

# Advanced Rapier – Strategies & Tactics for single combat

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(Adapted from: "The 4 Strategic Positions" and "The 5 Tactical Principles" found at <http://www.classicalfencing.com/articles.shtml>)

## Rapier Strategies

You can not be successful in rapier combat with only one "fight"

### Assessing your opponent

**BEFORE** each bout begins, assess you and your opponents reach and ability. Be ready to reassess reach and ability mid-bout

- **Reach**
  - Can you effectively outreach your opponent?
  - Can your opponent effectively outreach you?
  - Or are you exactly equal?
- **Ability**
  - Are you stronger/faster than your opponent?
  - Is your opponent stronger/faster than you?
  - Or are you exactly equal?

### Reach and Ability Combinations

LONGER/STRONGER	LONGER/weaker
shorter/STRONGER	shorter/weaker
exactly equal	

(If both fencers are exactly equal it becomes purely a tactical fight.)

- **Reach Strategies (Longer or Shorter)**
  - Out-fighting - To fight from the farthest effective distance
  - In-fighting - To fight from the closest possible distance

LONGER	shorter
SHOULD always employ out-fighting	MUST always employ in-fighting

- **Ability Strategies (Stronger or Weaker)**
  - Offensive (direct) fighting - To use strong, immediate, simple actions
  - Defensive (indirect) fighting - To use deceptive, syncopated, compound actions

STRONGER	weaker
SHOULD always employ offensive (direct) fighting	SHOULD use defensive (indirect) fighting

### The Four Strategic Combinations

LONGER/STRONGER	Offensive out-fighting
LONGER/weaker	Defensive out-fighting
shorter/STRONGER	Offensive in-fighting
shorter/weaker	Defensive in-fighting

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## **HOWEVER (of course)**

- The use of the "correct" strategy does not guarantee victory
- Using an incorrect strategy can almost guarantee defeat
- A longer fighter may sometimes be effective at in-fighting
- A shorter fighter will NEVER be effective by out-fighting
- If a longer fighter fights as if he/she has no reach advantage, making it true, you must then adopt the strategy appropriate to your opponent's actual position.
- Hence, be ready to reassess reach and ability mid-bout.

## **Rapier Tactics**

One must learn tactics applicable and adaptable to various situations.

- **Know the weapons**
  - LOOK at your opponent's weapons (Reach)
  - Learn to COUNTER your opponents weapons, don't match them
  - Daggers can get around everything
  - Buckler fights need speed and outside-line attacks.
- **Know your distance**
  - What is your strategic position? (in or out-fighting)
  - Maintain the distance at which you can be most effective.
  - On defense, be out of distance.
  - On offense, be within distance.
- **Point at your opponent**
  - Keep the point aimed at your opponent.
  - Do not move the point from your opponent unless you must.
  - If you must move the point from your opponent, move it as little as possible, for as brief a time as possible.
  - If it is not possible to quickly bring it back, be out of distance
- **Take your time**
  - Do not let your opponent set the pace of the bout.
  - Fight at your pace (one where you fight well and in control)
- **Do not stop**
  - Do not stop if you "make a mistake;" fight your way out of it.
  - Do not stop just because you think you MAY have landed a good blow.
  - Do not stop unless your opponent acknowledges a good blow (or someone calls "hold")