier, making them less convenient to carry around and therefore generally less accessible than short swords, the heavier the sword, the more training and physical strength are required to wield it effectively. Even though the long sword can hit fast and hard at a distance and change angles quickly when in the hands of a

skilled swordsman, at close range or in confined spaces, a two-handed sword may still not be as versatile and would therefore be less effective. Since shorter blades are more maneuverable at close range, the general rule is, the shorter the blade, the more treacherous the grapple.

Training Equipment: Choosing a Sword

Before you can start training, you are going to need a two-handed sword. There are many available on the market, and choosing the right one for you is not merely a matter of personal preference. It is important you know how to choose a sword that fits your body size and feels good in your hand. It must also be of appropriate construction for the type of training you will be engaging in.

Materials

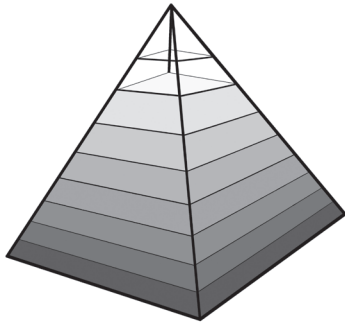
When it comes to buying your first long sword, the first consideration is probably the type of material used to construct the training sword. The fact is that you usually get what you pay for, so let's start with the least expensive alternatives and move up in quality and price from there.

Shinai are a type of bamboo sword commonly used in the Japanese art of kendo. Comprised of split bamboo, the blade of the shinai is circular. While roughly the size and shape of a long sword, shinai usually lack a crossguard. Shinai do bend a little when cutting; however, they do not flex in the thrust. At only \$30 to \$40, shinai are an inexpensive option for a long sword trainer.

Like the shinai, polypropylene long sword trainers are relatively inexpensive, costing around \$40 to \$50. They come in many styles and are extremely durable, making them perfect for pell work. Like the shinai, most have little or no flex, and can, in fact, be heavier than a steel sword, which means that they hit very hard. This is not to say that all polypropylene trainers are bad. Some do have lighter, more realistic blades.

Wooden long swords cost about the same as polypropylene trainers and share many of the same traits. Wooden swords, or wasters, are relatively heavy and do not flex, so they, too, can hit hard. Wooden wasters are also durable enough to withstand the wear and tear of hard training, so they do not need to be replaced very often, although they do have to be checked regularly for cracks and splinters. Minor damage to a wooden sword is easily fixed with sandpaper, and small cracks can sometimes be mended with high-quality wood glue and clamps. However, a large crack is a clear sign that it is time to retire that waster. If historical accuracy in a sword is important to you, this is a great option.

Plastic and low-end synthetic trainers tend to have more flex and a more realistic weight than polypropylene swords. Plastic long swords tend to cost more than polypropylene, coming in at about \$80 to \$100. The downside of plastic swords is that the inexpensive, low-end ones usually either flex too much or are so heavy that they hit harder than a blunt steel sword. On the other hand, high quality synthetic long swords are different than plastic trainers.



LEVEL 7:

Long Sword Fencing

Back in Level 3, you learned the basics of fencing with a short sword. We are going to build upon those skills to quickly teach you the ins and outs of fencing with a long sword. You'll find that the concepts are basically the same, although the mechanics of performing them with a two-handed sword are slightly different.

As their names suggest, the primary distinction lies in how the swords are held. While the single-handed sword is designed to be wielded with one hand, a long sword has room on the grip for two hands. Wielding the sword with two hands provides increased control, leverage, and power. Two-handed swords also generally have longer blades and, therefore, greater range that requires more deliberate footwork and larger movements to control. Longer blades tend to be heavier, however, requiring more strength to wield effectively.

Controlling the Centerline

Remember, using a true guard to control the centerline puts you in a strong defensive position while simultaneously putting your opponent under imminent threat. Keeping the tip of your sword pointed directly at his face puts him on the defensive, preventing him from entering striking range without having to first either move or get around your sword. If your opponent gives up the center to deliver an arcing strike, he opens a line of attack between the tip of your sword and his face or body. Quickly lunge or step forward with a straight thrust while his sword is still in the acceleration zone.

Engagement and the Bind

By assuming a true guard with the tip of your sword pointing directly at your opponent's face, you force him to contend with this immediate threat by engaging your sword. Once you have found the opponent's blade, your swords are engaged in a bind, if only for a moment.

At middle range, cross the strong part of your sword over the weak part of your opponent's blade to achieve an advantageous bind. This contact allows you to manipulate his blade, simultaneously smothering his attack while opening lines of attack for yourself. At close range, the strong parts of your blades cross, placing you in a heavy bind. In this position you are each able to exert equal force upon the other's sword.

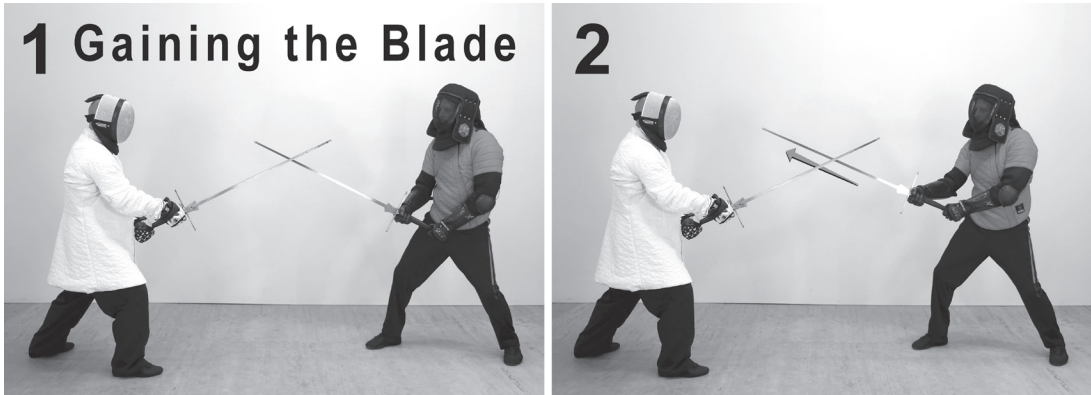
Heavy pressure in the bind is generally discouraged as it prevents you from sensing your opponent's intentions. Light pressure, on the other hand, allows you to sense any pressure that your opponent may exert upon your blade. These tactile clues can reveal your opponent's intentions before you can visually perceive any physical motion. Since you are within striking range, you must not leave any open lines that would allow him to land a simple quick thrust. If your opponent's sword is on the left side of your blade, close his primary lines of attack by positioning your blade slightly to your left, with your point aimed at his left shoulder, creating a wall on your left side with your sword. Likewise, if his blade is on the right side of yours, move your sword slightly to create a defensive wall on your right side, aiming your tip at his right shoulder. Your goal is to simultaneously limit your opponent's ability to attack or defend while creating an open line of attack for you to strike or thrust with your own sword.

You can also get into binds as a result of blocking an attack or having an attack blocked. Most binding with two-handed swords starts in this fashion, either through provocation or as the result of responding to a strike, whereas with a single-handed sword, it is best to seek to actively gain the opponent's blade. In this case, however, you don't seek the opponent's blade. Instead, you simply attack or look to block an incoming attack. The increased mass of the long swords allows you to turn this momentary contact into sustained cohesion between the blades. Once established, your next priority will be to ensure that you quickly move to gain your opponent's blade.

Gaining the Opponent's Blade

As with the short sword, gaining control over your opponent's sword begins with proper positioning of your blade. Position your sword so that more of your blade is over less of theirs. This puts the strong part of your sword against the weaker part of theirs, giving you a mechanical advantage. Utilize the force of gravity by positioning your blade over the top of your opponent's blade. Keep your point on target to provide a threat as well as to set up for a thrust.

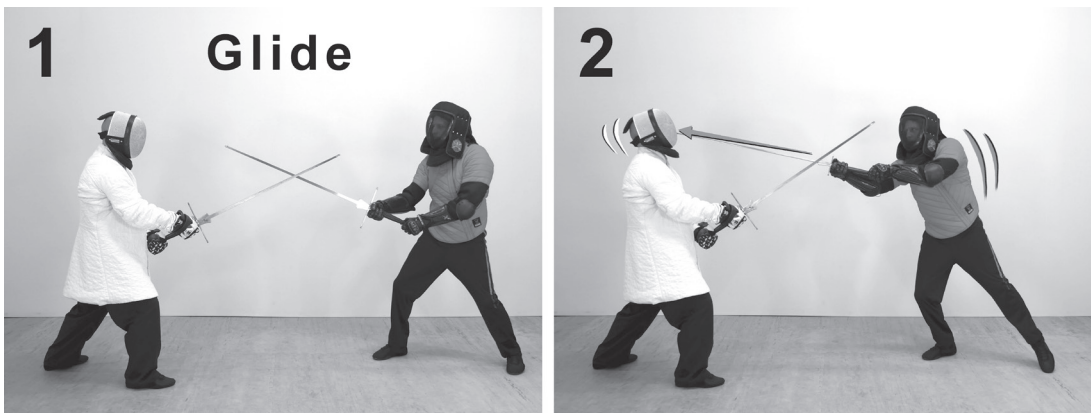
Avoid touching blades too early, as this can alert your opponent as to your intentions. When possible, simply float your blade over your opponent's until you are positioned to launch your attack. When it comes time to engage the opponent's sword, press with your true edge against the flat of his blade. This not only maximizes your power but aligns your crossguard to catch your opponent's blade.



Gaining the Blade: You have engaged your opponent's blade with roughly equal amounts of your swords crossing (1). Extend your arms slightly, allowing your sword to slip past your opponent's blade without moving it until more of your blade is crossing over less of his, providing you with a mechanical advantage (2).

Glide

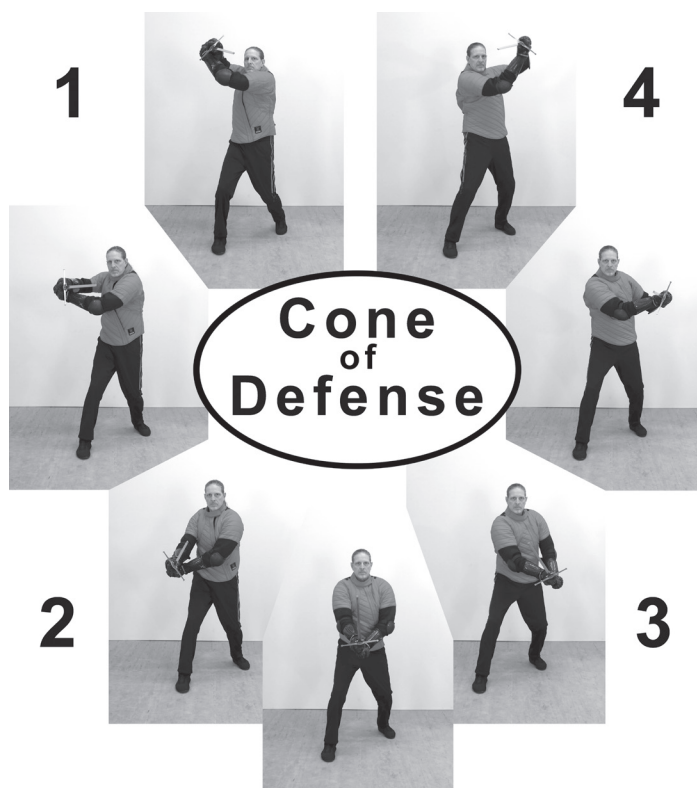
In the glide, you are already in perfect position to thrust while simultaneously checking your opponent's blade. No manipulation of his sword is necessary, and yet he should momentarily be unable to counterattack. The instant you have gained your opponent's blade, quickly thrust straight forward without pulling back or losing cohesion with his blade. As you thrust forward into the gap, your blade glides along the opponent's blade, checking his sword with the edge of your blade as you drive the tip of your sword into his body.



Glide: You have engaged your opponent's blade and you are both vying to control the center. You see that he is not sufficiently protecting his centerline leaving an open line of attack (1). Extend your arms, followed by a press off your rear leg, allowing your sword to skim past your opponent's blade without moving it (2).

The Cone of Defense

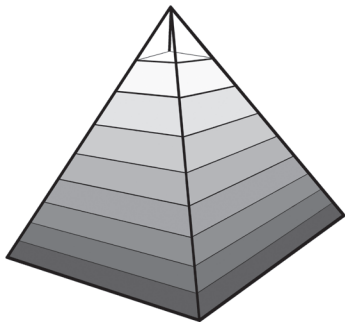
Your opponent will naturally attempt to get around your defense. As he does, you will need to reposition your sword to check his blade, all the while keeping your tip pointed toward him to maintain a constant threat. This can be accomplished using the four long sword guard positions that make up the Cone of Defense.



To describe the Cone of Defense more easily and clearly, we will compare its positions of defense to the numbers on a clock face. Quadrant 1 describes your right high gate, anywhere between 12 and 3 o'clock. It is defended by assuming a right hanging guard (right ox). Quadrant 2, your right low gate position, extends from 3 to 6 o'clock, and it is defended with a right middle guard (right plow). Moving your sword to the left places you in quadrant 3, which is defended with a left middle guard (left plow). Quadrant 4 is your left high gate, and it is defended with a left hanging guard (left ox).

Remember when we discussed whether it was better to block with the edge or the flat of the blade? Using the Cone of Defense is one of those times where you can still be mechanically sound blocking with the flat of the blade.

Developing a strong Cone of Defense is an important prerequisite skill to learning and employing the single tempo master cuts presented later in Level 8.



LEVEL 8:

Advanced Long Sword

Before you train advanced long sword techniques, you should have trained hard and often to put into place a deep understanding of the fundamental techniques and principles presented in Levels 5, 6, and 7. The workouts should have honed your skills in areas such as footwork, timing, distance management, and blade control. This foundational base is necessary for advanced long sword training, which involves a more sophisticated level of training and understanding.

Again, if this all sounds familiar, that is by design. As we've seen in the previous two levels, fighting with the long sword and fighting with the short sword share many commonalities. Just as Levels 5 and 6, Long Sword Offense and Long Sword Defense, were reprises of Levels 1 and 2, Level 8 reads much like Level 4. By applying the same principles you learned with the short sword to the long sword, we can streamline your learning. More versatile applications of techniques make for less memorization, which equates to more efficient and effective mastery.

Long Range

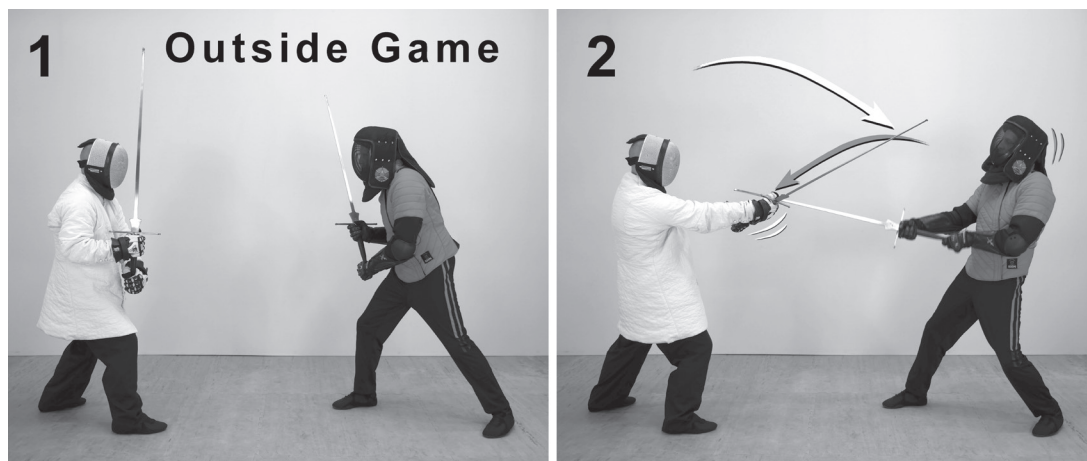
When the objective is to hit your opponent and not get hit back, trained combatants will naturally stand at their maximum striking range to minimize the chances of being struck while staying close enough to attack. Effective long-range combinations require quick, efficient footwork and proper target prioritization. At this long range, it makes sense to strike at the nearest vulnerable targets, usually the hands and lead leg. Targeting the edges is a key element of the outside game.

When targeting the leg, aim for the lead knee. Be ready to attack as soon as he moves into your circle. To keep your opponent from being able to simply step back out of range of your strike, try to anticipate his advance. If you can catch him mid-stride as he enters, it will be difficult for him to withdraw his leg before your strike lands. Remember that attacking your opponent's low line leaves your high line open and your head exposed. Therefore, it is essential to strike at maximum range to avoid any counter cut. As always, be prepared to capitalize on the success or failure of your initial strike. If your strike misses, be prepared to maintain the initiative by flowing directly into a second attack. If your attack is successful, quickly move back out of range to avoid your opponent's counterattack.

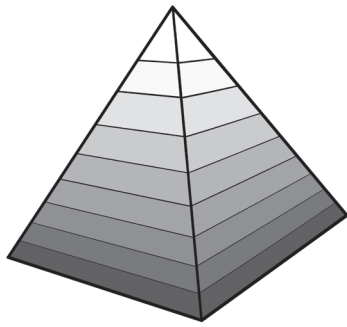
When targeting the hand, full strikes can leave you exposed should your attack fail. Therefore, use half strikes when attacking the hand. Returning quickly to your original guarded position minimizes the amount of time you are exposed. If your first cut misses, you can use a double strike to make a second, unexpected attack to the same target. If your opponent avoided your strike by pulling his hands back and out of range, compensate by leaning in slightly farther with your second strike.

A hand strike usually requires less power to harm to your opponent than a head or body shot, yet it still has the ability to end the confrontation. However, landing a hand strike can be difficult to accomplish because the opponent's hands can move quickly. Rather than chasing the opponent's hands around trying to hit them, increase your chances by waiting for him to commit to a strike instead. You will not only then know where the opponent's hands should be at a given time, but, because he is committed to the attack, it will be difficult for him to avoid your counterstrike. Furthermore, if you strike his hand straight on as he is swinging at you, the resulting forces will be far greater than if you had hit his hand when it was stationary. Keep in mind that merely striking the opponent's weapon hand may not be enough to end the confrontation. Be prepared to either continue striking or quickly move safely out of range after striking his hands.

The ability to strike the hands successfully and consistently requires that you be able to read your opponent, see his attack coming, and plot the trajectory of your sword to his hand almost instantaneously in your head. Developing these skills takes practice.

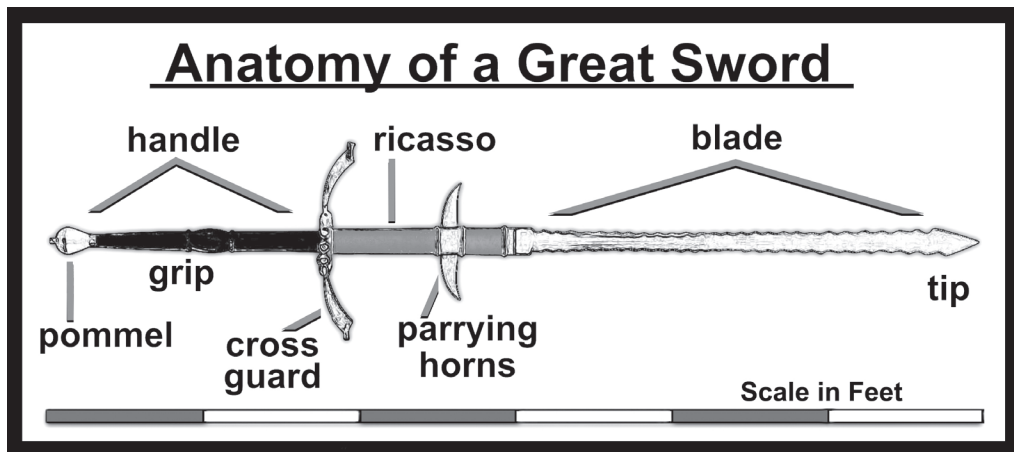


Outside Game: Hover at the edge of your opponent's Circle of Death, watching for him to telegraph his attack (1). As he strikes for your head, evade by fading back out of range of his strike and simultaneously hit his hands (2).



LEVEL 9: Great Sword

Because the bastard sword can be used with one hand or two, it did not warrant its own section in this book. However, the great sword, while similar to the long sword, is different enough that it deserves some special attention. The good news is that, after all your training in first short sword and then long sword, we are able to cover the topic thoroughly in a single level.



Anatomy of a Great Sword

The most obvious characteristic of a great sword is its remarkable length. A great sword, like a staff or polearm, can be about as long as the wielder is tall. Any longer and it would become unwieldy and not able to be used like a sword. Instead, it would have more in common with, and thus be employed like, a long spear.

To manipulate the long and usually heavy blade of a great sword, your hands need to be spaced far apart to provide you with good leverage. For this reason, the handle of a great sword can take up a third of the overall length. The handle is further extended by the ricasso, an unsharpened part of the blade that was sometimes wrapped in leather. In addition to an oversized crossguard to protect your hands on the handle, great swords are often equipped with parrying horns. These horns protect your hands when you are gripping the ricasso.

Some great swords, particularly German battle swords, were equipped with wavy blades that served as psychological weapons and status symbols. In addition to its impressive size, a

great sword, especially one with a flamed blade, can be an intimidating weapon that may strike fear into your opponent, possibly helping you to win the encounter before the fight even begins. While the serrations do not help much in chopping, when drawn either forward or backward across a target, each wave catches and focuses the energy of your cut into the curved edge. This sawing motion is aided by the excessive weight of the weapon. Conversely, it can be argued that serrations on the blade would only serve to drag and slow the momentum of your strike. In either case, since the long blade of the great sword lends itself to being grabbed by an opponent, the serrated edge acts as a good deterrent.

However fierce they might have been, the fact is that serrated blades on great swords were rarely used in combat, mostly because they were very expensive and difficult to produce and maintain. Furthermore, while the serrations may aid in cutting, every curve on the blade provides a potential weak spot, making them more prone to breaking and, therefore, less reliable than a straight blade. This design weakness is why great swords with *flamberge* blades were usually reserved for bodyguards, ceremonies, and parade grounds.

Grip

You hold a great sword similarly to how you hold a long sword, but the grip is much wider. Your non-dominant hand grips just above the pommel, while your dominant hand grasps behind the crossguard. Your hand can be placed thumb facing up, toward the sword tip (1), or facing down, toward the pommel. You should not feel overly committed to either grip. Rather, switch your grips as is necessary to best utilize the weapon given the circumstances.



For a wider grip, move your lead hand to just behind the parrying horns, using either the thumb (2) or pinky side of the hand leading. This grip (3) is akin to half-swording with a long sword. As in half-swording, your grip on the weapon is so wide that cross-handling, that is, crossing your arms as you often do when normally wielding a long sword, can place you in a weak position to either attack or defend. While you will certainly flow through crossed-hand positions when blocking and striking, when gripping the ricasso, strive to maintain a strong open position that allows you to quickly and easily manipulate your sword.

“A true masterpiece ... the perfect reference manual and instructional guide.”

—Master Michael J. Gallagher, USA Taekwondo national weapons champion

“More than basics ... learn how to actually fight with the sword.”

—Paul Peterson, Shihan, 4th dan Hapkido

“[How to] select safety gear and make your own training equipment. This book is well worth your time.”

—Sifu Brian William Jewell, author of *The Wisdom of Wing Chun*

“The essential techniques that form the foundation of attack and defense across disciplines.”

—Bernie Mojzes, Shodan

The best of both Eastern and Western sword fighting techniques

The Art and Science of Sword Fighting takes an innovative, progressive approach to swordsmanship. Consisting of an eclectic collection of the most effective sword fighting techniques borrowed from many diverse sources, these universal concepts work with a wide variety of swords and are applicable to any style.

“Once you have developed your skills so you no longer have to think about them, you can focus your attention on outwitting your opponent in an exciting game of physical chess.” — Joe Varady

Streamlined and divided into nine logical stages of training, the purpose of this text is to create a formidable general practitioner, someone who is comfortable fighting with a variety of swords. This approach provides a solid foundation in the art of sword fighting, a necessity for beginners and experts alike. This book features

- Nine levels of instruction, progressing from easy to expert
- Over 600 photos with motion arrows
- Fighting with a one-handed sword
- Fighting with a two-handed sword
- Detailed plans for building your own training tools

Whether you are just starting out or have been practicing sword fighting for years, this book provides important universal concepts for all levels of experience.



Joe Varady, M.Ed., 7th dan with over thirty years of experience in martial arts, is the award-winning author of *The Art and Science of Staff Fighting* and *The Art and Science of Stick Fighting*. He has trained in numerous Eastern and Western disciplines, including karate, judo, eskrima, boxing, fencing, and long sword. He has won numerous awards competing in full-contact weapons tournaments around the world. Holding a master's degree in elementary education, Joe is the head instructor at Satori Dojo and Modern Gladiatorial Arts. Joe Varady resides in Phoenixville, Pennsylvania.

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