

## **How to enter competitions**

So you're an adult, taken to fencing late in life, have been fencing for a year or two and want to start doing the odd competition. Here's how to go about it:

### **The stuff you need:**

1/ BFA membership

Please check the membership categories for your region:

([http://www.britishfencing.com/British\\_Fencing.asp?PageID=675](http://www.britishfencing.com/British_Fencing.asp?PageID=675))

I recommend that you get full membership, as this allows you to enter as many fencing competitions as you like, and you can visit other clubs with no issues.

2/ Full 'whites', mask, weapons, etc, including:

Jacket,

Plastron,

Breeches,

Mask,

Glove,

Electric Jacket, or lame (for Foil and Sabre),

Two working tested electric weapons,

Two working body wires,

Appropriate footwear (fencing shoes from Adidas or Hitec are available)

Track suit, towel, shower gel, spare t-shirts and a water bottle are all good ideas.

It is also worth getting a small toolkit together consisting of an Allen Key (for pistol grip weapons), a set of screwdrivers, some spare tips, grub screws and springs. It might also be worth getting a test weight for foil/epee and epee gauges.

Please see the BFA website for details about kit and suppliers, etc ([http://www.britishfencing.com/British\\_Fencing.asp?PageID=440](http://www.britishfencing.com/British_Fencing.asp?PageID=440)). The website also contains details about the different levels of kit you can buy. Basically, you need 350N Jacket and Breeches for UK competitions and you'll need a 800N plastron as all competitions fence electric throughout.

### **How to select a competition:**

You'll want to start off at a lower key event, so have a chat with the people at your club and see when the county championships are taking place, and indeed most clubs run their own championships. The next level would be the section championships. The good thing about these competitions is that they should be fairly local. There are also some team competitions in the calendar, such as the Wellesbourne Trophy, the White Horse Trophy and a number of inter-county competitions. Hopefully members of your club can point you in the right direction.

The next level up is the open competition, and for these you will probably have to travel further afield. The strength of the entries in these competitions can vary, even year to year, so I advise that you start off at the lower level opens. Luckily, the results of these competitions are used to generate a national ranking table. This table has what is known as a NIF score for each event, and the higher the NIF the harder the event. So for instance, in Men's Foil the Bristol Open currently has a NIF of 50, the Ashton Open has a NIF of around 5, and the British Championships has a NIF of over 120. You can use the NIF to help judge whether the competition is for you, or not.

### **How to enter a competition:**

Once you've selected an open to enter, you need to send off an entry form and fee to the organisers. Try to do this well in advance, as the cost goes up if you enter late. You can download the entry forms from the BFA website, or some competitions have an online entry facility.

Note that some competitions run some weapons on the Saturday, whilst another might run the same weapon on the Sunday, so double check and make sure you turn up on the right day. Make it easy for the organisers, and get there well before the check-in closes. This allows you to be prepared and warmed-up before the first round starts.

Make sure you are in the right place to hear and check what is going on when the competition starts. Often one of the organisers will call out all of the poules (see later), or notices will be posted on the wall of the sports hall. You need to turn up at your piste on time for the first round with all your kit, including a spare weapon and bodywire.

Most competitions will run the first round as a poule round (of five to seven fencers in each poule), with each bout being the first to five hits with a maximum time of 3 minutes. The poules are drawn up based on the fencer's national rankings. Some competitions make a point of running the first two rounds as poule rounds, with no fencers eliminated between the rounds. It's good to look out for these events, as it guarantees more fencing on the day. Once the early rounds are complete, the fencers are ranked according to their results. Some fencers may be eliminated at this time, but not always. From now on the fencers are in the direct elimination stage of the event (knock-out), with the strongest fencer meeting the weakest, and so on. The direct elimination stage of the event is run as the first to fifteen hits over three three-minute periods, with a one minute rest between each.

During a fight, If you are uncertain as to what is happening, or you cannot remember the score, then politely ask the president (or referee) and they'll help you out.

If you are eliminated in the poule stages, some competitions run a separate plate competition. The Bristol and Welsh Open's do this. Look out for this in when you select your competitions, as it gets you a lot more fencing for your day out.

The most important thing to remember is that you are there for the experience, so go with the expectation to learn a lot, and enjoy the day. There's a lot you can learn from watching the more experienced fencers, and also pick up some of the more intricate rules from the referees.