

What kind of cross-training will help my fencing?

Contributed by Internet FAQ
Tuesday, 18 November 2003

The best training for fencing is fencing. Fencing development is asymmetrical and few other sports use the same muscle groups, so this is a difficult question whose answer depends largely on what aspect of your training you really want to focus on.

Cardiovascular fitness and leg strength always help, so anything that enhances these will be beneficial. Cycling, swimming, aerobics, and skating are good examples. Running, sprinting, soccer, basketball, and similar sports can also be helpful, although some athletes dislike the stresses they put on the knees. Racquet sports like tennis, badminton, squash, racquetball, and table tennis are also excellent, and will exercise your weapon arm in addition to your legs. Circuit or period training (short bursts of high-heart-rate exercise followed by brief recovery periods) has been put forward as particularly relevant to the demands of fencing.

Many martial arts have physical and mental demands that are similar to fencing, and can improve both your fitness and your intellectual approach to the sport. Technique and tactics very rarely translate, however.

Weight training can help, if done properly, but the athlete must remember that flexibility, speed, and technique are more important than raw strength, although proper strength training (especially of the lower body and legs) can improve speed significantly. Otherwise, endurance training should have priority over bodybuilding. Excessive weight training of the upper body can adversely affect point control, according to some masters, who prefer weighted wrist straps worn during regular practice.

Some fencers maintain that juggling improves reactions, hand-eye coordination, and use of peripheral vision.

Many coaches and fencers suggest occasional fencing or workouts with your opposite hand, both to improve skill and balance your muscular development.