

Issue # 2, January 2013

# Essential Fencing Equipment Guide

Much of the equipment used in fencing is worn with safety in mind. Fencing is an **extremely safe sport** provided the correct equipment is worn.

Fencing is also a technical sport, demanding specialist equipment. We'll try to give you an overview of what you'll need, in some kind of order and how much you should expect to pay for it.

Whilst we launder the club gear regularly, there's nothing like having you own gear that a) fits and b) you can take home and wash yourself. Fencers are very enclosed inside their kit while running around. Think about it...

Consider which weapons you eventually wish to fence. Club foil requires only the lighter weights of clothing. Competition-grade equipment is of higher spec. and higher price. For épée, you may want the heavier-gauge clothing for extra protection. Don't forget the blindingly obvious when ordering equipment: **left- or right-handed?**

## The Essential List

1. Mask
2. Glove
3. Plastron (& chest protector)
4. Jacket
5. Weapons
6. A bag (important when you have long weapons to carry around)
7. Electric (competition) kit

## Item-by-item

'N' is for... Where you see items graded by a number suffixed with N, the N is for *Newtons*, a measure of force-resistance, or protection.

**1. Mask:** you can adjust your own mask for width, tongue length and back-strap. Get a larger size if you wear glasses. A detachable, washable liner is a god-send. Starts around £50 for a 350N standard grade mesh. There is a 1600N mask for FIE competition grade at around £105. Sabre masks are made of all-conductive mesh for the electric box, hence prices start around £65.

**2. Glove:** a good quality fencing glove stretches to fit your hand. Think about length of cuff and padding on the back of the hand. Starts around £17.

**3. Plastron:** get yourself a protective under-plastron in the right size. Standard weight is 350N which starts around £18. The 800N variety is thicker, heavy and gives more protection, but prices go from £35 upward.

**Chest Protectors** are mandatory for girls and women and a recommended item for men. The one-piece white plastic strap-on types start at £15. The old-style plastic cups are not legal for competition.

**4. Jacket:** A front-zippered jacket is easier to get into than the club's random assortment of back-zipping jackets. Starts around £35-40.

**5. Weapons:** Bear in mind there still exists a division between *electric* fencing (on the scoring box) and *steam* (the old, non-electric way).

Electric weapons have switched contact-tips, wires and sockets. They are more expensive. You can fence 'steam' with them off the box.

	Jacket	Plastron	Breeches	Mask
U14	350N Jacket	350N Plastron	Trousers with pockets sewn shut -no shorts	Mask with 350N bib
	or integrated 350N Jacket/plastron			
FIE	800N Jacket	800N Plastron	800N Breeches	Mask with 1600N bib
Others	350N Jacket	800N Plastron	350N Breeches	Mask with 350N bib

Minimum clothing standards for club and competition.

Whichever weapons you eventually take up, a basic steam foil is always a useful starting point and decent practice weapon. Steam foils start at £25.

Electric foils come with a variety of blade quality. Avoid 'maraging' blades (unless you're feeling rich) as they are only mandated for A-grade ranking competitions. Electric foils start around £35.

**Epée** It is worth going straight to electric épée. Again, a club or standard blade will do. Electric épées start around £35.

**Sabres:** still come as steam or electric, the main difference being a plug socket for the body-wire and some insulation in the guard. Most clubs have some electric sabre kit, so its worth the extra for an electric weapon. Electric sabres start around £40

**6. Fencing Bag:** needs to be large enough for full kit, 3-4 weapons and hard-wearing. Basic 'sausage' bags starts around £25. Fancier, single-weapon bags are available for around £18-25, which never seemed like a great deal to us

**7. Fencing shoes:** specialist fencing shoes are available and often recommended because they can grip the fencing piste very easily. For club fencing, a decent pair of trainers **used indoors only** will do the job just as well.

**7. (Electric) over-Lamé:** (pronounced *la-may*) – two types of lame are used when fencing on the electric scoring apparatus. The lamés for foil and sabre are cut to the different target area for each weapon. Get one if you are planning to compete regularly and practice often 'on the box.'

Foil lamé 'vest' starts around £45. Sabre lamé starts around £65 (with 2 sleeves!)

**8. Bodywire:** required to connect you to the electric apparatus – one end lugs into the weapon, the other to the spool connected to 'the box.'

*Electric épée* uses a standard bodywire with three-pin plugs at both ends. Epée wires start around £10.

*Electric foil and sabre* come with choices of sockets and plugs: The push-and-twist Bayonet plugs are longer and prone to stick and some people find this longer type of plug gets in the way of the fingers when fencing.

Two-pin plugs are smaller and more compact.

Make sure when ordering you get weapons with sockets and bodywires that match!

Bodywires (either plug) start around £9

**Not forgetting - Breeches** (or fencing trousers) are technically a requirement for any electric fencing, but not always enforced at club level; we're looking at our insurance cover for this. You will need them for competition, worn with long socks.

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## Suppliers

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The selection of suppliers listed below are used by local clubs.

### The Fencing Shop (was 2020 Alpha)

Tel: 0191 3727 194

e-mail: [sales@thefencingshop.co.uk](mailto:sales@thefencingshop.co.uk)

web: <http://www.thefencingshop.co.uk>

Sean and Noel run mail-order from Durham.

Starter Kit, foil épée or sabre from £121

(Club discount available on most lines)

### PBT UK

Tel: 01252 342898

e-mail: [sales@pbt-uk.com](mailto:sales@pbt-uk.com)

web: <http://www.pbt-uk.com>

Ian Briggs has shop premises in Aldershot and also supplies mail order.

No starter kit in the price-list but a wide range of choices from which to make up your own kit. (Club discount available on most lines)

**Leon Paul** is probably the first supplier you'll find in an Internet search of UK suppliers. Shop premises at Hendon and mail-order. Oldest established supplier, still trading internationally; prices sometimes reflect this.

**NOTE:** There is a number of overseas, Internet-only and 'grey' importers of East European and far-East (China, India) kit. Use at your own discretion and do not be tempted by attractively under-priced gear, as we have found quality is variable at best -even from the US.