

## What is a flick?

Contributed by Fencing FAQ  
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Flicks are whip-like attacks that can score against very oblique and even concealed targets. Sometimes thought of as a recent corruption, flicks actually have a long history that stems from coupe' (the cut-over) and epeeists efforts to throw their points around the bell. Properly executed and judged, they are effective and beautiful attacks; poorly executed and judged, they can be painful and annoying.

One common criticism of the flick is that it would cause minor injury with a real weapon. The obvious, if flippant, response to this is not to flick when fencing with a real weapon.

Another common criticism is that flicks are difficult to defend against. One must simply remember to parry them as if they were cuts, not thrusts (using auxiliary parries like tierce, quinte, and elevated sixte). The flick is also highly sensitive to distance, and a well-timed break in the measure will cause it to land flat.

A third criticism is that flicks are usually given the priority, even though the attack often begins with the point aimed at the ceiling. However, the definition of an attack (see question 1.15) says nothing about where the point is aimed, only what it is threatening. It is normally true that an attack that scores must have threatened in at least its final tempo.

Sabre fencing has suffered from a related and more serious scourge, the whip-over. In this case, the foible bends around the opponent's blade or guard following a parry, to contact the target and register a touch. The scoring machines attempt to reduce these false touches by blocking hits within a certain time window following weapon contact, but this is of limited effectiveness and also has the unfortunate effect of blocking the occasional attack through the blade. Referees have tried to help out by analyzing whip-over touches as remises, but they still score over composed or delayed ripostes. The FIE has been considering and trying various possible fixes, including varying the timeouts and mandating stiffer sabre blades.