



CANADIAN FENCING FEDERATION

INSTRUCTIONAL PROGRAM

CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION.....	3
SKILL DEVELOPMENT.....	4-6
INSTRUCTIONAL PROGRAM	7
ASSESSMENT PROCESS.....	8-9
APPENDIX A - FOIL	
APPENDIX B - EPEE	
APPENDIX C - SABRE	

INTRODUCTION

The intention of the Canadian Fencing Federation Instructional Program is to guide the delivery of the sport and develop complete fencers. Complete fencers are those with strong technical knowledge and good tactical observation skills leading to a capacity for adaptation and a more complete knowledge of all the aspects of fencing.

Aligned with the NCCP's Competency Based Education and Training Model of coaching training and sport delivery, the Instructional Program is divided both by stages of skill development and fencing specific performance factors. This provides a foundation for coaches to build balanced and complete fencers.

This document will discuss the stages of skill development and align these stages with performance factors specific to fencing. It will also outline the requirements at each stage of the program and necessary exam procedures.

SKILL DEVELOPMENT

Stages of Skill Development

A basic understanding of skill development is essential for successful application of the Instructional Program. Fencing is a sport of open skills. Open skills are those where movements are performed in an unpredictable environment. Despite the unpredictability of fencing, as athletes learn a new skill, they progress through a series of predictable stages. It is important to note that the time and amount of practice required at each stage varies across athletes.

The Instructional Program of Canadian Fencing Federation is guided by the five stages of skill development. In order these are: Initiation, Acquisition, Consolidation, Refinement and Creative Variation. The following table has been adapted from the Coaches Association of Canada 2003 Document. It describes the key stages of skill development and the needs of athletes at each stage.

Stages of Skill Development and Needs of Athletes at Each Stage

	Stage of Skill Development	Key Points to consider when recognizing the stage of the athlete	At this stage athletes need to...
BEGINNER	Initiation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · First contact with skill · Athlete may have no idea of what to do to perform skill 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Have a clear mental image of what correct execution looks like. · Understand fundamental positions, stance, and patterns of sport or skill · Feel safe when performing skill
	Acquisition	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Early stage of learning · Coordinate key components of movements and execute them in the correct order · Perform a rough form of the skill · Movements not well synchronized or under control · Lack rhythm, flow and precision · Inconsistent, thoughtful execution · Form and performance deteriorate with speed or when under pressure 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Understand clearly what to do · Good mental representation of task · Perform many repetitions at their own pace and under stable, easy and safe conditions · Find solutions through trial and error, based on coach feedback
INTERMEDIATE	Consolidation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Execute the skill in the correct form · Movement control, synchronization, and rhythm are good when performing skill under easy and stable conditions · Repeated consistently with precision under stable conditions · Some elements maintained under pressure, through condition changes, or increased demands · Overall performance inconsistent · Begin to develop personal style 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Be exposed to a variety of situations · Perform many repetitions under varied conditions · Be challenged by more complex and demanding tasks or conditions · Find more solutions through trial and error based on less frequent feedback · Practice skills in conditions where fatigue prevails or that replicate competitive demands · Deal with consequences of errors

ADVANCED	Refinement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Execute movements with nearly ideal speed and form · Consistent performance · High precision, even under very demanding, complex and varied conditions · Only minor fine-tuning required for optimal execution · Very definitive personal style · Movement components are automated increasing focus on the environment and rapid changes · Critical reflection on performance 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Be exposed to complex or demanding competitive situations requiring high level skill execution · Be trained on developing solutions to problems independently
	Creative Variation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Achieved only by the best athletes in the world · Movements performed according to the ideal model · Personal style is efficient · Personal interpretation of ability · Create unique patterns in response to competitive situations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Be exposed to complex and demanding competitive situations requiring perfect skill execution · Develop own solutions

CAC 2003

Regarding the ‘advanced’ stages shown above, it should be noted that “it may take months or even years of practice for an athlete to reach the ‘Refinement’ stage [and] the vast majority of them will never reach the ‘Creative Variations’ stage. ... Therefore, the focus should be on ensuring the fundamentals are correct, and that they can be performed in a variety of situations and conditions.” (CAC, 2003)

Activity Planning Guidelines

As an athlete progresses through the stages of skill development, the practice conditions must adapt to expose athletes to the appropriate situations and conditions required to meet their needs and encourage their athletic success. It is important to ensure that the goals and activities for the athlete are adapted to their needs and that the conditions for these activities match the athlete’s capabilities. Exactly how these activities are arranged should be creatively decided by the coach based on their understanding and interpretation of the athlete’s stage of skill development.

While the ‘Stages of Skill Development and Needs of Athletes at Each Stage’ table above expresses this need for changing conditions, the ‘Activity Planning Guidelines’ breaks these changing conditions down further and relates specific conditions to each stage of skill development. This table provides a guideline for coaches to meet the needs of their athlete’s stage of development when planning activities.

Activity Planning Guidelines for Various Stages of Skill Development

Recommended Practice Conditions	Stages of Skill Development				
	Initiation <i>First contact</i>	Acquisition <i>Movement Patterning</i>	Consolidation <i>Correct Execution in Variable Conditions</i>	Refinement <i>Minor Improvements</i>	Creative Variation <i>Inventing New Movements</i>
Surrounding environment	Stable and predictable, free of distractions	Stable and predictable, free of distractions	Increased variability and distractions, but not to the point where movement patterns deteriorate	Competition conditions	Conditions similar to those encountered in the highest level of competition
Decision-making, or situation uncertainty	No decision-making or options to choose from	Simple decision-making, max. 2 options	More complex decisions, increased frequency of decision-making, and more options (3-4)	Complex decisions, as many options, and at the same frequency as in competition	Conditions similar to those encountered in the highest level of competition
Speed of execution	Slow and controlled	At athlete's own pace	Increased, variable, and close to competition demands	Similar conditions in competition	Similar to highest level of competition
Importance of precision and consistency	Not important, but should demonstrate some ability	Moderately important	Precision and consistency are sought	A high degree of precision and consistency are sought	Perfection is sought at all times
# of repetitions, or opportunities to execute the movements	As needed, depending on athlete's general motor development	High	High	As many as possible	As many as possible
Risk factor and consequence of error	Completely safe conditions, errors of no consequence	Low risk conditions	Less than or similar to what is encountered in regular competition	Similar to high level of competition	Similar to highest level of competition
During training, the emphasis should be on...	Basic stances and positions; getting the idea of what the movements are about, look like	Global execution and general form of the movement	Maintain form of movements and some performance consistency user variety of conditions and under stress	Creating conditions that stress the specific elements that need adjustments	Generating new and unfamiliar situations

CAC 2003

INSTRUCTIONAL PROGRAM

The Canadian Fencing Federation Instructional Program is designed in-line with the stages of skill development and activity planning guidelines. As athletes progress through the stages of skill development, their abilities directly correlate with the levels of the Instructional Program. These levels are called Armbands and are designated by colours. These colours are Yellow, Orange, Green, Blue, Red and Black and are obtained in that order through skill demonstration.

To be successful in obtaining a coloured armband, the athlete must demonstrate the required skills at the appropriate stage of skill development and in the recommended settings. These required skills are divided into fencing specific performance factors. These factors include: Footwork and technical elements, Preparations and proposed tactical action plan, Refereeing and Coaching. Athletes must demonstrate competency in each of these areas to achieve the next armband level.

For each armband level athletes are introduced at the Initiation stage, but at the time of assessment, should demonstrate their skills at the Acquisition stage of skill development. As they progress through the armband levels, the skills from the previous armband level should progress and be able to be demonstrated at the next stage of skill development.

For example, to obtain a Yellow Armband, athletes must demonstrate the skills for each performance factor specific to yellow at the Acquisition stage of skill development. To move forward and obtain an Orange Armband, the athlete is required to demonstrate the skills from yellow at the Consolidation stage and those of orange at the Acquisition stage. This pattern continues through the armband levels and across the stages of skill development. The following table depicts this relationship.

Relationship between Armband Level and Stages of Skill Development

Stages of Skill Development	Armband Levels					
	YELLOW	ORANGE	GREEN	BLUE	RED	BLACK
INITIATION	X	X	X	X	X	X
ACQUISITION	Yellow	Orange	Green	Blue	Red	Black
CONSOLIDATION	X	Yellow	Orange	Green	Blue	Red
REFINEMENT	X	X	Yellow	Orange	Green	Blue
CREATIVE VARIATION	X	X	X	Yellow	Orange/ Yellow	Green/ Orange/ Yellow

Appendices A, B and C explain the minimum skill requirements of each performance factor for each armband and specific to each weapon in fencing: foil, epee and sabre.

ASSESSMENT PROCEDURE

To ensure proper acquisition of skills, athletes are required to demonstrate their skills both within the regular practice of the club and within the context of a formal exam. These two contexts allow skill demonstration in both a comfortable, non-threatening club environment and a more pressured exam environment. Demonstrating these skills in both situations suggests a total acquisition of skills. As a result, athlete performance in each context is considered when assessing skill development at each armband level.

The specific formal assessment process varies across the levels as the degree of understanding and skill development increases.

Yellow and Orange

At these levels, the club coach or ideally another coach who does not directly coach the athlete, but could be from the same or another club, is responsible for administering the exams. Each of the skills within the five performance factors is tested and given a ranking of either: Acquired (3), Being Acquired (2) or Not Acquired (1). To pass the assessment, the athlete must attain a minimum of two “Acquired” marks (3’s) and no “Not Acquired” marks (1’s).

Evaluators should have a minimum NCCP Instructor-Beginner or equivalent certification.

Green and Blue

For green and blue, the assessment process should be completed at the Provincial level. Evaluators can include the club coach and at least one other coach who does not directly coach the athlete. This coach could be from the same or another club. The same scale is used as in the yellow and orange assessments, but is done by each coach completing the assessment. An average of the two assessments is used to constitute the final assessment mark. The club coach must present the marks for the club environment assessment to the second examining coach.

Evaluators should have a minimum NCCP Comp-Int. or equivalent certification.

Red and Black

The final two levels will be assessed by the regional training camps hosted by the Canadian Fencing Federation. The examining board for this assessment will consist of three coaches, one of whom must be the senior camp coach in the given weapon of assessment. The personal coach can be present at the exam, but cannot participate in the examining process. This coach must provide the club environment assessment to the examination board prior to the exam. At these levels a more stringent marking scheme is used. A scale of 0 to 10 is to be used for each of the performance factors with 10 being the highest level of demonstrated ability. To achieve the armband, the athlete must not receive any mark lower than a 5.

Evaluators should have a minimum NCCP Comp-Dev. or equivalent certification.

At each stage beyond yellow it is important to see progression through the stages of skill development for all previous armband performance factors. Refer to the “Relationship between armband levels and stages of skill development” table for details of expected skill progression.

It is important to note that the preparation time for each armband level will vary from athlete to athlete and many may never reach the final two armband levels. Coaches should ensure that their programming challenges their athletes, but that the fundamentals are the focus at the earlier levels.