



## Health & Safety Guidance

August 2023

**Venue address:**

**Coombe Boys School**

**Sports Hall**

**College Gardens (off Blakes Lane)**

**New Malden**

**Surrey KT3 6NU**

**[kingstonfencing.co.uk](http://kingstonfencing.co.uk)**

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## 1. Introduction

The purpose of these set of guidelines is to ensure the safety and well-being of all participants in the Kingston Fencing Club (KFC) activities. Accidents and injuries are rare in fencing.

Everyone at the club, has an important role in maintaining a safe environment.

The following guidance arises following British Fencing (BF) & our own regular risk assessment reviews to mitigate and eliminate risks and ensure safety for all involved.

## 2. Mandatory Protective Equipment & Weapons

BF has laid down standards for personal protective clothing to be worn which apply wherever fencing is taking place. All members of KFC are required to follow these safety guidelines. Every fencer is responsible for ensuring that their personal equipment is in a safe condition.

### Sparring or Competing

When sparring or competing fencers must wear full protective clothing which includes:

- mask
- jacket
- breeches
- plastron
- glove
- socks
  - Socks should always be covered by the bottom of the breeches, **so that no bare skin is showing**
- shoes, suitable indoor trainers
- for women, chest guards.

All masks must be fitted with safety back straps.

Please see the following BF Guidance regarding exact requirements for each equipment & more specific guidance regarding competitions, March 2023:

[www.britishfencing.com/wp-content/uploads/2023/04/2023-Safety-Guidelines-v20-March.pdf](http://www.britishfencing.com/wp-content/uploads/2023/04/2023-Safety-Guidelines-v20-March.pdf)

### Key message

**if you are not wearing the required clothing = no fencing**

If you do not have the required kit, please liaise with the committee to discuss borrowing club kit. The club has a large stock of all the necessary protective equipment.

If you notice a fencer does not have the correct kit, please escalate to the fencer, their parent/guardian, coach or committee member.

When sparring is supervised by a coach and a risk assessment has been done, fencers can wear tracksuit trousers rather than breeches at the discretion of the coach or club manager even when size 4/5 electric blades are being used.

## Lessons and Junior Classes

The pupil should normally at a minimum wear the appropriate full protective clothing required for those fencing non-electric foil which is:

- mask
- jacket
- plastron
- glove
- shoes, suitable indoor trainers
- for women, chest guards.
- Full length Trousers with openings/pockets, zipped/sewn/taped closed or fencing breeches

Coaches/instructors, having done a risk assessment considers that particular circumstances justify less than this level of full protective clothing being worn, they should draw the attention of the pupil or parent/guardian to the increased notional risk of accident or injury that could result because full protective clothing is not worn).

**Note:** all plastrons, jackets and masks provided by the club are the minimum safety standard for sparring at the club. All plastrons are 850N.

Fencers are reminded of rule t.15 of the rules of fencing, which states:

- Fencers arm, equip and clothe themselves and fence at their own responsibility and at their own risk.
- It is the duty of all members to act responsibly, and to take reasonable steps to minimise the risks inherent in any sporting activity, and in particular to support and enforce British Fencing safety guidelines.

## 2.1 Adult Beginner / Taster Classes:

As per BF guidance, when sparring is supervised by a coach and a risk assessment has been done, fencers can wear tracksuit trousers rather than breeches at the discretion of the coach or club manager even when size 4/5 electric blades are being used.

## 2.2 Blades & Sizes:

- children under the age of ten should fence with weapon blades of size 0
- children under the age of 14 should normally fence with weapon blades of size 3 or less, as required in competitions for their age.

To reduce the risk of broken blades, never use a blade (or fence with someone who is using such a blade) if any portion displays obvious kinks or excessive plasticity that may lead to a break.

## 2.3 Armourer / Club Kit

Given regular use, KFC club kit is washed and inspected / replaced on regular basis to ensure they are in a useable and safe condition.

If a piece of equipment is weak or damaged, you are not sure or have any concerns, it must not be used and should be reported to a coach or committee member.

## 3. Piste Layout, Sparring & Refereeing

All fencers must sign in on arrival. Following internal risk assessment & following the BF guidance the following piste guidelines have been set up to minimise hazards including wires on the ground and to minimise risk to fencers and referees from fencing too close. This takes into account the age group, the weapon, the standard of fencing and a safe position for the referee and spectators.

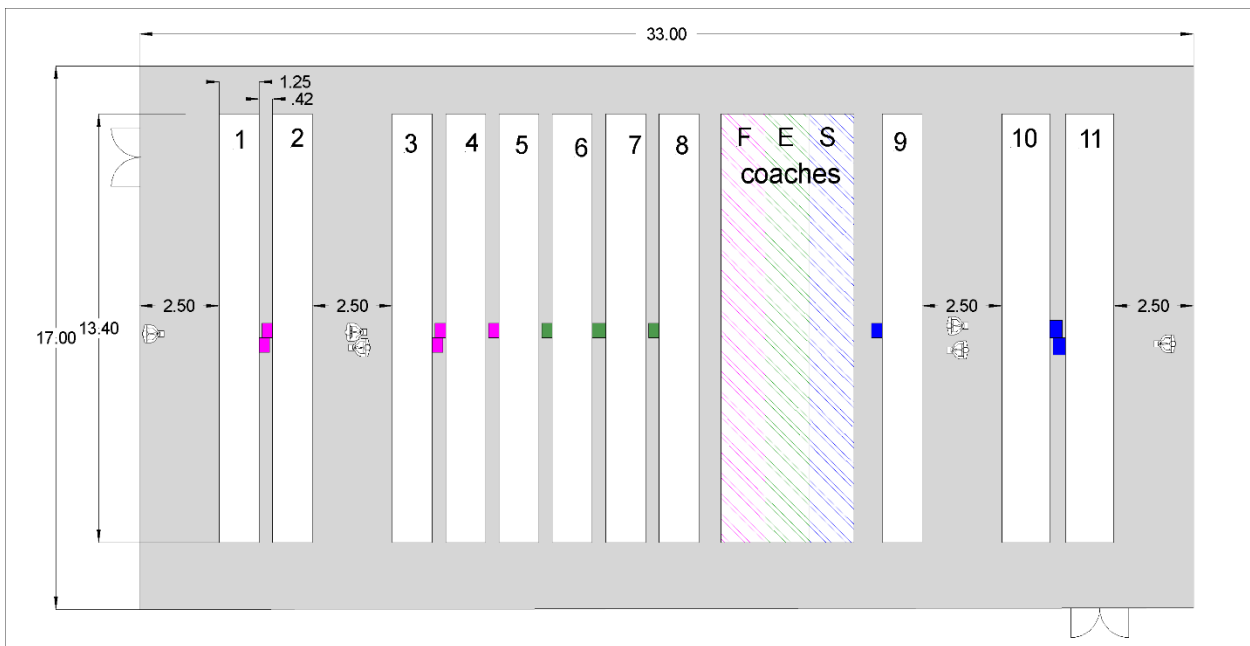
For further information please see: [www.britishfencing.com/safe-piste-layouts](http://www.britishfencing.com/safe-piste-layouts)

Piste safety is the responsibility of all members in relation to creating a safe fencing environment and reducing the risk of accidents.

Piste layout rules:

- Pistes should be contained within the area occupied by the four badminton courts in the school hall.
- There should be sufficient space around the piste, both sides and rear, clear of any obstructions and hazards (furniture, equipment, trip risks such as loose pool cables and, importantly, spectators)
- If there is a referee, there should be sufficient space to the referee to operate safely. There should be 2.5m space between each piste to accommodate the referee. If the space is reduced to less than 2.5m the referee must preside from the end of the piste or wear full fencing gear including a mask.
- There should be half a meter between each piste to contain wires, spools and boxes

The hall can accommodate approximately 11 pistes mixed between refereed, non-refereed and coaching. An example layout is shown below:



(Thanks to Kate Smith for producing the piste layout)

It is accepted by the club that the number of fencers will vary and on some occasions, there will be more or less space available for each piste. The club has elected to use a flexible piste layout to accommodate changing numbers of fencers however, all members must follow the above rules to ensure safety. Members should be prepared to move pistes to accommodate to allow adequate spacing between pistes.

Coaches are to give lesson between pistes. At least 1.25m piste width is required for lessons. Coaches may elect not to use the full length of the piste. It is the responsibility of the coaches to make sure that the student being coached is safe and not at risk of encroaching on the space occupied by pistes using for sparring.

Safety is everyone's responsibility and as a participant (whether a fencer, a coach or a club officer) you have a responsibility to stop training if necessary to deal with any risks (for example spools can move, fencers can drift and be in line to retreat onto ground leads or other hazards).

## 4. COVID guidelines

In England, there are no restrictions on the numbers of those taking part in sessions and face coverings are no longer required by law.

However good hygiene, including hand sanitising, is strongly recommended particularly with the use of shared kit. Individuals should use the hand gel at sanitation stations (at check in desk and in the kit cupboard) available.

Individuals should not attend the sports hall if unwell. If you feel unwell during the session, please see 'first aid' section.

To minimise crowding, KFC advises a maximum of two people to be in the kit cupboard at any one time. If you need to access the cupboard & can see that it is full, please wait your turn outside.

For current guidance, please see: [www.britishfencing.com/covid-19-advice-guidance](http://www.britishfencing.com/covid-19-advice-guidance)

## 5. Fencing Classes

As per British Fencing guidance, generally, no more than twelve children per coach/instructor should fence at any one time (a larger number may be appropriate depending on the age, experience etcetera of the pupils).

If the ratio in the group is higher than this, the group should be split into relays for fencing activity (larger numbers can take part together in footwork and games without weapons). In the case of groups of young children fewer than twelve may be an appropriate maximum.

Fencers will be made aware of the potential hazards of mishandling their weapon and will not be allowed to act irresponsibly with equipment. All fencers, when they are not fencing or practising, must carry their weapons either by the pommel with the points towards the floor or by gripping the point, with the weapon hanging down vertically.

Fencers will not be allowed to begin or continue fencing if their clothing or weapon is inappropriate or unsafe. It is the coach's responsibility that fencers are always safely attired and equipped.

BF maintains a central register of qualified coaches who are required to have a DBS check and attend UK Coaching Safeguarding and Protecting Children in Sport courses regularly. Please see safeguarding section for further information.

### 5.1 Minimum Age

The minimum age for junior fencers is 10 years old. This may be reduced to 9 years old at the discretion of coaches. (Coaches discretion is based on the maturity and skill of the student only.) For juniors mixed with adult classes the minimum age is 14 years old. This may also be reduced at the discretion of the coaches providing there is adequate supervision. For Epee, the minimum age is raised to 16 for mixed classes with adults due to the Epee being a heavier weapon.

## 6. First Aid

All coaches are required to have first aid qualifications to a minimum standard of First Aid at Work (or equivalent). Volunteer coaches may file a waiver of this requirement if at least two qualified first aiders are present at the venue. KFC maintains a list of all qualified first aiders and audit this list every 6 months.

First aid box is located within the equipment room with directions to it on the noticeboard on checking in. First aid manual is included within the box. Should any incident arise, please escalate to a coach or committee member for support. If an ambulance is required, dial 999 and inform the patients emergency contact. A log book is included within the box, please complete an accident report once safe & appropriate to do so.

If you have a pre-existing medical condition, please inform the coaches / committee prior to starting the session.

## 7. Fire Safety

In the event of a fire emergency, you will hear an alarm sounding throughout the sports hall. If the alarm sounds, stay calm and alert. The leading coach for the evening acts as Fire Marshal. (This role may also be fulfilled by a committee member). Listen for instructions from the committee and coaches. There are two exit doors available in the hall. No matter where you are, proceed to the nearest exit door. All fire exit routes are identified with the provision of pictogram signs with directional arrows.

If you are with children, help guide them to the nearest exit. Coaches to check changing room if safe. Ensure that everyone moves quickly but calmly. Once outside, gather at our designated evacuation point in the car park.

The Fire Marshal present will conduct attendance check from the log book to ensure that everyone has evacuated. If anyone is missing, inform the committee member immediately. The Fire Marshal will also raise the alarm with the site manager and/or the Fire Brigade. Under no circumstances should anyone re-enter the building until the all-clear is given by emergency personnel.

If you notice a fire, immediately pull the nearest fire alarm if available. If no fire alarm is nearby, immediately notify a coach, committee member, adult / parent as soon as possible to raise the nearest alarm, begin evacuation as outlined above and call 999 for fire services once it is safe to do so.

The venue, Coombe Boys School, has a Fire Safety Policy which includes Risk Assessment, Fire Training and Evacuation Drills, Maintenance and Duties. KFC follows the procedures in this policy. For more information see <https://www.coombeboyschool.org/key-information-policies/item/11/policies>.

Fire drills are performed periodically and are coordinated by the school's facilities manager.

## 8. British Fencing Membership

A fencer is generally deemed at Law to accept the ordinary risks involved in fencing. Examples of ordinary risks that a fencer is deemed to accept are accidents arising from breakage of blades, or from normal bodily contact with an opponent, arising in the normal course of a bout. However, a fencer may possibly be legally liable if he injures an opponent by an action that is illegal under the Rules of fencing or is recklessly violent. Fencers can limit the risk of legal liability by fencing within the Rules and ensuring that their equipment is safe as outlined above.

Kingston Fencing Club has Public Liability Insurance as part of its membership of British Fencing. Kingston Fencing Club does not undertake to provide health, accident, disability, hospitalization, personal property, or other insurance to participants in any activities undertaken at the club. Temporary membership of Kingston Fencing Club will be conferred on those enrolled on any course organised by Kingston Fencing Club. This gives insurance

cover provided by British Fencing (BF). See <https://www.britishfencing.com/policy-zone/insurance-policies-guidelines/> for more details. BF insurance is free and valid for 90 days on commencement of the activity at the club. To guarantee that the participant is insured for ongoing participation in the activity beyond 90 days, the participant should sign up for the British Fencing (BF) Introduction Insurance membership. <https://www.britishfencing.com/become-a-member/>.

All coaches are covered by their own insurance provided through their governing bodies which are British Fencing and the British Academy of Fencing.

All members are expected to join British Fencing.

## 9. Policy Review

Policies are reviewed annually and approved by the committee at the AGM or other committee meetings.

Written: August 2023

Recommended revision Date: August 2024