

## General Footwork Exercises

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There have been several discussions on the rec.sport.fencing newsgroup and in the fencing.net forums on the different types of exercises one should do in order to be in the best shape for fencing.

I thought I would take a different tack and suggest some footwork exercises that I have used in the past. These come from drills that the team at UNC-Chapel Hill did on a regular basis and are taken from the Olympic Footwork Exercises our national teams have used.

The idea behind the footwork drills are to get your body used to doing simple and then complex series of footwork exercises so that you can use them better in a bout. Just like you would practice a beat-disengage as one unit and not two, so you would practice an advance-lunge as one unit.

With that in mind, here are 12 drills that you can do. It helps to have a small group doing these with one person the designated reader. Keep a close feel on your body balance and make your steps short - they will get bigger in a bout.

If you would like to see more suggestions for drills, etc. Please let me know. If you have other subjects you would like to or like me to comment on, just email me.

Key: /=slight pause, -=continuous, :=new action

- Lunge/on-guard: advance-lunge/on-guard: double advance-lunge/on-guard: triple advance-lunge/on-guard: lunge/on-guard: lunge/on-guard-retreat: lunge/on-guard-double retreat: lunge/on-guard-triple retreat:

- Advance-retreat: lunge/on-guard: advance-lunge/on-guard-retreat: double advance-lunge/on-guard-double retreat: advance-fleche/on-guard-retreat (sabre fencers do triple advance-lunge):

- Retreat-lunge/on-guard: advance-lunge/on-guard: double retreat-lunge/on-guard: double advance-lunge/on-guard:

- Jump forward-lunge/on-guard: advance-lunge/on-guard: jump forward/jump forward-lunge/on-guard: advance/advance-lunge/on-guard: (remember the timing differences here!)

- (The killer) Lunge-on guard: lunge/on-guard: lunge-redouble/redouble/on-guard: lunge/on-guard: lunge/on-guard: lunge-redouble-fleche-on guard: (sabre do jump lunge instead of fleche)

- Jump forward-lunge/forward on-guard: jump forward-lunge/forward on-guard: jump forward/jump forward-fleche-on guard: 4 retreats-lunge/on guard:

- Triple retreat-fleche-on guard: triple retreat-fleche-reprise fleche-on guard:

- Lunge/on guard-retreat: fleche (or jump-lunge)/on-guard-retreat: lunge/on-guard-retreat: retreat-flech(or jump-lunge)-on guard-double retreat:

- Jump forward-lunge-short fleche/on guard: jump forward-lunge-redouble/on guard:

- Advance/advance-fleche-reprise fleche: retreat/retreat-fleche-reprise fleche:
- Fleche-on guard-double retreat: fleche-on guard-double retreat: fleche-reprise fleche-on guard-4 retreats:
- Jump forward-fleche-on guard: advance-fleche-on guard: triple retreat-fleche-on guard:

As you can see, these drills emphasize quick changes in direction, what we call "turning the corner". If you are good at making these fast, quick changes in direction, you will be able to take advantage of those fencers who can't.

The best example is when you are being attacked. You and the other fencer are going at full speed: you backward, them forward. Once you catch their blade, if you are faster at turning the corner than they are, you have a much higher chance of getting the touch.