



# The Society of American Fight Directors

## GLOSSARY OF TERMS (6/1/01)

It is important to note that the terms listed below may not correspond to the proper definitions of the actions as they are applied to historical or modern fencing, swordplay, boxing or wrestling. These terms are theatrical in nature, not tactical, describing the action as it is executed in the performance environment.

- Action - Reaction - Action:** (also *Cue - Reaction - Action*, and *Preparation - Reaction - Action*) The process of giving and taking focus during a physical argument. The first "action" is the aggressor's cue and control point, for the attack. The "reaction" is that of the victim, who, upon reading the cue responds - letting their opponent know they are ready. The final "action" is where the two combatants complete the offensive/defensive action together. This may be attack and parry, attack and avoid, feint and reaction, etc.
- Active Hand:** The non-weapon bearing hand used to block, check, lock, parry, strike or trap the opposing weapon or parts of a partner's body.
- Advance:** (also *Fencing Step*) Footwork carrying the body forward by moving the lead foot first, followed with the lag foot (without crossing them). The opposite of *Retreat*.
- Attack on the Blade:** Actions used to remove or displace the opposing blade before an effective offensive action can be launched. These may include a *Glissade*, *Beat* or *Press* as well as any *Prises de Fer* (*Bind*, *Envelopment*, and *Croisé*).
- Attacker:** (also *Aggressor*) The actor/combatant who sets upon, attacks, or assails another; the one executing the violent action.
- Avoidance:** A movement of the body and/or feet vertically, horizontally or diagonally in order to dodge an attack.
- Balestra:** (also *Jump-Lunge*) A compound piece of footwork designed to quickly cover a great deal of ground by combining a jump forward and a lunge. There are two counts in this action; one (jump), two (lunge).
- Beat Attack:** A sharp tap with the forte or middle part of one's blade against the middle or weak part (foible) of the opponent's blade to remove a threat, open a line for attack, or to provoke a reaction.
- Beat Parry:** A parry that clears the line by striking an attacking blade, as opposed to blocking or redirecting the attacking blade.
- Block:** A defensive action made with the hand or arm intended to stop a punch, kick or similar attack. A block can be made on either side of the body and in all lines. These may be as follows:
- Cross Block:** (also *X Block*) A block where both hands/arms are used together and are crossed, the one over the other, catching the attacking limb in the open "V" between the hands.
  - Descending Block:** A block delivered downward to defend against an ascending diagonal or vertical attack.
  - Inside Block:** A block made on the inside line of the defending hand and/or arm.
  - Opposition Block:** A defensive action where the hand or arm is brought up as a solid wall or shield against the attack.
  - Outside Block:** A block made on the outside line of the defending hand and/or arm.
  - Parallel Block:** (also *Double Block*) A block made with the defending arms placed one beside the other for greater defense. The arms are not crossed.
  - Redirection Block:** A defensive action where the hand or arm intercepts the attack and then immediately displaces or removes the opponent by mastering the energy of the initial attack.
  - Rising Block:** A block delivered upward to defend against a descending diagonal or vertical attack.
  - Semicircular Block:** A block that goes from above the belt to below the belt, or vice-versa, in a semi-circular path on the same side of the body.
  - Transfer Block:** (also *Replacement Block*) A block that uses both hands/arms, one after the other, to deflect and control the offending hand, arm or leg. One hand begins the block, the other is then used to complete the block, "checking" the offending limb and freeing the first hand for a counter attack.
  - Wing Block:** A defensive action made with the muscle groupings of the upper arm. The arm is bent, like the

wing of a bird, the hand near the shoulder, presenting a shield against strong blows; taking the attack on the back of the forearm and outside of the upper arm.

**Blocked Punch:** A punch that, due to the defensive action of a block, is stopped prior to landing on its projected target.  
See *Block*.

**Break Fall:** Any maneuver that dissipates the energy or force from a fall or roll and gives the illusion of impact.

**Butt End:** The trailing end of the staff in the En Guard position.

**Center Line:** (also *Centerline*) Referring to the imaginary vertical plane that bisects the body into two equal sections, delineating the Inside and Outside Lines of Attack and Defense.

**Change Beat:** A changement immediately followed by a beat attack.

**Change of Engagement:** To release contact of the blades, and reestablish contact in a new line.

**Changement:** An action of the blade that carries it from one line of engagement to another.

**Check:** The process of curbing, or restraining the offending hand, arm or leg after a successful block. The defending hand or arm remains in contact with the opponent's (without gripping, locking or holding) in order to sense their movements, feel or control the placement of the offending limb, and use that to both offensive and defensive advantage. These actions command the opposing hand or arm and may retain it or remove it with the action of an *Expulsion*.

**Bind:** A checking action made on the opponent's hand, arm or leg, executed by blocking the attack and then moving it diagonally to the opposite quadrant (i.e. from the inside high to the outside low, or outside high to inside low, etc.).

**Envelopment:** A checking action made on the opponent's hand, arm or leg, executed by blocking the attack and then by describing a circle with both arms in contact, bringing the opponent's arm back to the placement where the check began.

**Transport:** A checking action made on the opponent's hand, arm or leg, executed by blocking the attack and then moving it vertically from a high line to a low line, or vice versa, but on the same side as the block took place. A similar action made with a sword is called a *Croisé*.

**Choke Hold:** Any grasp or hold on the area of the throat made with any hand or limb that gives the impression of strangling the victim.

**Circular Sequence:** A series of steps and blade-play executed on a circular, rather than linear, track of footwork.

**Closed:** (also *Covered*) Said of a line of attack, when the defender's blade placement prevents an attack to that particular line.

**Contact Blow:** A punch, kick, strike or blow that actually makes contact with the receiver, generally in view of the audience and/or camera, delivered to a large muscle group or muscle mass. Opposite of *Non-contact Blow*.

**Corps-à-Corps:** (also *Corps a Corps*) Applied to a lockup at close quarters in swordplay, literally meaning "body-to-body." Describes the moment where distance is closed and there is body contact and/or the blades are locked together so that the weapons are immobilized.

**Counter Attack:** An attack made into an attack, either cut or thrust, which is intended to hit the opponent before the final movement of the opponent's attack is executed.

**Counter Parry:** (also *Circular Parry*) A parry that begins in one line, travels a full circle returning to parry in the original line. Counter parry two is sometimes called the "Actor's Parry" because of the flashy appearance.

**Coupé:** A changement executed from an engaged guard position that takes the blade around the point of the opposing blade. Sometimes called a cutover. Opposite of *Disengage, b*).

**Cross Parry:** A parry executed with two weapons, generally rapier and dagger, where the weapons are crossed at or near the forte, forming an "X" with the blades. The attacking weapon is blocked with the outer portion of the "X", away from the hands.

**Cross Step:** A step forward that takes the body diagonally off-line to either the right or left, ending with the legs crossed.

**Cut:** A stroke, blow or attack made with the edge of a blade.

**Dagger Reinforced Parry:** A defensive action of the rapier that is given extra support from the dagger. A standard rapier parry bolstered or braced by the dagger.

**Deception of Parry:** The action of deliberately avoiding a partner's attempted parry during the final stage of an attack.

**Demi-Volte:** A method of removing the body from the line of attack by swinging the lag foot back, generally to the right, turning the body so that the trunk is brought 90° in relation to the attack.

**Diagonal Slash with Avoidance:** (also *Diagonal Cut with Avoidance*) An off-line cut to either the inside or outside line. It may be a rising or falling cut. It is usually avoided by leaning to the side away from the cut (with or without footwork).

- Disarm:** An action of the blade or body that appears to force the weapon from the hand of one's partner.
- Disengage:** a.) *noun*. The act of removing the blade from contact with the partner's blade. b.) *verb*. Passing the blade around the opposing weapon's guard, from an engaged position of the blade, and terminating on the side opposite to the original engagement.
- Distance:** The proper measure between two or more combatants to safely execute any particular technique in stage combat.
- Doubl :** A compound attack in any line that consists of two deceptions of parry in the same line, deceiving both parries one after the other.
- Duck:** The vertical lowering of the head and torso to avoid an attack at the head.
- Elbow Attack:** Any contact or non-contact strike, or attempt thereof, which seems to be made with the point of the elbow.
- En Garde:** (also *On Guard*) The basic physical "ready" position of a combatant.
- Engagement:** The crossing, joining or touching of blades.
- Expulsion:** (also *Throw Off*) Using the energy and movement of a check or prise de fer to throw or fling the opposing arm and/or weapon aside.
- Eye Contact:** A "cue" or "check point" in a fight that has the combatants frequently look in their partner's eyes to assure mutual awareness and readiness to perform the techniques.
- Fall:** Any technique that allows a combatant to safely drop from a standing or elevated position to the floor, landing on some part of the body other than the feet.
- Feint Attack:** An attacking action made without intending to hit and designed to either probe the opponent's defensive reaction or to draw a reaction or a parry.
- Fencing Measure:** Correct distance between combatants when performing stage swordplay. A distance of six to ten inches from one's opponent at full extension after executing any offensive footwork.
- Flip/Throw:** An offensive movement that controls or appears to control the victim's center, giving the illusion of lifting them off their feet and returning them to the ground on some part of the body other than the feet – usually into a break fall or roll.
- Fore End:** The leading end of the staff in the En Garde position.
- Forward Roll:** (also *Somersault*) A roll or tumble executed down the back, rolling the length of the spine along the floor.
- Glissade:** (also *Coul *) A flowing attack on the blade that displaces the opposing blade by gently sliding down the opposing weapon foible to forte. Excessive force is not needed because it is generally executed against a guard that insufficiently closes the line of attack.
- Grand Volte:** A method of removing the body from the line of attack by swinging the lag foot back and to the side, so that the trunk is turned 180  to the line of attack.
- Hair Pull:** A grasp with one or both hands in which the victim's hair appears to be clasped in the fist and aggressive force is applied.
- Half Pronation:** (also *Middle* or *Vertical Position*) The placement of the weapon bearing hand where the thumb is held at roughly twelve o'clock or six o'clock.
- Hand Parry:** A method of defense where the unarmed hand (usually gloved) is used to deflect, block, or seize the opposing blade. Generally used against thrusting attacks.
- Hanging Parry:** A parry protecting the high lines with the hilt high and the point down, such as a high parry of one.
- Hold:** (also *Grasp*) To use one or both hands for clutching or grasping the opponent.
- Invitation:** Any movement of the weapon or body designed to lure the other combatant into an attack.
- Kick:** The use of the leg and foot in contact and/or non-contact striking techniques. To strike with the foot.
- Ax Kick:** A downward traveling kick that gives the impression of impact with the heel.
- Back Kick:** A kick that travels directly backwards giving the impression of impact with the heel.
- Crescent Kick:** A large, arcing kick traveling in a semicircular path that gives the impression of impacting with the edge of the foot. The kick may be made to the inside (*Inside Crescent Kick*) or to the outside (*Outside Crescent Kick*).
- Front Kick:** A kick delivered with the ball of the foot, in which the knee of the kicking leg rises vertically.
- Groin Kick:** (also *Crotch Kick*) Any kick that gives the impression of contact to the groin.
- Reverse Roundhouse Kick:** (also *Heel Hook*) A kick in which the heel, or sole of the foot, that travels towards the target via a circular path.
- Roundhouse Kick:** (also *Turning Kick*) A kick delivered from a chambered position of the knee that uses the top of the foot and is generally executed in a horizontal plane.

**Side Kick:** A kick using the heel or edge of the foot, delivered out from the side of the body.

**Snap Kick:** A fast kick, generally from a chambered position of the leg, which relies upon a whiplash like delivery.

**Knap:** A technique for creating the sound of impact of a non-contact blow, to help heighten the illusion that contact has been made.

**Body Knap:** The sound made by striking a major muscle group on the body.

**Cage Knap:** The sound made when the hand or foot of one combatant is slapped into their partner's slightly cupped hands. The hands are crossed, forming a "cage."

**Clap Knap:** The sound made when both hands clap together, usually made by the victim.

**Partnered Knap:** (also *Shared Knap*) A knap created by both combatants; by one hand striking another or by striking a specific muscle mass to create the sound of impact.

**Slip-Hand Knap:** A self knap on the attack where the aggressive hand slips past the non-aggressive hand to create the sound of impact.

**Knee Attack:** Any attack giving the illusion of contact with the knee.

**Lines of Attack or Defense:** Referring to the imaginary planes that bisect the body into four equal sections, one vertical (delineating Inside and Outside) and one horizontal (delineating High and Low). The line may be open or closed, according to the relationship of the attacking blade, the target, and the defending blade.

**High Line:** The area of attack and defense located above the waist level. Opposite of *Low Line*.

**Inside Line:** The area of attack and defense on a combatant, delineated by their vertical center line, which is furthest from their weapon bearing side. Opposite of *Outside Line*.

**Low Line:** The area of attack and defense located below waist level. Opposite of *High Line*.

**Outside Line:** The area of attack and defense on a combatant, delineated by their vertical centerline, which bears the identifying weapon. The weapon-bearing half of the body. Opposite of *Inside Line*.

**Lock:** (also *Joint Lock*) A grasp or hold executed with a weapon or one or both hands, applied to the joints in the wrist, arm, leg, etc. to immobilize one's opponent, or to be used as a lever for further techniques such as a throw.

**Long Form:** The hand placement for quarterstaff that utilizes the full length of the staff for attack and defense.

**Lunge:** The "extended" leg position used as a method of reaching the other combatant on an attack. To lunge, the leading leg extends forward in a long step, while the trailing leg stays in place.

**Mid Line:** (also *Midline*) Referring to the imaginary horizontal plane that bisects the body into two equal sections, delineating the High and Low Lines of Attack and Defense.

**Moulinet:** (also *Mollinello*) Means, "little windmill" and describes the action of pivoting the blade in circles (either forward or backward) in a diagonal, vertical or horizontal plane.

**Inside Moulinet:** (also *Inside Mollinello*) A moulinet executed on the inside (non-weapon bearing side) of the body.

**Outside Moulinet:** (also *Outside Mollinello*) A moulinet executed on the outside (weapon bearing side) of the body.

**Non-Contact Blow:** (also *Non-Contact Strike*) A punch, kick or strike that in actuality does not land on the recipient's body, is properly masked from the audience, with a well timed knap. Opposite of *Contact Blow*.

**Off-Line:** (also *Off Line*) a.) Any attack that is directed to a target away from the body. b.) The relationship of combatants' bodies when the centerlines of the combatants are offset.

**On-Line:** (also *On Line*) a.) A mode of theatrical swordplay where attacks are aimed at specific body targets on the combatant. b.) The position of the two partners' bodies where the shoulders are precisely lined up, no matter where they are on stage.

**Opposition Parry:** A simple defensive action made by moving the protecting weapon against the attack, closing the line in which the attack is made.

**Overhand Grip:** Holding a sword or dagger with the point above the hand. Opposite of *Underhand Grip*.

**Parallel Parry:** (also *Double Parry*) A defensive action made with the defending weapons placed one beside the other for greater defense. The weapons are not crossed.

**Parry:** A defensive action (made by a sword, dagger, shield, hand, etc.) which blocks or deflects an attack. When executed with a blade, the parry is generally made edge to edge, its forte against the opposing blade's foible.

**One, Parry of:** (also *Parry Prime*) Protecting the low inside line with the point down, the hand in half pronation with the thumb down. Sometimes referred to as the "watch parry" because the wrist position is similar to looking at a wristwatch.

**Two, Parry of:** (also *Parry Seconde*) Defending the low outside line with the point down, the hand in pronation.

**Three, Parry of:** (also *Parry Tierce*) Protecting the high outside line with the point up, the hand in pronation.

**Four, Parry of:** (also *Parry Quarte*) Protecting the high inside line with the point up, the hand in supination.

**Five, Parry of:** (also *Parry Quinte*) Defense for a descending vertical or diagonal cut to the head with the blade held above the head, the hand and hilt on the weapon bearing side.

**Five A, Parry of:** (also *Five Alternate* and *Window Parry*) Defense for a descending vertical or diagonal cut to the head with the blade held above the head, the hand and hilt on the non-weapon bearing side. Sometimes referred to as Six in broadsword and saber technique.

**Six, Parry of:** (also *Parry Sixte*) a.) Protecting the high outside line (the same as a parry Tierce or 3), except the hand is held in supination. Usually used against a thrust. b.) Defense for a descending vertical or diagonal cut to the head with the blade held above the head, the hand and hilt held on the non-weapon bearing side of the body. Sometimes called "5A."

**Seven, Parry of:** (also *Parry Septime*) Protecting the low inside line with the point down, the hand in supination.

**Eight, Parry of:** (also *Parry Octave*) Protecting the low outside line with the point down, the hand in supination. Usually used against a thrust.

**High One, Parry of:** (also *High Prime*) Protecting the high inside line with the point down, the palm turned out.

**Partnering:** The process in which two or more combatants actively work together to safely and effectively make nonviolent actions appear dangerous and real.

**Pass Backward:** A linear step backward made by passing the lead foot to the rear. Opposite of the *Pass Forward*.

**Pass Forward:** A linear step forward made by passing the lag foot to the front. Opposite of *Pass Back*.

**Patinando:** (also *Advance-Lunge*) A compound piece of footwork designed to swiftly close measure by executing an advance and lunge in quick succession.

**Pommel Attack:** Any aggressive or offensive action, usually in close distance, delivered with the pommel of a weapon.

**Press:** An attack on the blade that pushes the opposing blade aside, opening a line of attack.

**Pressure Glide:** (also *Froissement*) An attack on the opposing blade that combines a strong beating or pressing of the blade in conjunction with a fast graze or glissade from forte to foible. Generally used as a preparatory action to an attack.

**Prise de fer:** Attacks on the Blade that catch the opposing blade and master it in preparation for an attack. These actions may retain the opposing blade or remove it with the action of an *Expulsion*.

**Bind:** An attack on the blade which carries the opposing weapon diagonally from high line to low line, or vice versa, across the body.

**Croisé:** An attack on the blade which carries the opposing weapon from a high line to a low line, or vice versa, but on the same side as the engagement, not diagonally across like a bind. A similar action made without the sword is called a *Transport*.

**Envelopment:** An attack on the blade that, by describing a circle with both blades in contact, returns to the original line of engagement.

**Punch:** Offensive striking techniques with the hand(s) that are executed with the hand closed into a fist.

**Back Fist:** A punch made with the back of the hand.

**Cross:** A punch that travels horizontally across the victim's jaw-line, from either the right to the left, or vice versa.

**Double-Hand Hammer Punch:** (also sometimes *Rabbit Punch*) A large and violent punch made with the hands clasped one around the other, striking downward with the little finger side of the fists.

**Hammer Punch:** A descending, vertical attack made with a closed hand that hits with the little finger down and thumb up, to strike like club or hammer.

**Hook:** A rising diagonal punch delivered from the side that crosses the plane of the face (or body) with the arm curving through the air in a tight hooking motion.

**Jab:** A straight, in-and-out punch delivered from the leading shoulder and foot. Opposite of a *Straight Punch*.

**Rabbit Punch:** A sharp, chopping blow delivered downward in a diagonal plane, as if to the back of the neck, executed with a closed hand which is intended to hit with the little finger down and thumb up.

**Roundhouse Punch:** (also *Round House Punch*, *John Wayne Punch* and *Hay Maker Punch*) A large, dynamic, hooking punch that travels in a wide arc across the victim's face, from either right to left, or vice versa.

**Stomach Punch:** A hooking punch, delivered at close quarters towards the abdomen of the victim. A stomach punch may be delivered from either the right or left and may be either contact or non-contact.

**Straight Punch:** A direct, linear punch delivered from the rear or back shoulder and foot. Opposite of a *Jab*.

**Uppercut:** A left or right blow with the fist delivered with a bent arm in an upward motion.

**Pronation:** The position of the hand where the palm is turned down, nails of the sword-hand facing the floor.

**Punto Reverso:** (also *Punto Rivero*) A supinated thrusting attack delivered from the attacker's inside line.

**Recover Backward:** To arrive at an En Garde position from a lunge by bringing the forward foot backward.

**Recover Forward:** To arrive at the En Garde position from a lunge by bringing a rear foot forward.

**Reinforced Parry:** Any parry that is given extra support from another source, be it the unarmed hand, dagger, shield, another weapon, etc. A bolstered or braced parry.

**Replacement Parry:** (also *Transfer Parry*) A double fence parry where the attacking blade is stopped with a single weapon parry and then a second weapon engages the attacking blade and takes the place of the first parry.

**Retreat:** An action in the footwork that carries the body backward by moving the rear foot first and then the lead foot (without crossing them). Opposite of *Advance*.

**Riposte:** A return attack made by a defender immediately following a successful parry.

**Roll:** Any technique in which the body is safely turned on the floor, circling an axis parallel to the body's center line or mid line – often into a break fall.

**Shield Reinforced Parry:** A defensive action of the sword that is given extra support from the shield. A standard sword parry bolstered or braced by the shield.

**Short Form:** A hand position for quarterstaff that divides the staff into three equal sections.

**Shoulder Roll:** A roll or tumble executed by rolling on a diagonal from the large muscle groupings of one shoulder to the opposite buttock (forward shoulder roll) or vice versa (backward shoulder roll).

**Slap:** A blow delivered with an open hand, usually (but not exclusively) made to the face.

**Slash Across the Head:** (also *Cut Across the Head*) A horizontal cut designed to look as if it will strike the head if it lands. It may travel right to left or vice versa, and is usually avoided by ducking.

**Slash Across the Stomach:** (also *Cut Across the Stomach*) A horizontal cut designed to look as if it will cut the stomach open if it landed. It may travel right to left or vice versa. The wrist is often held to present the true edge. It is usually avoided by jumping back.

**Slip:** a.) A movement of the head or body, either to the right, left, forward or backward, used to avoid a punch or minimize its impact. b.) A circular step backward that takes the body off-line to either the right or left and ending with the legs crossed.

**Supination:** The position of the hand when the palm is turned up, with the nails of the sword hand pointing up towards the ceiling.

**Thrust:** An attack made with the point of the weapon.

**Thwart:** A step that takes the body diagonally off-line to either the right or left, ending with the legs open.

**Transfer Parry:** (also *Replacement Parry*) A defensive action that uses both weapons, one after the other, to deflect and control the offending weapon. One weapon begins the parry, the other is then switched in, shifting the parry to the second weapon and freeing the first weapon for a counter attack.

**Trap:** An act or action that immobilizes an opponent's limb(s) and or weapon to effect an attack or disarm.

**Traverse:** Any foot movement that takes the combatant off line.

**Underhand Grip:** (also *Ice Pick Grip* and *Reversed Grip*) A way of holding a dagger or knife with the blade held beneath the hand (gripped with the thumb at the pommel) and managed as a stabbing weapon. Opposite of *Overhand Grip*.

**Victim:** (also *Recipient*) The actor/combatant on the receiving end of any given attack.

**Volte:** A method of removing the body from the line of attack by swinging the rear foot back and to the side, turning the body out of the line of attack. This may either be a *Demi-Volte* or a *Grand Volte*.

**Yield Parry:** (also *Ceding Parry* and *Yielding Parry*) A parry executed against the cut or thrust made at the end of a successful glissade. To distinguish a yield parry from a normal parry, both the offensive and defensive blades remain engaged from the initial attack on the blade through the successful parry.