

REFEREE CODE OF ETHICS

The concepts of honor and right have permeated the practice of arms for centuries. From the medieval [Code Duello](#) – which held that only the just cause would triumph – to the codification of rules covering the emergence of competitive fencing in the nineteenth century, it is clear that both concepts are inextricably linked with the sport.

Combined, they constitute fencing’s essential spirit, an ineffable sense that justice will be done for the combatants.

This is the spirit that fencing referees must clearly recognize, embrace, represent and communicate.

It is not unlike the standard that [Hippocrates](#) crafted for physicians: The physician must not only be prepared to do what is right himself, but also to make the patient, the attendants, and externals cooperate.

This code of ethics seeks to establish for fencing officials – in particular the referee – a guide to the exercise of honor and right. It considers four areas:

Integrity, Competence, Responsibility and Dignity

INTEGRITY

- The Rules of Fencing assign sweeping powers to the referee and important ones to ancillary officials. It would be impossible to fulfill the letter of these “laws” in the absence of the sense of incorruptibility the idea of integrity implies.
- Rule t.55 states: “By accepting a position on a jury, each of the members concerned pledges his honor to respect the rules and to cause them to be respected, and to carry out his duties with the strictest impartiality and most sustained attention.”
- Referees must maintain and promote complete neutrality. When interacting with athletes and spectators, the referee's decisions must be free of bias for *any* reason, including (but not limited to) gender, gender identity, race, ethnicity, religion, sexual orientation, nationality, etc. Should a referee believe they are not capable of adjudicating in an unbiased manner, they must recuse themselves from the match and/or request a change of assignment.
- Referees should accept assignments only when no conflict of interest exists.
- Even in those instances that may suggest a conflict of interest, the referee must make it known immediately to the assignors e.g. pupil or former pupil, same club, et cetera.
- Referees are representative of the body conducting the competition and therefore, must not consider themselves associated with any country, club or individual during the competition.
- Referees are present at the competition solely to officiate; it is inappropriate to coach or assist athletes during the competition.
- Referees are to respect other referees to the utmost. It is improper to publicly indicate disapproval of the actions of other referees. This includes social media discussions.

COMPETENCE

- Referees must know the rules.
- Referees must apply the rules.
- Referees must stay current on interpretations of the rules.
- Referees must attend scheduled clinics on the rules.
- Referees must offer their judgment to appropriate Referees' Commission concerning rules that do not accomplish their intended goal.

RESPONSIBILITY

- Referees must be available for assignment from the time they are required to report until released by the assignors.
- Referees must do nothing that would interfere with their mental and physical abilities to perform.
- Referees must check with the assignors for reporting times and be present a minimum of one-half hour prior to the starting time of the round.
- Referees must be within earshot of all announcements affecting referees unless properly excused from the competition area.
- Referees are to be completely familiar with the duties assigned by Article t.53 of the Fencing Rules and carry them out scrupulously.
- Referees must insure that score sheets are accurate and that they are turned in to the bout committee immediately upon completion of a bout or match.

DIGNITY

- Referees must be properly attired at all times.
- Referees should refrain from joining in horseplay or other exhibitionism.
- Referees should exercise authority but avoid inciting contestants to misbehave.
- Referees should strive to conduct themselves in such a way that they earn a high regard from others.
- Referees should volunteer for withdrawal if unable to continue to perform.

This Code is intended to provide the general principles by which Fencing Referees shall guide themselves and by which they will be measured by the Referees' Commission.

Should a referee fail to adhere to the Code of Ethics, repercussions may occur.