

Preparing for Sanctioned Tournaments (RYC/SYC/NAC)

1. **Register for tournament:** Competitive USFA membership is required.
Register for these tournaments via USFA.org.

2. **Book hotel and travel** as early as possible.
 - Information is located on USFA Event “Details” page. There will often be “host hotels” listed that are close to the venue with a discount
 - On the USFA NAC page, click “Book a Room” on the right-hand panel

3. Make sure you own all necessary **equipment**.
It is recommended you have **3 weapons and 3 cords** (2 of each is acceptable), in addition to full uniform including knickers, long socks, hard chest protector (required for females) and underarm protector.
 - 3A. The body cords must have clear plastic ends
 - 3B. The mask must have the **strap with buckles on the ends**
 - 3B. **Last name** will need to be printed on the back of the jacket for NAC & SYC participation. Name is not needed for local tournaments & RYC’s. Ask us about printing (\$45).

4. **Test all equipment before leaving: Weapons** (tip screws, weight, & shims) **& body cords**
 - a. A coach can assist you during or outside of class. The testing equipment is located in the armory.
 - b. Testing should be done **a few days** in advance so if anything is broken, coaches have time to fix it before you leave.
 - i. You may leave your weapon in the “broken” section outside the armory if you need something fixed, with a name tag and the issue on it.
 - ii. Rewire is \$20.
 - iii. Anything fixed in the tip is \$10.
 - iv. **Recommended to buy your own bag of backup tip screws/tip screwdrivers.**

- c. Always test the last weapon and cord you used one more time right before leaving.
5. **Recommended items to bring**: water bottle, snacks, warm-ups, ibuprofen, music, folding chair, money, change of clothes, phone charger.
6. **Tips on arriving at the tournament venue**
- a. Make sure you **check your event time** the night before.
 - b. Arrive **one hour prior** to the registration closing time for your event
 - c. Look for these things first:
 - i. **Check-in** counter (present your **USFA card** or birth certificate if needed; to avoid this, you may [verify your age](#) once by uploading proof into your USFA account)
 - ii. **Armory** for checking equipment
 - 1. It is okay for parents to wait in line and have the equipment checked while the fencer warms up
 - 2. Only your **mask, body cords, and glove will be tested** at the competition
 - a. Make sure your glove has no holes, and sew it before the tournament if necessary. Tape will not suffice. Glue may be ok for very small holes in the seam
 - b. Mask and glove will get stamped, and cords will get stickers on them – referees will check these later. **DO NOT REMOVE** these until the competition is over.
 - 3. If something fails, you should have time to buy something from a vendor and get it tested again.
 - d. Warm up for the event
 - i. Run, jump rope, stretch, footwork.
 - ii. Around 20-30 minutes before registration closes, you should suit up and fence warm-up bouts with the clubmates and/or other participants in your event.

7. Tips during the tournament

- a. Go to [FencingTimeLive.com](https://www.fencingtimelive.com) to look for your competition; click on it for your pool & strip assignments and live results during the competition.
- b. Bring your parent and all equipment (including snacks, extra tip screws, etc.) to your assigned strip. Bring **your backup weapons and cords** right *alongside* your strip for every bout.
- c. When the referee arrives, they will call everyone in your group to gather in the middle of the strip before pools begin.
 - i. They will check to make sure your mask & glove are stamped and that your cord has a tag on it. They will also check to make sure you are wearing your underarm & chest protectors under your jacket. They will check the name on the back of your jacket at national competitions.
- d. At the start of each bout, go to your *en garde* (starting) line and allow the referee to **take your weapon and test it** (you are still plugged in at your hand). Test bell guards with your opponent once you and your opponent have both been tested. Make sure to **salute your opponent and referee from the "en garde" line before starting the bout.**
- e. After each bout, check to make sure both tip screws are still in your weapon. If not, use another weapon for the next bout, and your parent can bring your weapon to a vendor (i.e. Blue Gauntlet) to get repaired (there is a small fee for this; usually a few dollars).
 - i. If you come to the strip with only one screw, you cannot use the weapon, and this a yellow (warning) card.
- f. If a weapon fails testing (weight or shims) at the start of the bout, the ref **will take your weapon** for the bout. This is also a [yellow card](#). You must get your back-up weapon and have it tested as well. If your new weapon fails a test, you will get a red card, and your opponent gets a

point. You can get your weapon(s) back immediately after the bout and go have it fixed (a parent can take it to the vendor armorer).

- i. In general, if one thing goes wrong with the equipment at the start of the bout, it is a yellow card. If something else goes wrong, it is a red card (opponent starts 1-0). If a third thing goes wrong, it is another red card (the opponent starts the bout at 2-0). Etc. This is why it is important to have multiple backups for weapons/cords.

FENCERS DON'T FORGET!

You can always **stop the bout** (do not do so in the middle of a fencing action) by backing up out of fencing distance and ***raising your hand***, if:

1. **Think you had a touch but the light didn't go off:** ask the referee to **check your weapon**. If it is broken, you can grab your backup, the referee will test it, and you may use it.
 - a. You can also ask the referee to test your weapon after the referee says halt and awards your opponent a touch. If your weapon does not go off when the referee tests it, the referee will take away your opponent's touch and you may get your backup weapon to use.
 - i. You will NOT get the touch back if you test the weapon yourself
2. **Hair/sweat is in your eyes:** anything that makes you uncomfortable and unable to focus can be fixed – ask the referee to give you a few seconds. This also gives you a second to take a deep breath and think about your fencing actions for the bout.
3. **You're hurt:** if something really hurts and you are unable to continue, the medic will be called. You are entitled to up to 10 minutes for medical break, at their recommendation. If you fake it, it's a red card.

After the point is over, also feel free to ask.

4. **You are unsure if a touch is valid.** (i.e., Did the opponent actually hit your foot? Did your opponent step off the strip and then hit you? Feel free to ask the ref!)

Additionally, you may ask to **check the referee's score sheet** after each bout to make sure that the score was written down correctly. At the end of the pools, the referee will ask you to check over the sheet and make sure everything is correct – please take your time to read it correctly and ask them about any discrepancies you see.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION FOR PARENTS DURING BOUTS

1. Read about [how Strip coaching works here](#)
2. If you did not sign your fencer up for strip coaching from an Olympia coach (or coaching was not offered), you can still help your fencer a little:
 - a. Do not shout out long commands or interrupt their fencing. You may say **short statements** while they walk back to their en garde lines between points.
 - b. Let your fencer know if they are getting close to the back of the strip. Have your fencer clarify with the referee before the start of the pools/bout what the actual back of the strip is. They are allowed one foot off, but if both feet go off, the opponent is awarded a point. You may shout “Strip!” (or another short, similar statement) to your fencer during the bout.
 - c. If your fencer is losing the bout and **time** on the clock is running low, you can call out the time to your fencer (i.e. “30 seconds!” “10 seconds!”). Your fencer wants to at least be tied to their opponent if the bout time runs out.
 - i. **Pool bouts are 3 minutes long.**
 - ii. Direct Elimination bouts are 2 periods of 3 minutes (if you are in the Y8/Y10 event) or **3 periods of 3-minutes** (if you are in a Y12 event or above). It is ok if you are not tied at the end of the first or second period – you want to be tied or winning at the end of the final period.
 - iii. If your fencer and their opponent are **tied at the end of the bout**, the referee will bring them into an “overtime” period

known as “**priority**.” This period is only 1-minute, and it will end once one, single touch (one light goes off) has been scored.

1. *How it works:* The referee will *randomly* assign “priority” to your fencer or to their opponent (the light will blink back and forth on the score box, and the side that the light ends up on, is the side that has priority). The fencer with priority will win the bout if no touch is scored in that minute, or if all double touches are scored. A single light will end the bout either way. You will want to let your fencer know that time is running low if they do not have priority. They need to try to attack, or else they will lose.
- d. If no touch has been scored for a minute, your fencer can receive a P (Passivity) Yellow Card. This is also a type of warning card. You do not need to worry about this if the score is tied or your fencer is ahead. If your fencer is losing and it happens once – that’s ok, it is just a warning. But if your fencer is down and it might happen again, you want to keep track of the time and let your fencer know if time is running low. If it does happen a second time, your fencer will get a P Red Card, and the opponent will be awarded a point. If it happens a third time when your fencer is down, they will immediately be awarded another P Red Card, and the opponent will be awarded another point. If it happens a fourth time, they will get a P Black Card and will be eliminated from the competition.
3. **Parents can be carded just like the fencers and asked to leave the venue.**
 - a. While you can politely address a call/or ask a question after the referee says halt, do not extensively argue with the referee.
 - i. Examples: floor touch, faulty fencing, confusion over a rule.

4. The referee's **decision cannot be appealed** – insulting a referee can get you black-carded.

5. For direct elimination bouts, one coach or one parent can talk to the fencer and give pointers during the period breaks. No more than one person can be with the fencer on the strip during this time. Your fencer should have their water bottles right at the back of the strip for these breaks.

6. Do not readily accept help or coaching tips from parents or coaches from other clubs, as your fencer's fencing may not be in their best interest.

7. For your reference, [here is a link to the USFA penalty chart for a list of ways your fencer can receive yellow, red, and black cards](#). It is important for you and your fencer to review this chart so they will avoid making these errors during the bouts.

Remember to be patient and focus on LEARNING, rather than stressing out about points. Points will come as soon as your fencer is familiar with the competition process, and can be relaxed enough to focus on their skills!

Good luck, and have fun!!