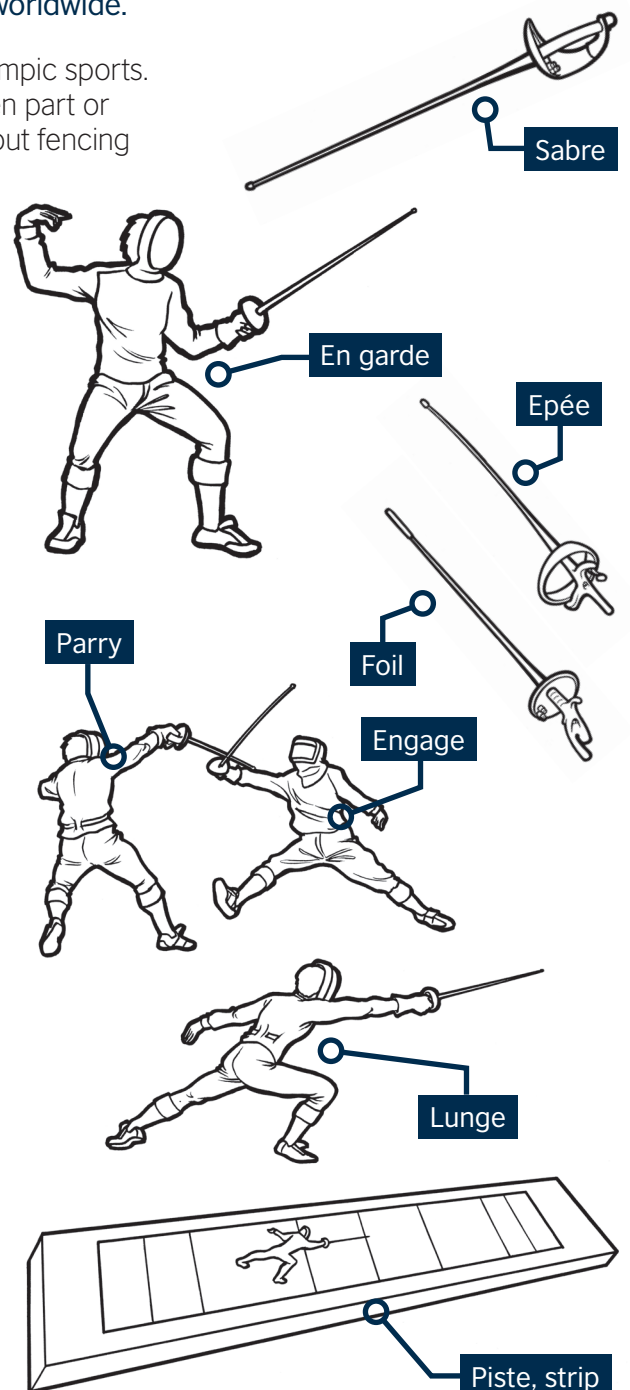
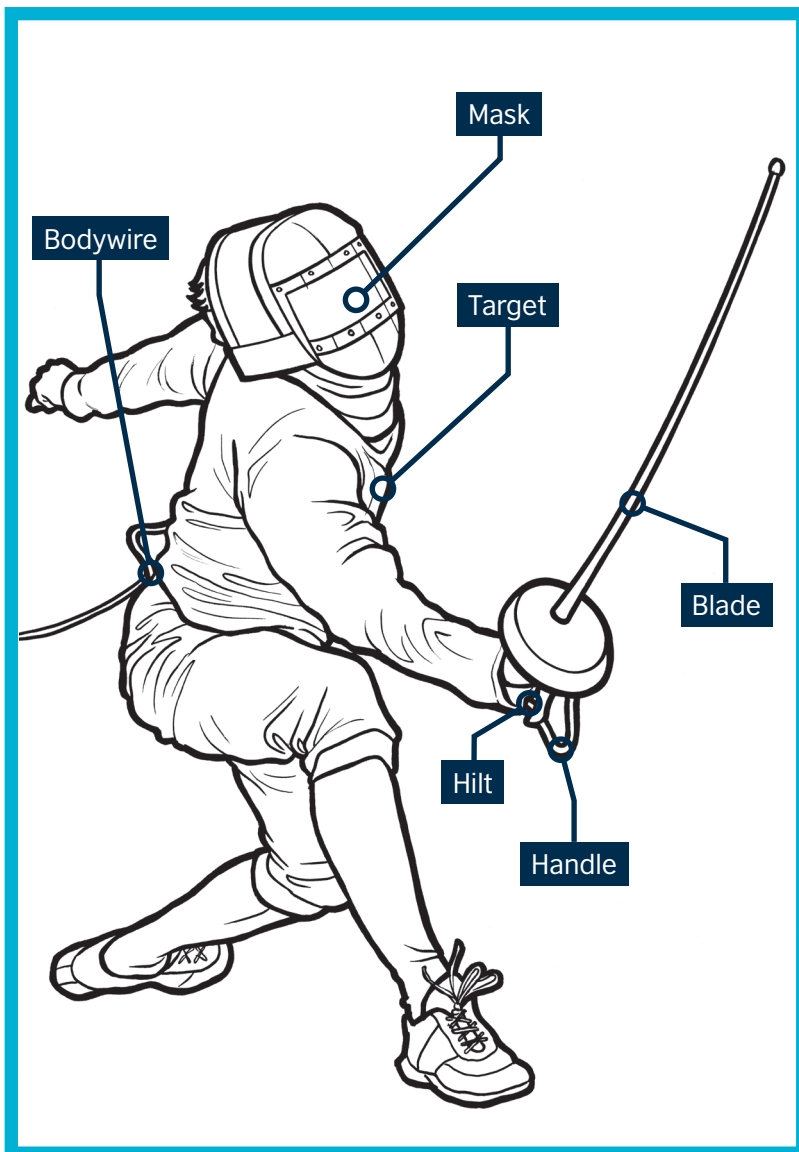


# Fencing

When athletes come together from around the world to compete in the Olympic and Paralympic Games, they are fulfilling their dreams and competing at the highest level. Billions of people across the globe join in; watching, listening to and reading about the greatest global celebration of sport. To celebrate the London 2012 Games, the British Council is making a wide range of classroom resources available for learners of English worldwide.

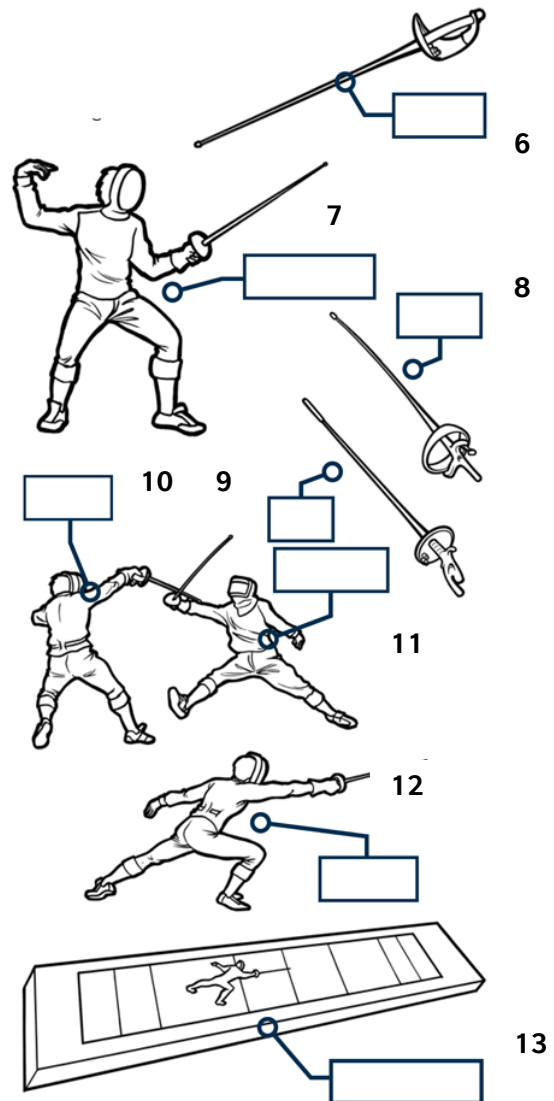
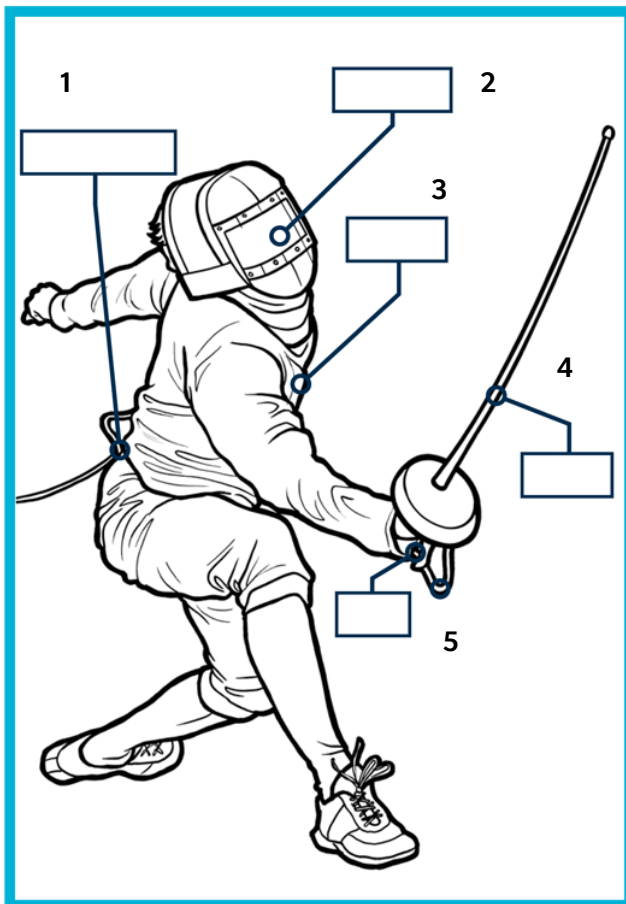
Fencing is a very old sport and one of the longest established Olympic sports. Have you ever seen fencing on the TV or live? Have you ever taken part or wanted to? Find out more about the history of this sport, learn about fencing techniques and fencing vocabulary.



**1. Vocabulary**

**1 a. Write the correct words in the spaces provided.**

a. sabre	b. mask	c. épée	d. blade	e. foil
f. bodywire	g. en garde	h. target	i. parry	j. hilt
k. engage	l. lunge	m. piste / strip		



## 2. The rules of Fencing

- There are ten events on the fencing programme, six for individuals and four for teams.
- Three types of weapon or sword are used: foil, épée and sabre.
- The foil is a light weapon. You score a hit when the tip of your sword touches your opponent between the waist and the shoulders.
- The épée is a heavier weapon. You score a hit when the tip of your weapon touches your opponent anywhere on her body.
- The sabre is a light weapon. You score a hit when the tip or edge of your weapon touches your opponent anywhere above the waist except her hands or the back of her head.
- In épée both fencers can score at the same time. In foil and sabre only one fencer can score a hit at a time.
- Each bout lasts for three rounds of three minutes each, or until one fencer scores 15 hits.
- An electric scoring system and a set of rules called 'priority' are used to decide if a hit is valid.

### 2 a. Match the words in the table with their definitions below.

a. bout	b. edge	c. hit	d. shoulder
e. sword	f. target	g. tip	h. waist

1. a sports competition in which two fencers fence against each other
2. an object used in fighting, especially in the past, with a long sharp metal blade
3. one of the two parts of your body that join your arms to the rest of your body
4. the area of your opponent's body where your weapon can touch
5. the part of your body at the bottom of your stomach and back
6. the pointed end of your weapon
7. the side of your weapon which cuts
8. touch your opponent with your sword

### 3. Questions & Answers

**Fencing an Olympic sport? But isn't that what I have in my garden to keep out the dogs?**

Ha! The sport of fencing involves fighting with different types of swords. But actually the two meanings have the same origin – from the old French *defens*, meaning 'defence'.

**Oh, yes, of course. People have been fighting with swords for a long time, haven't they?**

Yes, indeed. They discovered some carvings in Egypt showing sword fighting that date from about 1190 BC.

**Really? And when did it become a sport?**

In the 14th or 15th century. Both the Italians and the Germans say they invented fencing.

**For some reason I thought it was the French.**

That's not surprising because French has been the language of fencing since 1573. A man called Henri de Saint-Didier wrote a document that included most of the terms still used today.

**Such as?**

Well, *touché*, for example. It's French for 'touched', and it's what a fencer says when he's been hit by his opponent's sword.

**I've heard people say that in English, but they weren't talking about fencing.**

Yes, you can say it if someone makes a good point against you in an argument or discussion.

**Speaking of arguments, didn't people use to decide arguments by having sword fights?**

Yes, and they were called duels. They were quite common. People sometimes even got killed.

**Oh! Maybe better to just do it as a sport, then.**

I agree. Fencing is one of the few sports to feature at every modern Olympic Games.

**And who's won the most medals?**

The French have won one more medal than the Italians in total but the Italians have won more gold medals. So there's no way of knowing who's the best.

**Yes there is. They could have a duel!**

*Touché!*

**3a. Choose the best response to each statement.**

1. The word 'fencing' has two different meanings.
2. Some old paintings of sword fighting were discovered in Egypt.
3. The Italians invented the sport of fencing.
4. Henri de Saint-Didier spoke French.
5. People don't talk about fencing in English.
6. Duels were dangerous.
7. The Italians are the best at fencing.
8. At the end of the conversation one of the speakers makes a good point.

True	False	Don't know

**3b. Complete each question by following the instructions below.**

Write the correct form of the verb in brackets to complete each sentence. Then look back at the text to check your answers.

The sport of fencing (.....1.....) (involve) fighting with different types of swords.

People (.....2.....) (fight) with swords for a long time.

They (.....3.....) (discover) some carvings in Egypt that date from about 1190 BC.

When (.....4.....) (it/become) a sport?

French (.....5.....) (be) the language of fencing since 1573.

I've heard people say that in English, but they (.....6.....) (not talk) about fencing.

Fencing (.....7.....) (be) one of the few sports to feature at every modern Olympic Games.

## 4. Solution

### Exercise 1a

1. f; 2. b; 3. h; 4. d; 5. j; 6. a; 7. g; 8. c; 9. e; 10. i; 11. k; 12. l; 13. m

### Exercise 2a

1. a; 2. e; 3. d; 4. f; 5. h; 6. g; 7. b; 8. c

### Exercise 3a

1. True; 2. False (they were carvings); 3. Don't know; 4. True; 5. False (the language of fencing is French, but the conversation about fencing above is in English!); 6. True; 7. Don't know; 8. True (the other speaker replies 'Touché')

### Exercise 3b

1. involves; 2. have been fighting; 3. discovered; 4. did it become; 5. has been; 6. weren't/were not talking; 7. is