

## Tips For Swashbuckling Scenes

By Golden Aerie

This is a general list of terms for anyone writing a European sword fighting scene with rapiers (or the like of) in mind, such as you would find in *The Three Musketeers*. This article is for your fanfiction dealing with Sir Didymus or any other characters that are to use a sword.

### Terms For Sword Fights

- Parry – A defensive block
- Riposte – An attack after a block
- Attack – A strike either the first strike or after a brief break
- Strike – An attack
- Thrust – A forward motion
- Lunge – An extended step forward with a deep bend of the legs.
- Extended Lunge – An even more exaggerated form of a lunge that still allows for the person to return to their original position without trouble.
- Feinte – Having your opponent believe you are making a specific line of attack, but changing it before your attack is finished. A feigned attack.
- Fleche – Means “the arrow”. The attacker leaps to make their attack in mid-air.
- En Garde – Literally means “on guard” and is the most common declaration for an enemy to be ready for a duel.
- Counter Attack – A responsive attack to your foe’s initial attack.

### Types of Swords:

- Foil – A blade of 110cm with small guard and grip (typically French or a pistol grip). Target area is upper torso only, no arms, no head.
- Epee – A blade of 110cm with large bell guard and standard straight grip. Target is entire body.
- Sabre – A blade of 105cm with bell and finger guard and standard straight grip. Target is upper torso, but not hands. Contact can be made with tip and side of blade.
- Rapier – Similar to a sabre. Popular during the 16th and 17th centuries. Used for thrusting and slashing attacks; a mix between foil, epee, and sabre styles.
- Dagger – A type of knife with a spear-shaped blade, used in conjunction with a sword.
- Stiletto – A type of knife with no cutting sides. Used as a piercing weapon in conjunction with a sword.

### Common Adjectives And Verbs

|              |             |             |
|--------------|-------------|-------------|
| Slash        | Hack        | Swish       |
| Poke         | Jab         | Run Through |
| Stab         | Scratch     | Cut         |
| Strike       | Flick       | Hilt        |
| Blade        | Slice       | Attack      |
| Edge         | Razor Sharp | Pierce      |
| Cutting-Edge | Pommel      |             |

### The Gentleman

When it comes to European swordplay and sword etiquette being a gentleman is always encouraged and it a common aspect of fencing classes. The sport of fencing even starts out with the two players using their weapons to salute each other before the match. This isn't done for fighting, but it lends itself to the etiquette that accompanies swordplay.

If you watch *The Three Musketeers*, *Princess Bride*, *Zorro*, or just about any other swashbuckling films, you're going to notice that they all have one thing in common: sharp tongues. It is extremely common to feature banter between the characters that are fighting, including terms and gestures of etiquette. You might recall the scene from *Princess Bride* where Montoya fights the Dread Pirate Roberts atop the Cliffs of Insanity. He allows the pirate to rest for a moment before starting the fight.

Despite the gentlemanly aspirations, don't forget that the goal of a swordfight is to stop the other person with the blade.

Honor is a big motivator for swordfights, when it's not outright war/battle. Honor is the perceived quality of worthiness and social stature of a person. Even in modern day fencing, honor is a very big deal. A swordsman might defend his own honor or the honor of another person who, for whatever reason, is not able to fight. *Zorro*, for instance, fought for the honor of the common man while the three musketeers and D'Artagnan fought for their king.

### Duels

There are a lot of common misinterpretations of dueling. The standard way a duel works is that Person A does something that causes Person B to challenge them to a duel (like dishonoring them!). Often the challenge is formally served via letter by a close friend – basically, Person B asks a friend to take a note to Person A that says "I'm challenging you to a duel" or something

to that effect. A challenge that is refused is often seen in a few ways: Person A was wrong in the matter at hand, Person A is a coward, or Person B isn't worth the challenge. Sometimes a duel could end before it ever began by simply writing a formal apology. If the duel was accepted, Person A and Person B would find Seconds. Seconds are simply a close friend or acquaintance who is essentially their back up. Since Person B issued the duel challenge, their Second would be responsible for having a surgeon/doctor at the site. The Seconds were also responsible for the correspondence between Person A and Person B, which included setting a time, place, and rules.

Most duels were to "give satisfaction" and not to kill. Often "first blood" was issued as final satisfaction. This means that the first to bleed loses the duel. If, for whatever reason, Person A or Person B failed to show for the duel, their Second would step in and duel in their place.

Some other forms of final satisfaction are "to the death" and "terribly wounded". To be terribly wounded, one party would essentially fight until they could no longer fight or until the duel issuer calls satisfaction.