

What clothing is required for fencing?

Contributed by Fencing FAQ
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Fencing clothing includes the jacket, pants, plastron (underarm protector), and socks. Some companies manufacture unitards (combined jacket and pants). Inexpensive practice gear is fashioned of synthetics or heavy cotton, but competition clothing is required to pass an 800 N puncture test.

Casual and beginner fencers can rely on cotton or synthetic jackets, but should consider using a plastron for extra protection. Track pants or baseball knickers are also thrifty alternatives to genuine fencing clothing, although they afford little protection.

Most jackets are left- or right-handed. Women's jackets are not only cut differently, but have pockets for breast protectors. Ambidextrous (back-zip) jackets are available, but generally not with homologated fabrics. Ambidextrous (double-sided) plastrons are available from some manufacturers.

Knee-high sport socks (such as for soccer/football or baseball) can be purchased from most sporting goods stores. Skin should not show between the socks and pant legs nor the cuff and glove of the weapon hand. The trailing hand and back of the head should be the only areas of exposed skin on the fencer's body.

FIE Homologated Clothing

800N homologated clothing is fashioned from special fabrics such as kevlar, Startex, or ballistic nylon. Some uniforms (especially older uniforms of kevlar construction) offer partial 800N coverage in vital areas with lighter 350N fabrics used elsewhere. Full-coverage 800N uniforms are now the norm in homologated clothing.

The rules for FIE 'A' level competition demand homologated jacket and pants. As of April 1, 1995, an additional 800N plastron is required.

The CFF currently requires a minimum of 800/350N uniforms for all elite tournaments. No plastron is required in conjunction with FIE clothing.

800N uniforms are not required in USFA competition; a regulation plastron is compulsory with all types of uniform, however. (USFA clothing regulations can be found at <http://www.usfa.org/Documents/Policy/Uniform.html>).

800N clothing generally provides the highest degree of quality and protection available. It is strongly recommended for serious competitors, and for anyone else concerned about their safety. Although considerably more expensive than practice gear, many fencers find it well worth the price.