

# **Fencing's a *SPORT*?**

*A Guide to Promoting Fencing Locally & Regionally*

# **Contents**

<b>Introduction.....</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Part 1: Create Your Identity.....</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>Part 2: Create &amp; Maintain Your Website .....</b>	<b>13</b>
<b>Part 3: Spread Your News .....</b>	<b>15</b>
<b>Part 5: Be Active in Your Community .....</b>	<b>26</b>
<b>Appendix 1: Bibliography .....</b>	<b>29</b>
<b>Appendix 2: Sample News Releases .....</b>	<b>31</b>

# Introduction

The 2008 U.S. Men's Saber Team got it right about the public's views of fencing in their *New York Times* video\* before the 2008 Beijing Olympic Games.

James Williams:

*Zorro has influenced a lot of people's perceptions of the sport.*

Jason Rogers:

*The majority of the answers would be like, "Oh, fencing! Schwoosh, shwoosh, shwoosh, shwoosh!"*

Tim Morehouse:

*I run into people every day who had a gym class at college...*

Jason again:

*Twenty percent would probably say, "I have no idea what fencing is."*

Fencing has a problem. Everybody wants to play with swords, but few of the myriad d'Artagnan and Obi-Wan wannabes make the leap from wrapping paper tubes and plastic light sabers to competitive fencing. And for all too many of us who do find the sport, the discovery is often accidental.

My own family's experience was pretty typical. Shortly after the release of the 1988 *Mask of Zorro*, our local paper ran what was essentially a "Look, real live people play with swords in clubs here in this very city!" story, complete with contact information for the then-two local clubs. "Mom!" said my almost 14-year-old daughter, "I've always wanted to do that, but I never asked because I figured there wasn't any place around where I could." We were lucky—the first club we found turned out to be a good one, and within a few months, we were well and truly hooked on the sport. But without that movie prompting that newspaper article, it might never have occurred to us to even look for a fencing club.

So how do we convert all that natural swordplay into awareness of the competitive sport?

Sponsorships, say some. All US Fencing has to do is get some big-money corporate sponsors, and the money from those sponsorships will fund the major training programs we need for our national teams. But there's a slight hitch: what's in it for those big sponsors? Sponsors are looking for attention—and a market for their products. They want to invest in sports that are visible and popular, while we want sponsorships in order to make fencing more visible and more popular. Were the USFA to double or even triple its membership, say, in an Olympic year when the U.S. brings home six medals, our sport would still be a niche sport, attracting nowhere near the numbers pulled in by swimming and gymnastics.

So what are we to do? Are we stuck with our relative invisibility within the sports world, doomed to perpetual obscurity? Of course not. It's not only the national office or the USFA board of directors or national committees who can and should promote our sport—it's every division, every club, every tournament organizer, every individual fencer who can help raise awareness of the sport within their own communities.

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\* "Sabre in the City," July 2008,

[http://video.on.nytimes.com/?fr\\_story=2176fc6eb65529ac8407326ee33d4641a6ce39b6](http://video.on.nytimes.com/?fr_story=2176fc6eb65529ac8407326ee33d4641a6ce39b6)

The work we need to do at the local level is a combination of word-of-mouth networking, traditional publicity efforts with press releases and media lists, and what PR consultant and author Jay Conrad Levinson calls “guerilla marketing”—using every possible tool at our disposal to communicate our message.

This guide is intended to help provide some of those tools at the grass-roots level of fencing—clubs, divisions and sections, and regional tournaments. It's for anybody looking for a basic, no-frills guide to promoting their specific endeavors as well as competitive fencing generally. Many fencing clubs are already doing some of what we suggest, but almost all could—and should—do more.

Marketing and promotion at this level takes a lot of time and energy, often more than most fencing coaches and managers and organizers have to devote beyond the enormous amount of work that fencing organizations already demand of them. This is one area where it pays to canvass your members—and their parents and friends—to find supporters with the time and energy to help out. Ask for the help you need and be specific: If you ask generally for volunteers to help with publicity, you're likely to get a couple of parents nodding vaguely as their kids gather up their belongings to leave; if you ask a specific person for help writing a specific news release this particular week, you're more likely to get the positive, active response you need.

*Fencing's a Sport?* aims to provide you with a few fundamental tools to get you going. Part 1 starts with the basics of creating a visual identity, developing and using a logo, and writing for public consumption (and why getting those fundamentals right is important). In Part 2, we focus on the single most important tool you have for reaching the public: your website. We look at what makes a good website, and what drives visitors away, and talk about what information your website should provide. Part 3 tackles that traditional tool of publicity, the press release, and how to use it, along with a few other tools for dealing with the press and media. In Part 4, we look at some of those “guerilla” means to reach the public, working through youth groups, business associations, and other community organizations. Finally, you'll find in the appendixes a bibliography of useful references—books, magazines, and websites—and a collection of sample news releases.

You'll probably notice that many of the examples and samples I've included are from the Sacramento Fencing Club. That's because I spent more than five years doing publicity work for that club, including for its service as the local organizing committee for several North American Cups and two Summer Nationals. For future editions of this guide, I'd like to include ideas and examples from all over the country, so please feel free to send any material you'd like to see added.

For this edition, I'm grateful to the scores of individuals within the fencing community who've helped me learn about the sport as a parent, as a club volunteer, as a division and section officer, and as a tournament official. Most especially, I thank Kalle Weeks, Tanya Brown, Jerry Benson, Brad Baker, Christine Simmons, Kathy Schifferle, Cindy Bent Findlay, Gerrie Baumgart, and the inimitable Carla-Mae Richards.

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*September 2008*

## Part I

# Create Your Identity

If you're going to be talking to the public about fencing, you'll want to create an image for your organization, whether it's a club or an annual tournament or a school fencing program. You want that image to be memorable enough that when you present yourself as someone who knows what they're talking about (which you will, of course—but more on that in Parts 2 & 3), the local media will remember to come back to you when they want a local story to tie in with news of American fencing medals at the Olympics or the latest movie swashbuckler. You'll need a logo, some basics of English usage and grammar, and a little bit of style.

## Working with a Logo

My favorite logo story is one told in a publications workshop I gave at a conference years ago. The frustrated woman who told it explained that when she and a few others started up their organization, they decided that they wanted a logo, so they appointed a committee of three or four people to come up with an appropriate design. The committee set to work and eventually came forth with a proposal: they had developed three or four designs that they liked, but because they each thought their own design was best, they suggested that the group rotate among the different designs, using a different one each month.

One senses here a certain lack of understanding of just what a logo is for.

A logo is a symbol used by an organization to represent itself. It usually appears on every piece of published material the organization produces: letterhead, envelopes, advertising, brochures, pamphlets, websites, banners, club warm-ups and other apparel, patches—*everything*. A good logo can be invaluable to any organization, but especially so to a small organization with limited resources, like most fencing clubs. A good, memorable logo can dramatically increase your public name recognition and create the impression of a strong, active, professional organization.

## Developing a logo

We'll assume you don't have the budget to hire a professional to design a logo for you. (But don't overlook the possibility that there is a professional in your club or division who can help you!) There are some quick and easy methods you can use, individually or in combination, to create an effective logo.

- **Typeface designs.** Try your name or acronym in a variety of typefaces—you may find that a specific style used consistently in everything you do may be all the logo you need. Or, you might try playing with the letters of your acronym: reverse the letters, vary the size, change the shapes.
- **Calligraphy.** A handwritten version of your name may suit your needs perfectly. (Again, check your membership to see if you have calligraphers among you.)
- **Color.** A block of color used with your name can give your publications the distinctive look you want. (But color almost always means more expense, so be careful.)

Don't rush into choosing a logo. You want something that you will be happy with for a long time, and something that will present the image you want to project, so it's better to go without for a while than end up with something that doesn't do the job.

Elizabeth W. Adler, in *Everyone's Guide to Successful Publications: How to Produce Powerful Brochures, Newsletters, Flyers, and Business Communications, Start to Finish* (Peachpit Press, 1993; much of this advice is based on her ideas), suggests the following questions to help evaluate a proposed logo's suitability:

- Does this logo have immediate impact?
- Is it good to look at?
- Is it distinctive?
- Does it create a positive image?
- Does it accurately represent your organization or business?
- Is it straightforward?
- Is it comprehensible?
- Is it memorable?
- Is it flexible?
- Does it copy well?
- Will it hold up both large and small?
- Will it wear well over time?
- Will you be proud to use it?

**Some examples**

There are a few definite themes among fencing logos used around the country these days. There are lots of weapons, naturally enough, and quite a few fencers. Many clubs incorporate some sort of geographical reference into their logo, (Keep in mind that these are real logos already used by existing organizations and may therefore be under trademark protection.)

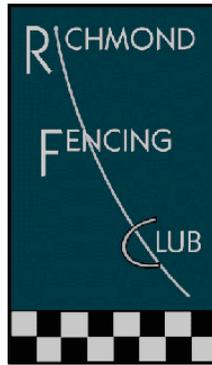


From straightforward text, we add weapons:



And then add some angles and play around with shapes a bit:





There are the shield or patch variations:



And the more abstract:



Mix in some fencers:



Finally, add some geography:



## Looking Professional: Why Bother?

Once you've got a visual image for yourself, it's important to take the time to make your written communications look professional, too. Looking professional means being careful and precise. It is knowing lots of often arbitrary rules of spelling and grammar and sentence structure and style. It is following the rules.

Many of us rebel against the very idea. We're running a fencing club, after all—we're coaches and parents and fencers, not professional writers or editors. Why all the fuss? After all, even if I make a few typos or write less than perfect prose, they'll know what I really mean, won't they? Why should I have to be so picky about what I send out? Why bother?

Think about the editor or reporter you've sent your press release to, in hopes of getting some publicity for the tournament you're organizing. If she works for a moderately sized newspaper, she's got a stack of press releases sitting on her desk and many more in her computer's inbox waiting to be reviewed. She's a busy person, with deadlines fast approaching and three or four stories in progress, but she's always on the lookout for new stories to fill that newspaper space every day. She doesn't have the time to read every one of those releases carefully, so how's she going to choose?

How would you choose? A handwritten notice goes into the trash immediately—too time-consuming. Here's one that nicely printed, but there's no headline and no clues to what it's about in the first few paragraphs—into the trash. Here's one that's 12 pages of tiny single-spaced type about some fundraiser's cause, but the editor can't find her bifocals under the stacks of paper on her desk, so into the trash it goes. Next is a clearly written announcement of an interesting-sounding event, except that the location and time are not clear, and there's no contact person listed for further information—regretfully, she tosses it, too.

At the end of her review, our newsperson may have no more than half a dozen items to look into further. They may still not be used, perhaps because something similar is already being covered, perhaps because it's just a busy news day. Maybe a couple of them are interesting enough that the information will be noted for a possible feature article someday or filed for future reference.

Looking professional gets you through the door. There's not much you can do about a new doping scandal or a basketball trade that preempts the story about your tournament, but you can control the picky little details that can sink your work regardless of its substantive value.

How that substantive value is perceived is tricky, too. Information presented sloppily, in a haphazard format, without enough attention given to its presentation, will raise doubts about its reliability: If a writer is so careless about how his information appears, perhaps he is just as careless with his facts and figures.

The time and effort and patience you put into getting all the boring, nitpicky, arbitrary details right are well worth the effort. You won't hear much about it if you do it right, but getting it wrong could negate all your hard work.

### **What's "Right"?**

How do you go about getting it right? Attention to detail, pure and simple.

Good reference books can help. A dictionary and thesaurus are basic, but there's lots of other help available.

If you can afford only one book on writing, make it *The Elements of Style* (William Strunk, Jr., and E. B. White, Allyn & Bacon). It's cheap, it's short, it's deceptively simple, and it uses lots of examples. One friend groans whenever she hears it recommended: "Everybody recommends it—I'm sick of hearing about *The Elements of Style!* People have been telling me about it since I was in high school." Everybody does recommend it, and for good reason: it's the best basic guide to style and usage around. Many professionals (including this one) reread it at least annually to make sure its advice stays drummed into their brains. The last chapter, "An Approach to Style (With a List of Reminders)," offers terrific advice for keeping your writing clear, concise, and powerful.

On the other hand, if you hate *The Elements of Style*, browse through the reference section of your local book store and find a style and usage guide you do like. As you look through the many available guides, you'll find that they often disagree on details of what is considered "correct" usage. You could buy all of them and try to figure out the majority opinion on any given problem, but it's not really worth the trouble. Usage recommendations from any of them will be acceptable as long as you don't alternate styles from one sentence to the next. Choose the guide you like best and find easiest to use, and stick with it consistently.

If you're not familiar with typesetting conventions used for publication, get either *The Mac Is Not a Typewriter* or *The PC Is Not a Typewriter* (Robin Williams, Peachpit Press). These look far too skinny for the price, but they're cheap for computer books and worth every penny. The rules we (the Boomers among us, anyway) learned in typing (e.g., "Doublespace after a period.") are different from the rules typesetters use for printed matter, and Williams offers clear and specific advice to make your work meet publishing standards. You'll be amazed what a few simple spacing and punctuation changes can do for your documents. (After all, "épée" looks much better than a plain old "epee.")

### **Making It Right**

All the reference volumes in the world, though, aren't worth the paper they're printed on if you don't notice when you need to use them. How do you learn to catch and correct problems in your own writing?

The best answer, of course, is not to try. Once words are down on paper, writing ceases to be a solitary undertaking and becomes a collaborative art. When reading your own work, it's easy to miss problems because you already know what you mean, and you will tend to see what you expect to see. Ask someone to read your work for you. If the idea of others discovering your mistakes bothers you, think how much worse it would be to have those mistakes appear in print publicly.

I've always found it easiest to fix any mechanical problems first. Once the spelling and grammar are taken care of, it's easier to notice places where meaning is unclear or information is missing.

Of course, in the real world, it's often impossible to avoid having to check your own work. What then?

- Allow yourself enough time to set the article aside for a day or two, or at least a few hours. The less you remember about what you wrote, the more easily you'll see any problems. (Of course, if you had time to do this, you'd probably have time to have someone proofread it for you.)
- Read it out loud. Phrases that seem articulate and intelligent in print can sound stilted and confusing when you hear them. Reading aloud also tends to slow you down, and that helps you find problems, too.
- Try reading your copy backwards. This will make you focus on one word at a time instead of whole phrases, and will make typos and spelling errors glaringly obvious.
- Do not try to proofread anything on a computer screen. Use your spellchecker, go over your copy on the screen for obvious problems, but don't expect to find everything. Even when you think you've already caught and fixed it all, give it a final run-through on paper.

If you're thorough and careful, you will catch every error, every awkward phrase, every senseless statement, and produce a perfect document every time.

Every time? Not a chance!

You'll definitely improve your odds. You'll produce better work than you would have without all that care and attention, But eventually, even under the best of circumstances, when six people review your work, and six more check it after layout just before it goes public, something really stupid will make it through, and you'll be baffled at how all of you could have missed something so obvious.

Let it go. Everybody makes mistakes sometimes.

## **Developing a House Style**

Getting your spelling and punctuation and subject-verb agreement right are just the beginning of finding your voice for communicating with the public. You also need some style, specifically, a "house style."

Your house style is your collection of rules for handling all those details that don't have a right or wrong, but are a matter of choice: Do you use "saber" or "sabre"? Do you give fencing commands in English or French ("on guard" or "en garde")? Do you write out all numerals or only those under 10? What's the proper acronym or abbreviation for your club? Is the American national governing body for fencing "US Fencing," "USA Fencing," or "USFA"?

Writers and editors can spend hours haggling over the details of such decisions, and differences of opinion can be every bit as fractious as political or religious disputes. One of the few true perquisites of being an editor is having the authority to decide such questions.

Once you make those decisions, though, you need a way to keep track of what you've decided. A house style is no house style if it's forgotten from one newsletter issue or press release to the next.

What you need is a style sheet. A style sheet (and this kind of style sheet differs from those in word processing and page layout programs) is simply a sheet or several sheets of items you've created standard styles for. Such a style sheet also serves as a handy reminder for the correct spellings of words and names you have trouble with.

Probably the easiest kind of style sheet to use is the one Karen Judd describes in her *Copyediting: A Practical Guide*. She suggests four pages (or one 11 x 17 inch sheet of paper, folded in half). Divide pages 2 and 3 into boxes for the letters of the alphabet; list specific words (e.g., "repéchage") in the appropriate boxes.

Pages 1 and 4 can be divided into whatever sections you need for your work. Judd lists some of the most commonly used boxes:

- Numbers & Dates: when to spell out numbers, whether to use commas between months and years, how to handle fractions, dollar amounts, etc.
- Abbreviations: when to use, how to punctuate.
- Footnote style
- Bibliographic style
- Typographic style: amount of space marked in similar situations, when to paragraph, when to use boldface or italic type, accents in words of foreign origin, etc.

One useful category Judd doesn't mention is one I learned to use from embarrassing experience: words NOT to find. Basically, this is a way to avoid common typos. Keep a list of words you don't expect to find in your publication, and before you go to print, use your word search to make sure they aren't there. Sound like more trouble than it's worth? You won't think so after you've sent out an article with the "l" omitted from "public."

The actual form of your style sheet is not important as long as you have something. Some people prefer index cards or yellow legal pads, but for most of us, a simple sheet or two is sufficient. (Following is an example of a simple single-sheet version.)

As you produce each publication, note any style decisions you make as you make them. This way you'll have them written down for next time, and will spare yourself having to flip through past work to figure out what you did last time.

**Example of Simple Style Sheet**

*(Use to keep track of grammar and usage details for consistency.)*

<b>AB</b>	<b>CD</b>	<b>EF</b> en garde épée Erinn (Smart)	<b>GH</b>
<b>IJK</b> its (possessive) it's (it is) Kalle (Weeks) Keeth (Smart)	<b>LM</b>	<b>NO</b>	<b>PQ</b> Pederson (Mike)
<b>R</b> repêchage	<b>S</b> sabre or saber— pick one and stick with it	<b>TU</b> their (not ours) there (not here) they're (they are)	<b>VWXYZ</b> Weeks (Kalle)
<b>Punctuation</b> Apostrophes are for possessives, not plurals. - (hyphen) for word breaks - (n-dash) for number and date ranges ("2008-2009") - (m-dash) for use as informal pause within a sentence			
<b>Abbreviations</b> US Fencing			
<b>Miscellaneous</b>			

## Part 2

# Create & Maintain Your Website

It used to be that when you started up a small niche business—like a fencing club—the one indispensable first step to making sure that potential customers could find you was buying an ad in the Yellow Pages. But the Yellow Pages aren't what they used to be—they aren't even *the* Yellow Pages any longer, and it's a puzzle just figuring out which of several different area directories you should consider. Many club owners now opt for only the barest minimum listing, and more than a few have dropped their Yellow Pages ads completely, having found that most of their inquiries now come through the Internet.

The Web has completely changed the way people look for resources. Nobody wants to go flipping through several different editions of telephone directories to find listings for all the local fencing clubs in the area when it's far easier just to sit down at their computer and type "fencing club" into their favorite search engine.

All USFA member clubs, of course, are included in the club listings on the USFA website, and it's only common sense to make sure that your club is also listed accurately at [fencing.net](http://fencing.net) and at your division and section websites. But those listings only go so far—if your club listing doesn't include a web address, you're losing potential customers to clubs who do.

If your club doesn't already have its own website, you need to get it one.

You could hire a professional to create one for you, but again, this is an area where canvassing your members may find you the help you need. If not, there are lots of resources, both in print and online, to help you create your own website. Check with your current Internet Service Provider (ISP); a web address and storage space might be included as part of your account. Many services also offer "sitebuilder" programs, where you can cut and paste your own text and images into provided templates to create your website. Web design options range from free online sites through Yahoo or Google, through low-cost web development packages such as Apple's iWeb, to the high-end Adobe Dreamweaver and beyond. Ask around and find out what your friends and colleagues use for their websites, if they have them. What you end up using will depend on your interest, your time, and your budget.

- Consider purchasing a domain name for your website. A web URL like "www.anytownfencers.org" will be far easier to use and remember than a more anonymous "www.myserviceprovider.com/personalsite/~093520/index.html," which wouldn't even come close to fitting on a business card.
- Be sure to include metatags or keywords in your website design. These don't show up on your site but are used by search engines for indexing web pages. Words and phrases like "fencing," "sport fencing," "competitive fencing," "fencing instruction," and your club's name are the sort of thing you need here.
- Keep in mind that the purpose of your website is to provide information about your club. Don't let the design get so fancy or busy that it interferes with the presentation of the content. Avoid colored (especially multicolored) text on dark backgrounds, anything that blinks, rotates, or wiggles, and anything else that would cause a visitor to the site to flinch.
- Keep the site navigation simple and understandable. A standard menu bar across the top or down the left side of each page makes it easy for visitors to find their way around. Make sure that there are no "orphan" pages with no way to get back to the home page. You also might want to be sure

that any links to other sites open in a new window, so that visitors don't get directed away from your site.

- Make sure your club logo, name, and address are visible on every page.
- Above all, keep your site up to date. If your front page says that the November class schedule will be posted next week and today's date is March 15, a visitor could easily assume your club is no longer in business and not bother to give you a call.

Once you get your design figured out, what do you put on your website?

Basic information about your club is essential—you want people to know what your club does, where it is, and how to contact you for more information. You'll probably want to provide information about your coaches and their history and qualifications, and at least some information about classes and lessons.

Beyond those beginnings, you can add plenty of other material:

- calendars of club activities, local, regional, and national tournaments
- information about fencing, the three weapons, uniforms, scoring, etc.
- links to the USFA, your division and section, other fencing websites, Wikipedia articles on fencing and fencers
- club news, including tournament results
- member biographies
- photo galleries

The key is to include content that makes your club look interesting, appealing, and above all, active.

## Part 3

# Spread Your News

### What *IS* My News?

OK, you've created a public face for your club or your event. Now what?

That depends on your purpose for doing publicity in the first place. What is your goal? Are you running a club and looking for new members? Are you a new tournament organizer looking to promote a specific event? Are you local volunteer trying to help with a sectional championship or a national tournament? Are you working to get more public recognition of fencing as a competitive sport? Are you trying to do several of these at the same time?

Whatever your goals, there are two essential requirements for news: First, it has to be current, something that's about to happen or has just happened. This means that if you're announcing tournament results, you're announcing them the day of the tournament or the next day at the latest. If you wait even two days, your results are no longer news, and nobody will be interested.

Second, it's got to be relevant to your news outlet—that is, if you're sending news to your local paper or television station, you've got to have some kind of local connection. If one of your club members wins a national championship, that's a local connection. If a national tournament is held in your city, that's a local connection. If the American women's foil team wins an Olympic silver medal, the local media won't care to hear about it from you unless you can leverage a local angle into the story: One of the team members grew up locally, your club held an all-night streaming-video viewing party to watch the competition, or perhaps a team member is visiting your club to show off her medal and talk about her Olympic experience.

So what news do you want to send out? You can send out results for every local tournament your fencers compete in, but it's not likely that they'll all get printed. The odds will be better in a tiny neighborhood weekly than a large metropolitan daily paper, but they're still pretty slim. Regional and national results for local fencers are a better bet for attracting media attention, but aren't guaranteed to make it into the news. You'll probably find that news outlets are attracted by medals more than placement: a fencer who wins gold at a section championship and can be called, for example, "Pacific Coast Champion" will probably get more attention than someone who makes the top 16 at a Division I NAC, even though the section championship was only a B-rated event with 27 competitors and the Division I event was 174 fencers with six Olympians included.

You'll probably find that it'll take a long time—years—to train your local media outlets to think of fencing competitions as sporting events worth covering. You can train them by sending news releases about:

- fencers entering JO and SN qualifiers
- fencers qualifying for JOs and SNs
- fencers preparing to leave for JOs or SNs
- daily results of local fencers at NACs, JOs, or SNs
- recap of local fencer results at NACs, JOs, or SNs

If you're organizing a major tournament, you can announce:

- the fact of the tournament, with date and site and anticipated attendance and local impact

- the signing of sponsors for the event
- the number of actual entries at deadline
- notable entries (e.g., 2008 Olympic medalist entered to compete)
- tournament results

Sending out news releases can seem pointless when you seldom see any response to your work. But you can plug away at it with no result at all, and then suddenly two newspaper reporters and a TV crew want to interview you within a few hours. The response you'll get to your efforts will often seem random, dependent as it is on what other news is happening, on the resources of the paper or TV station, on the whim of a particular assignment editor, but every so often the circumstances will fall in your favor.

(Just be prepared—when the press finally comes calling, they'll usually want you Right Now, and you'll end up scrambling to find enough club members to show up at whatever weird hour the TV crew needs to get their story done in time for that night's evening news!)

## Writing the News

*“Begin at the beginning,” the King said gravely, “and go on till you come to the end: then stop.”*

The King's advice to the White Rabbit is a good—though not the only—way to tell a story. But it is never the best way to write news.

News is meant to be understood immediately. The best news writing gets directly to the point and leaves background details for later. The traditional term for the style is the “inverted pyramid.” This simply means that you present your information in order from the most important to the least important, and that you cover the what, where, when, and who of your story before you get to how and why.

For example, assume that your club is planning a tournament at a local shopping mall to give both the sport and your club some local exposure. The information you most need to get out to the public is what the event is, and when and where it will be held. If you start instead at the beginning—how at a parents' meeting five months ago you decided to hold the event because your former assistant coach's wife's old division had such a success with theirs—you'll lose your readers before you finally get to the point.

Present your information in the active voice (“The Anytown Fencing Center presents its fourth annual Tournament of Champions...”). The passive voice (“A fencing tournament will be held...”) sounds anonymous and detached, as though no people are, or will ever be, involved.

### “Just the facts, ma'am.”

Joe Friday had it right. Avoid editorializing in a news release or any straight news article. (The styles for feature articles differ a bit; we'll cover those later.) This doesn't mean you can't slant your information to make your point. It just means you should maintain the appearance of objectivity. Instead of using adjectives to comment on your facts (“The amazing Anytown Fencing Center will hold its fabulous Tournament of Champions. . . .”), quote someone directly to make your point (““Our whole family's now avidly fencing because of last year's amazing event!” says Esther Épée.”).

With any news release you write, ask yourself the following questions:

- What is the purpose of this announcement? Whose attention am I trying to get and for what purpose?

- Does this news release give all the facts necessary for a member of my target audience to do what I'm trying to persuade her to do? (Date, time, place, etc.)
- Am I sticking to the facts? Is any editorial comment in the form of direct quotations?
- Can I cut any unneeded words? Have I used active verbs as much as possible?

## Sample Format for News Release

<b>1</b>	<b>2</b> [Your Letterhead or Organization Name & Address]																
<b>3</b>	<table border="0"> <tr> <td>NEWS RELEASE</td> <td>CONTACT:</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Date</td> <td>Person</td> </tr> <tr> <td>For Immediate Release</td> <td><a href="mailto:email@domain.name">email@domain.name</a></td> </tr> <tr> <td></td> <td>(000)555-0000</td> </tr> <tr> <td></td> <td>or</td> </tr> <tr> <td></td> <td>Person</td> </tr> <tr> <td></td> <td><a href="mailto:email@domain.name">email@domain.name</a></td> </tr> <tr> <td></td> <td>(000)555-0000</td> </tr> </table>	NEWS RELEASE	CONTACT:	Date	Person	For Immediate Release	<a href="mailto:email@domain.name">email@domain.name</a>		(000)555-0000		or		Person		<a href="mailto:email@domain.name">email@domain.name</a>		(000)555-0000
NEWS RELEASE	CONTACT:																
Date	Person																
For Immediate Release	<a href="mailto:email@domain.name">email@domain.name</a>																
	(000)555-0000																
	or																
	Person																
	<a href="mailto:email@domain.name">email@domain.name</a>																
	(000)555-0000																
<b>5</b>	<b>5</b> <del>Headline</del> —Factual Description of News Item Not to Exceed Two Lines (and NOT all caps!)																
<b>6</b>	<b>6</b> CITY, STATE—Press release should be on letterhead, double-spaced. Neatness counts: no typos, misspellings, grammatical errors, faded print, exotic typefaces.																
	<b>7</b>																
	Release should be written as clearly and concisely as possible. Do not use passive sentence structure (people should always be doing things, NOT things are being done). Make sure information is in descending order of importance.																
	Do not exceed one page. If an editor or reporter wants more information, they can call or email the contact (who will always return calls promptly and be able to answer any questions!). <b>8</b>																
	# # #																
	<b>10</b>																

## News Release Notes

### (1) Format & Paper

Type or print your release on plain paper. If you decide to use colored paper, be conservative with pastels or other pale colors. Don't use fluorescents or brights under any circumstances: they can make it hard to focus on the text and will only annoy the reader. If you have an email address for your media contact and the contact welcomes email, use email rather than paper—it's easier and cheaper for everybody. For email releases, use plain text rather than HTML or attached files.

### (2) Letterhead vs. Plain Address

Publicity professionals disagree about whether to use letterhead for releases. A plain typed name and address for your organization will leave more room on the page for your information. However, if you have a distinctive logo and are trying to build a reputation as a source for reliable information, using the logo can help make your organization more identifiable. Again, for email releases, stick with the plain text.

### (3) Release Date

Use the date the press release is to be distributed. It is always better to send press releases when they can be used immediately than to ask for the information to be held until a later date ("Hold until <DATE>"). How early you should send releases varies with the type of announcement and the media outlet. Normally, daily papers need information at least three weeks ahead of time; monthlies may need to get them two to three

months ahead. If you're reporting news of something that's already happened, it needs to be sent out THAT DAY—later than that means it's no longer news. If in doubt about timing, don't guess; call and ask.

**(4) Contact Information**

This information is mandatory! Always give a phone number (email is optional but useful) for someone who can give more information, and always give it at the top where it is immediately visible. In an email release, right before the headline is fine. If your contact is only available certain hours of the day, say so specifically. Give two or three contacts if necessary, but make sure they know they are listed and can answer questions.

**(5) Headline**

The headline should be descriptive of the information contained in the release. If you're sending the release via email, the headline should also be the subject line of the email. Don't get cute here or try for humor—it usually doesn't work. (On the other hand, try not to be totally uninteresting.) Normally this headline will not be used for publication; most papers will write their own to their specific space and style standards. However, a few may use your whole release, including the headline, exactly as written, so make sure it's accurate and informative.

**(6) Location**

Also commonly referred to as the "dateline." This is optional. Use if your release is going out to papers in a number of cities or to (or from) a city other than your own.

**(7) Writing style**

Make sure it's clean, clear, and concise, with the most important information first. Read the "Looking Professional" section (starting on page 10) for more details.

**(8) Length**

Keep your release to a single page if at all possible. You should be able to provide basic information within one page, or two at most. If you feel background information is necessary, send a fact sheet or backgrounder along with your release. If the editor or reporter wants more information, they can call your listed contact person.

**(9) Ending**

Use "# # #" or "-30-" (less common now) to mark the end of the release. If you must use a second page (not applicable to email releases), end the first with a complete paragraph or sentence, and type "more—more—more" at the bottom. Put a one- or two-line heading indicating the organization, date, and topic at the top of the next page. Don't staple pages together.

**(10) Reference Copies**

Keep a copy of your release for yourself, and give one to your contact person, if different. If you send different versions to different papers, make sure you know which versions go where, so you will know exactly what any questions refer to.

## **Talking About Fencing with the Media**

Here you are, happily running your club, and one day the telephone rings and it's a reporter from the local paper who says she's doing a story about obscure sports and would like to talk to you. Or it's a producer for a local news show looking for families to profile for a feature story on amateur club sports. Or maybe it's a producer for a radio or television talk show looking for participants for an upcoming show.

You've got some decisions to make. First, will you decide to participate at all? There could well be good reasons to decline: You may be incorrigibly shy, or one of those people who can't think of what to say until later that night when you're falling asleep, or perhaps you're a legend in your club for the amount of time you spend with your foot in your mouth. For our purposes, though, we'll assume you decide to help with the story.

Once you decide to participate, you need to know about the focus of the story: Is it about fencing in general, or does it focus on a more narrow topic, e.g., “Nerd Athletes” or “Unusual Sports For All Ages”? If the story or show is to have a particular slant, you can tailor your preparation accordingly.

### **Doing Your Homework**

Ideally, you should have at least a few days to get ready for the interview. However, if we're talking about a TV interview, it's not uncommon to be given only a few hours' notice, if that. Prepare yourself beforehand by creating some reference materials for yourself.

Presumably you know all about your own club or the tournament you want to promote, but do you have all the basic details in your head: How many members do you have? When was the club started? What kind of people take lessons there? Or if it's a tournament: How many entries do you expect? Where will they come from? What time are the different events? Is there a fee for spectators?

If the story is to be about your fencers, can you provide basic information about them? For any one of them, can you answer the following questions: How long has she been fencing? What school does she attend or what is her profession? What appeals to her about fencing? What area of town does she live in? Consider working up a biographical form including this kind of information, along with contact information for any of your members who are willing to do interviews—that way, you can keep it all on file or in a binder and be able to provide suitable interview subjects when needed.

Once you've got yourself prepared, you can start thinking about how to handle this particular interview:

***Decide what message you want to convey.*** This may sound contrived, but whether you intend it or not, you will be perceived by those who know little about fencing as representing the entire sport. (Fencers, on the other hand, will see very clearly that you're nothing at all like “most” fencers, and will recognize you as the individual you are.) You will have a limited amount of time to make whatever points you want to make, so try to keep your message simple and clear. If you are a saber fencer, for instance, talk about the speed and target area and don't try to convey all the details of right-of-way.

***Think about the questions you are likely to be asked and what your answers should be.*** This is not as difficult as it may sound—journalists almost always ask the same few questions, and after a couple of interviews you will be able to start predicting the order in which they will ask those questions. Expect to be asked what fencing feels like, why you or others do it, what kind of conditioning it takes, whether it hurts, how many fencers there are in your town/city/state, etc., etc. If you've never been interviewed before, it is worth the trouble to role-play an interview with a couple of friends. If you think about the probable questions ahead of time and practice a bit, it's less likely you'll be caught off-guard during the actual interview.

***Try to keep your answers to no more than a sentence or two.*** Don't give complicated explanations of tournament formats or lengthy histories of every fencing club in your area. Keep your answers focused and to the point. Remember to try to work in the name of your club or event, along with a phone number or web address.

***Moderate your expectations.*** Once you've figured out your message, don't expect that you'll be able to convey it perfectly, or that the reporter will produce exactly the story you wanted or expected. It hardly ever happens. Reporters and producers and editors come to each story with their own biases and expectations and those rarely jibe with your own. The only way you will ever see a story exactly the way you think it should be is if you buy advertising space and fill it with precisely the story you want.

If the final story gives a glimmer of what fencing is about, gives sources for readers or viewers to find more information, and leaves you not feeling a complete idiot, count it a success. Anything more is a gift.

### General Tips for Interviews

- Practice answering questions, and learn your facts, figures, ideas, and anecdotes well enough so that they become part of your thinking process. Go beyond memorizing—get comfortable enough to be able to discuss your material naturally without sounding rote and mechanical.
- Don't hesitate to think a few seconds before answering a question. Better to organize your thoughts and sound relatively coherent the first time through than to try to rephrase after you've already started talking.
- Forget you've ever heard the phrase "off the record." Assume that anything you say may be quoted by the reporter. Even if the notebook is put away, or the tape recorder or camera is turned off, consider anything you say fair game.
- Avoid flippant or sarcastic remarks. Such comments are usually short and eminently quotable, and almost always end up in the story, usually to your regret.

*Example:* Reporter asks main reason for fencing, to which fencer drily replies, "I like to hit people on the head." Appears as straight fact in published article as "Steve Sabre fences because he likes to hurt people."

- Relax! Even if you consider the interview a disaster and your own part an embarrassment, most readers will forget it as soon as the next issue is published. (Of course, your fencing friends may not let you forget it quite so soon, but you can volunteer them for the next interview.)

### Fencing on TV

Fencing is irresistible—there's no other way to account for the consistency with which television reporters and producers approach stories about fencing: Get the talent geared up! Matt Lauer fenced with Keeth Smart on *The Today Show*, WNBC Chuck Scarborough took a fencing lesson from Tim Morehouse, and your local TV sports reporter will probably want to fence at your club.

But there's more--the odds are also pretty good that once the reporter learns a little footwork and a few basic attacks and parries, she'll want to try a short bout. Inevitably, she and the producer will go cute and draft one of your youngest members to fence and—naturally—defeat her. If the camera operator is a bit creative, he'll borrow a mask to shoot through, to give a view of "what it really looks like."

Pretty harmless, if not terribly original. There's no reason not to go along with it all, and you'll probably get a few calls in response to such a story. But there's also no reason you can't offer your own ideas for them to consider, such as showing a real bout with some experienced fencers, a group class, or an individual lesson. Just adding a tiny bit of real fencing to the fun and games will help give a better idea of what our sport is about.

### Tips for Broadcast Interviews

- Practice your message. Michael Levine, in his book *Guerrilla PR*, says to boil your message down to a "SOCO": a Single Overriding Communications Objective. According to Levine, "Your message should be concise to the point of haiku when conveying it on television."
- Expect to be able to answer most questions in 10- to 20-second phrases. Some program formats will allow longer responses, but be prepared for the interviewer to interrupt if your answers run long.

- Be prepared to speak both on and off camera. In addition to the typical on-camera interview format, it's also common for TV crews to record just the sound of an interview. They'll edit it down to something that can be used as voiceover narration to their video footage.
- SLOW DOWN! Almost everyone speaks too quickly when starting out. Watch and listen to on-air personalities whose style you admire, and try to emulate their pace. Speaking too rapidly can make you sound nervous and agitated; only rarely will you err too far to the opposite extreme. Take a deep breath, consciously relax, and slow down—you'll feel calmer, and you'll sound more confident and more intelligent.

## **Creating Media Kits**

Earlier, we talked about the virtues of keeping your news releases clear, short, and to the point. But unless all you want from your publicity effort is a simple calendar announcement, such a concise and pithy release will leave reporters without enough information to produce a good story.

What do you do? You don't send just the news release—you create a media kit.

A media kit can be as simple or as complex as you want to make it. For our purposes, we will assume that you're on a typically limited budget, so you won't be interested in gimmicky packaging or free balloons or refrigerator magnets as attention-getters, and you're probably not going to be sending video press kits.

You can provide a printed media kit, usually made up of several of the items described in the sections below, or you can set up a media website, either as a stand-alone site or as a media section of your regular website. One big advantage of the web option is that you can easily update your material as needed.

In either case, what you want is to provide information to enable reporters to write a good, informative story. As always, try to make the reporter's job easier by presenting your information as clearly as you can, in an easy-to-follow format. (Usually, as long as the layout is clear and legible, it's not necessary to use the doublespacing and very wide margins of a news release.)

## **The Backgrounder**

An obvious item to include in your media kit is a backgrounder on your club or organization. A backgrounder might include the club's history, coach and staff information, membership demographics, how it's financed, and what it does.

For example:

*Purpose: The Anytown Fencing Club provides individual and group instruction*

*Organization & Membership: The Anytown Fencing Club is a California nonprofit corporation founded in 1987. It has 120 members in the Anytown metropolitan area . . . .*

Normally, you would only need to update this type of backgrounder as often as the information contained in it changes.

## **The Fact Sheet**

A fact sheet typically is tailored more to the specific event you're publicizing, and it might be appropriate to include more than one fact sheet.

For instance, if you have a big regional tournament coming up, you might include in your press kit a fact sheet on the recent growth in fencing in your club or area, and cite recent high-level results of local members at past tournaments or events in other regions.

You could also include a fact sheet on the basics of fencing, describing the three different weapons and illustrating their respective target areas. (This information might even appear unchanged as a sidebar to whatever article finally appears in the paper.)

Once you decide on the focus of your publicity efforts, you'll probably be able to think of several different types of information that would be useful to reporters. Just don't overdo it—make sure that the information you provide is relevant to the specific event you're promoting, and that each fact sheet is clearly identified with a subject title.

### **Other Press Kit Items**

Other possible items in your press kit might include:

- press clippings (after all, if a story appeared somewhere else, it must have been newsworthy!)
- a “quote” sheet—quoted statements (sound bites!) that can be used in a story. These should be from real, live people with some relationship to your event, such as coaches, competitors, or perhaps even a local official to talk about the amount of business a locally held NAC will bring to the area.
- a bibliography—If you're especially hopeful of a major feature article on the sport, this could get a reporter started on her research. Emphasize currently available books, magazines, articles, and—especially—websites. Make sure that whatever you recommend is readily available—again, make that reporter's job as easy as you can.

### **Sending It Out**

Once everything is ready, you can publish your media website or mail your printed kit out. Don't staple the pages together, even if your press release is longer than one page and you just want to keep those pages together. If you feel you must attach pages, use a paper clip.

If your information package is less than six pages, fold it and mail it in a #10 business envelope. If more, use a flat 9 x 12 inch envelope, preferably white. If you use brown kraft envelopes, make sure they are marked to be sent first class; unmarked, they may end up traveling third class. If your kit includes many separate pieces, you can opt to organize them all in a portfolio or folder before they go into that envelope.

Always send your press materials first class. Anything less is announcing to your recipients that you're sending them junk mail.

### **Building a Media List**

All right—you've figured out what you want to say, how to say it, it's proofed and printed and ready to go. Who do you send your information to?

There's the easy way: get out your local Yellow Pages and send your material to every newspaper, every radio station, and every television station listed. This way, of course, you can maximize the probability that most of your information will end up in a wastebasket somewhere in town.

It pays to be a bit more selective and direct your materials carefully. If you plan to send anything to the media more than once every two or three years, start building yourself a media list. Building a good list will take time and work, but will be well worth the trouble.

A good media list will be specific to your needs. It will include every publication or station that is likely to be interested in your information, but will omit those for whom your stuff will be a waste of time and paper. For fencers, this means you will probably include all the general interest newspapers, the parenting and

fitness monthlies, and any alternative papers in town, but you'll ignore the legal announcement papers, the real estate weeklies, and other specialized publications.

Specialized publications worth looking into, though, are ethnic or cultural publications. Almost any good-sized city is likely to have newspapers serving African-American, Spanish-speaking, Catholic, Jewish, or other communities. Don't ignore any publication that is likely to reach people you want to hear about your club or event. (It's a good idea, though, with foreign-language papers, to know someone who reads the language, or you'll likely be wasting time and effort again.)

Publication names and addresses are a good start, but for a really useful media list, you'll need more. What do you do with mail addressed to "occupant"? Except for the very smallest papers which have only one or two staff members, you are essentially writing to "occupant" if you don't address your release to a specific person.

Read your paper; look at the masthead (usually inside the front page) for contact information for the different departments or check the paper's website. Look for contact information for assignment editors or sports editors, or for a reporter or columnist whose work you like. If you've been interviewed for a story, try sending things to that reporter. You can also call (try to avoid deadline hours—check right away whether it's a good time to call) and ask to speak to the assignment editor: ask who you should send your material to. Most editors are happy to provide such information—it can save them time and trouble later.

If you send material to a contact, try calling a few days later to see if they received it, or if they have any questions. Such calls may also pique interest in a story that had been headed for the trash. (Or sometimes it's already made it to the trash, in which case you might be asked to send another copy—do so, along with a note saying you've sent it at their request, so they don't automatically toss it again.)

Another means of feedback is to include a postpaid card with boxes to check off on whether they used the information, whether they'd like more information, and whether they want future mailings from you.

Keep track of which individuals you send things to and what kind of response you get. Eventually you may develop different contacts for different types of stories at each publication. For example, your recent club expansion might not interest the sports department of your local paper, but might appeal to a business department editor looking into fitness market growth.

In the process of developing contacts, you may also develop relationships with reporters and editors. Not only will you learn who to talk to and what kinds of stories you can get, but they will also learn that you are a reliable source of information or that you're happy to provide an interesting backdrop for a stand-up TV report (as many fencing clubs did for local NBC affiliates attempting to tie their stations to the network's Beijing coverage).

## **Featuring Fencing**

All right, you're a coach or club organizer and you've got a story to tell about fencing. It may be the story of a particular fencer or coach, of a whole family who compete, or of an ancillary supporter, such as an armorer or referee.

What you probably don't have is news.

It's not news in the sense that the Olympics were news, or that a big hurricane is news. Unlike "hard news," your story isn't time-sensitive: it makes no difference whether it appears on Tuesday or Wednesday.

What you've got is a feature article.

But other than being “softer” than election results or diplomatic overtures, what exactly is a feature?

In her book, *The Essential Feature*, Vicky Hay says a feature is:

*. . . a long, nonfiction story, 800 to 3,000 or more words, written in clear, simple language and dressed out rather casually. . . [I]t is always factual and . . . is based on solid research. But unlike a news story, it begins with a lead like a fictional opening and presents facts in a more flexible manner. The writer may take an obvious point of view, and the story may use fictional techniques to show rather than tell the reader what is going on.*

Because you are allowed to tell your story like a story, feature articles can be a lot more fun to write than straight news.

A good fencing feature could take any number of forms:

- human interest—focusing on the everyday routine of practice and lessons at your club.
- personal profile—focusing on a specific person, perhaps a teen fencer who is also a referee, or a grandparent who got into armoring to spend time with his fencing grandkids.
- color story—a light, descriptive piece covering a particular event, say a Junior Olympic qualifier or a group of fencers preparing for Summer Nationals (photos would be a natural for a color piece).
- the how-to or service piece—an informational piece intended to give the reader the specifics of what competitive fencing is, how to find a club or coach, etc.
- personal experience—one individual’s account of her fencing competition. This one might be tricky to make appealing enough for general interest.
- the sidebar—a short piece meant to accompany a larger article; for instance, local club information to go along with a personal profile, or one or two personal stories alongside a service piece.

### **Structuring the Story**

No matter what approach they take on a story, all feature articles share certain characteristics:

- the lede—the opening of the story: an introduction to a person, an anecdote (often not finished until the end of the article), a set scene, possibly even dialogue.
- the transition—explains what the article is about, and why the story is worth telling.
- development—the meat of the article; it might give some background on the sport of fencing, compare local with national statistics, quote relevant experts (whoever they might be). This is the section that will likely be cut if the article needs trimming for space.
- strong ending—unlike the straight news story, which can sometimes dribble away to nothing as its facts become less and less important, a feature has a real conclusion. It may take the form of a pithy quote or it might be the end of an anecdote which started the piece.

One variation often used in feature articles is to start several parallel stories (perhaps looking at two or three fencers of different ages or experience) and tie them together (perhaps they have more in common than is immediately apparent) through the course of the article.

## **Part 4:**

### **Be Active in Your Community**

Many fencing clubs hold their classes under the auspices of local parks and recreation districts, or provide after-school programs through public or private schools. But there are plenty of other ways to present fencing throughout your community, some of which even offer a bit of income.

#### **Youth Organizations**

For the past several years, the Sacramento Fencing Club has provided introductory fencing sessions for Girl Scout groups through the local Girl Scout council's event calendar. The club's "En Garde" fencing class, offered half a dozen times a year, is a two-hour session of footwork, glove games, and basic fencing moves taught by a coach and two or three junior or cadet fencers, and participating girls earn a council-designed patch. Enrollment is handled entirely through the Girl Scout council office, which pays a nominal fee per enrolled girl. The program is popular enough that there is nearly always a waiting list for enrollment, and a few troops who are unable to sign up through the council sessions arrange for private sessions similar to the club's birthday party program.

Such council event calendars are usually put together each spring for the following school year. Check with your local Girl Scout council to see about arranging a program in your area, and look into other groups—Boy Scouts, Camp Fire, 4-H, etc.—for similar opportunities.

#### **Community Education Classes**

In any good-sized city, you see the catalogs in restaurants and supermarkets, libraries and bookstores—Learning Annex, Learning Co-op, Learning Exchange: catalogs of classes on everything from using computers to making jewelry to public speaking to jazz dance to aromatherapy to getting a real estate license. Does that catalog in your community include a fencing class?

If not, it's easy enough to set one up. Send the company a class proposal with a course description suitable for the catalog, an outline of what's to be covered, summary of your qualifications to teach the course, and a short explanation of who the class would be likely to appeal to. You can even set the dates as the same as your regular introductory fencing class, so you wouldn't even need to hold separate class sessions. Exact arrangements vary from one company to the next, but generally, the instructor and the company agree on a fee for the class and how it will be split. In most cases, the company will take much the larger portion of the fee, so you may not make a profit or even break even on the students who enroll in your classes. But those catalogs have the potential to let several hundred thousand readers know that there is fencing available in your community.

#### **Networking & Service Groups**

If you're running a fencing club, you are a small businessperson and should consider getting involved with local service or networking groups such as chambers of commerce, JayCees, Rotary, or Kiwanis. You'll not only have an opportunity to promote fencing, but you may find resources for helping you, such as volunteers to help with larger tournaments, such as Regional Youth Circuit events.

Even if you choose not to join such organizations, look into their speaker programs—such groups are often on the lookout for speakers for weekly luncheon meetings.

Don't ignore cyberspace, either. Consider creating a Facebook page for your club or tournament. Use Facebook's status updates and other messaging tools to keep people aware of what's happening with your fencing activities.

## Fairs, Conferences & Trade Shows

Any event which attracts families is worth looking into for the possibility of running a booth or presenting a short class or demonstration. State and county fairs, Renaissance fairs or other appropriate historical re-enactments, and sports and fitness shows are all worth checking out for the cost of a booth or the possibility of making your club part of the entertainment offered.

If you learn of a conference soon enough, and it's the type that offers workshops on various topics, you can send a resume describing a potential workshop, along with your qualifications for presenting it. The organizers may decide your topic is of sufficient interest to include in their schedule.

Even events for which booths are too expensive might be within reach. While show organizers obviously prefer to sell all their booth space, they may sometimes offer unsold booths at low or no cost to local nonprofit organizations to avoid having ugly gaps in their exhibit halls. This may take some nagging on your part, and you have to be willing and able to put a booth together at the last minute, but it could be worth the trouble.

- Get your members signed up to work in shifts, preferably at least two or three people at a time. You may want to work together with other area clubs to spread out the work and expense. If possible, have fencers bouting or doing footwork or other practice throughout the day, and have gear available for visitors to look at or try out (under supervision, of course).
- Try to have at least one person at your booth the entire time the exhibit hall or show is open, and don't just sit there while passers-by simply pass on by. If you hand out flyers or greet passers-by, they are more likely to stop, ask questions, and start conversations, which will make your booth look more interesting and attract even more people.
- Your handout doesn't need to be anything fancy or complex. A single sheet with basic fencing information on one side and club contact information on the other might be plenty. Even a half-sheet handout could have enough information to be useful and would be easy to quickly make more copies of if you run out.

This is one place where you can effectively use all those violently bright colored papers. People who are busily stuffing those nifty vendor bags with all the literature they pick up from every booth they pass will be more likely to find your information among all those other flyers if they remember it was on "that really ugly fluorescent chartreuse paper."

- Don't forget a sign-up sheet for more information (especially if your "staff" has to leave your booth), or provide 3 x 5 cards for visitors to provide their addresses on in exchange for a chance at a prize—hold a drawing for a club t-shirt or a free introductory class or lesson.
- Try to keep track of how many handouts you use (and how many end up on the exhibit hall floor), how many people you talk to, and how many inquiries or new memberships you get as a result of the show. Give yourself a way to evaluate the success of your booth and decide whether the effort was worth the trouble.

## Public Tournaments & Demonstrations

Look into opportunities for hosting tournaments at a shopping mall. Knights of Siena (NC) has held several tournaments at a local Westfield shopping mall. (Pictures and a description can be viewed at their website at <http://www.knightsofsiena.com/west1.html>.)

Another option to consider is a stand-alone public fencing demonstration. In September 2008, the New Jersey Fencing Alliance and the Maplewood Department of Recreation and Cultural Affairs held a community fencing event as part of the Ten Thousand Fencers project. Tim Morehouse, Jeff Bukantz, and Akhi Spencer-El participated, and NJFA's raffle, bake sale, and t-shirt sale proceeds went to support a local

school fencing program. Nearly 400 people showed up for the event, of whom at least 60 suited up and tried fencing for themselves. (A press release for this event is included in Appendix 2.)

# Appendix I: Bibliography

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Phillips, Michael, and Salli Rasberry, *Marketing Without Advertising* (Nolo Press, 2008; ISBN 978-1413306323). A classic; full of ideas for those with little or no money to spend on PR.

Yale, David, and Andrew J. Carothers, *The Publicity Handbook, New Edition: The Inside Scoop from More than 100 Journalists and PR Pros on How to Get Great Publicity Coverage* (McGraw-Hill, 2001; ISBN 978-0844232423).

## Style & Usage

Associated Press, *The Associated Press Stylebook* (Basic Books, 2004; ISBN 0465004881).

*The Chicago Manual of Style* (University of Chicago Press, 2003; ISBN 978-0226104034). Everything (and more!) you'll ever want to know about style and usage, and preparing manuscripts for publication.

Follett, Wilson, *Modern American Usage* (Hill and Wang, 1998; ISBN 978-0809069514).

Fowler, H. W., *A Dictionary of Modern English Usage* (Oxford University Press, 1983; ISBN 978-0192813893). The classic English language reference. There is a 2004 revision by R. W. Burchfield, also from Oxford (ISBN 978-0198610212), that is somewhat controversial and disliked by Fowler aficionados.

Judd, Karen, *Copyediting: A Practical Guide* (Crisp Learning, 2001; ISBN 978-1560526087). Good advice for writers and those using writers' work, especially on finding and correcting flaws; excellent bibliography.

Strunk, William, Jr., and E. B. White, *The Elements of Style* (Allyn & Bacon, 1999; ISBN 978-0205313426). THE book to get if you can only get one; deceptively simple guide to clear, effective, and elegant writing.

Yagoda, Ben, *When You Catch an Adjective, Kill It!* (Broadway, 2007; ISBN 978-0767920780). Not a style guide, but worth the read nonetheless. Both useful and opinionated—and downright fun.

## Design, Typography & the Web

Alder, Elizabeth, *Everyone's Guide to Successful Publications* (Peachpit Press, 1993; ISBN 978-1566090278). Not just concerned with the visual impact of publications, this comprehensive volume covers the entire process: planning, writing, design, desktop publishing, printing, and distribution.

White, Jan V., *Graphic Design for the Electronic Age* (Watson-Guptill Publications, 1988; ISBN 978-0823021222). Useful (and even interesting to read) discussion of printing and publishing, and why they are done the way they are. Clear presentation of options for effective design and layout, despite the technological changes since publication.

† Williams, Robin, *The Mac Is Not a Typewriter* (Peachpit Press, 2003; ISBN 978-0201782639).

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- \* \_\_\_\_\_, *The Non-Designer's Web Book* (Peachpit Press, 2005; ISBN 978-03213030370). Like all of Robin Williams's titles, this is a clear and concise guide to the essentials of good design for those without any particular background in design, but useful even to the experienced.
- \* \_\_\_\_\_, *The Non-Designer's Type Book* (Peachpit Press, 2005; ISBN 978-0321303363)
- \* \_\_\_\_\_, and John Tollett, *Robin Williams Design Workshop* (Peachpit Press, 2006; ISBN 978-0321441768).
- \* \_\_\_\_\_, John Tollett, and Dave Rohr, *Robin Williams Web Design Workshop* (Peachpit Press, 2001; ISBN 978-0201748673).

## Appendix 2: Sample News Releases



# Sacramento Fencing Club

11347 Folsom Blvd., Ste. A, Rancho Cordova, CA 95742 · 916.635.6867 · [www.sacfencing.org](http://www.sacfencing.org)

**NEWS RELEASE**  
**October 5, 2004**  
**For immediate release**

**CONTACT: Mary Griffith**  
**(916) 622-3585**  
**or**  
**Paul Sears**  
**(916) 635-6867**

### **Sacramento to host 2005 U.S. Fencing National Championships**

The Sacramento Fencing Club has agreed to serve as the local host organization for next year's U.S. Fencing National Championships, to be held July 1–10 at the Sacramento Convention Center.

Nearly 3,500 men and women, ranging in age from under 10 to over 60, will compete in both individual and team events in each of the three fencing weapons (saber, épée, and foil). Among those expected to compete are members of the American team who fenced in the 2004 Athens Olympic Games, including women's saber gold medalist Mariel Zagunis and bronze medalist Sada Jacobson.

The U.S. Fencing National Championships are projected to bring more than 6,000 visitors to Sacramento for an average stay of 6 days, and a total economic impact of nearly \$4.5 million.

As the local host organization, the Sacramento Fencing Club (SFC) will provide information about the local area to the visiting athletes, coaches, and officials, as well as information about fencing to local spectators. SFC will also provide local volunteers to assist with the logistics of the tournament.

Local businesses and individuals interested in advertising, sponsorships, or volunteering at the tournament, are urged to contact SFC at 916-635-6867 or [psears@sacfencing.org](mailto:psears@sacfencing.org).

The Sacramento Fencing Club, in Rancho Cordova since 1999, is one of the top saber clubs in the United States, offering beginning through advanced training for both recreational and competitive fencers of all ages.

###

*U.S. Fencing National Championships • July 1–10, 2005 • Sacramento Convention Center*

NEWS RELEASE  
July 10, 2005  
For immediate release

CONTACT: Mary Griffith (916) 555-0000  
or  
Paul Sears (916) 555-0000

**Local fencers qualify for national fencing championships**

Thirty members of the Sacramento Fencing Club (SFC), ranging in age from 10 to 64, have qualified to compete at the 2005 U.S. Fencing National Championships July 1–10 at the Sacramento Convention Center.

Over 6,000 entries are expected for this year's championships. The U.S. Fencing National Championships are the largest fencing tournament in the world, with 13 individual events and 3 team events in each of six weapons (men's epee, men's foil, men's sabre, women's epee, women's foil, women's sabre).

Competitors qualify on the basis of performance at national tournaments over the past year and through regional qualifying tournaments held throughout the spring.

Among the SFC qualifiers are:

- Anika Davis, 18, Elk Grove, currently ranked #9 nationally in Women's Sabre.
- Anders Eiremo, 18, Carmichael, ranked #11 in Junior (under 19) Men's Sabre.
- David Lee, El Dorado Hills, who will compete in Veteran-60 Men's Sabre and has already earned a spot on the American team for the Veteran World Championships this fall.
- Jeanette Strumillo, El Dorado Hills, who will fence in the Veteran-50 Women's Saber, trying for a place on the team for the first-ever Women's Sabre event at the Veteran World Championships.

The Sacramento Fencing Club, celebrating its 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary this year, is the local host organization for this year's Nationals. The club, located in Rancho Cordova, offers classes and individual fencing instruction for children and adults, beginners to elite competitive fencers.

**Complete List: Sacramento Fencing Club Qualifiers to 2005 US Fencing Nationals**

**Austin Anchor**, 14, Sacramento, Junior Men's Sabre, Cadet Men's Sabre, Youth-14 Men's Sabre, Division 2 Men's Sabre, Division III Men's Sabre

**Alexis Baran**, 17, El Dorado Hills, Junior Women's Sabre, Division I-A Women's Sabre

**Mary Bessell**, 19, Roseville, Division II Women's Sabre, Division III Women's Sabre

**Emily Cheng**, 15, Gold River, Youth-14 Women's Sabre, Cadet Women's Sabre, Junior Women's Sabre, Division II Women's Sabre, Division III Women's Sabre

**Jennifer Chun**, 18, El Dorado Hills, Junior Women's Foil, Division II Women's Foil

**Ben Conley**, 12, Carmichael, Youth-12 Men's Sabre, Youth-14 Men's Sabre, Cadet Men's Sabre, Division II Men's Sabre, Division III Men's Sabre

**Anika Davis**, 18, Elk Grove, Junior Women's Sabre, Division I Women's Sabre, Division I-A Women's Sabre

**Devin de Silva**, 11, Natomas, Youth-10 Men's Sabre, Youth-12 Men's Sabre

**Tara de Silva**, 15, Natomas, Cadet Women's Sabre, Division II Women's Sabre, Division III Women's Sabre

**Drew Dickinson**, 11, El Dorado Hills, Youth-10 Men's Sabre

**Anders Eiremo**, 17, Carmichael, Junior Men's Sabre, Division I Men's Sabre

**Malin Eiremo**, 10, Carmichael, Youth-10 Women's Sabre, Youth-12 Women's Sabre

**Christine Griffith**, 17, Roseville, Junior Women's Sabre

**Greg Hampton**, 16, Orangevale, Division II Men's Sabre, Division III Men's Sabre

**Zach Jones**, 15, Carmichael, Youth-14 Men's Sabre, Cadet Men's Sabre, Division I-A Men's Sabre

**Christina Juliana**, 22, Fair Oaks, Division II Women's Sabre, Division III Women's Sabre

**Sarah Kelly**, 16, Sacramento, Division III Women's Sabre

**Bryan Kim**, 17, Shingle Springs, Junior Men's Sabre, Division II Men's Sabre

**Jai Kim**, Shingle Springs, Veteran-50 Men's Sabre, Division II Men's Sabre, Division III Men's Sabre

**David Lee**, El Dorado Hills, Veteran-60 Men's Sabre

**Ali McCreary**, 14, Folsom, Youth-14 Women's Sabre, Cadet Women's Sabre, Division II Women's Sabre, Division III Women's Sabre

**Doug Mize**, 16, Shingle Springs, Cadet Men's Sabre, Division II Men's Sabre, Division III Men's Sabre

**Chris Piroto**, 17, El Dorado Hills, Junior Men's Sabre, Division II Men's Sabre

**Leonon Reid**, 15, Rancho Cordova, Youth-14 Men's Sabre, Cadet Men's Sabre, Junior Men's Sabre

**Chaz Smith**, Diamond Springs, Veteran-40 Women's Foil

**James Smith**, Sacramento, Veteran-40 Men's Foil

**Ted Smith**, Diamond Springs, Veteran-40 Men's Sabre

**Jeanette Strumillo**, El Dorado Hills, Veteran-50 Women's Sabre

**Alec Taylor**, 11, Carmichael, Youth-12 Men's Sabre

**Paul Wendelboe**, 11, Granite Bay, Youth-12 Men's Sabre

###

**En Garde! Olympic Champions Demonstrate the Thrill of Swordplay  
at Maplewood's First Community Fencing Event, Sept. 7**

Maplewood, NJ— With the success of the US fencing team at the Beijing Olympics— six medals, the best in US history— there's a groundswell of interest in the sport of swordplay. The public will have a chance to experience world-class fencing firsthand at Memorial Park Tennis Courts, in Maplewood, NJ, on Sunday, September 7, from 9 am to 1 pm.

During the event, the public can learn about the mental and physical skills involved in foil, epee and sabre, and even touch blades with an Olympian and members of the championship girls' and boys' teams at Columbia High School, part of the South-Orange-Maplewood school district. The teams have won a combined 12 state fencing championships since 1997.

The event organizers, Maplewood-based New Jersey Fencing Alliance (NJFA) and the Maplewood Department of Recreation and Cultural Affairs, hope to convince more area residents to try fencing as part of a national campaign to recruit 10,000 newcomers to the sport.

Aptly called "Ten Thousand Fencers" ([www.tenthousandfencers.com](http://www.tenthousandfencers.com)), the movement is the brainchild of Tim Morehouse, NY-based silver medalist in the 2008 Olympic men's sabre team competition. Morehouse will be on hand at Memorial Park to talk about the benefits of fencing and demonstrate his skills, along with Jeff Bukantz, team captain in Beijing, and Akhnaten Spencer-El, a 2000 Olympic fencer who currently coaches at the NJFA in Maplewood.

"Fencing is an exciting sport for people of all ages and athletic abilities. Beyond the physical benefits, fencers develop strategic thinking and self-confidence," says George Janto, president of the NJFA.

Proceeds from a raffle, bake sale, and T-shirts will help support Columbia High School's fencing program, which includes 100 students, and the 2012 US Olympic fencing team. Additional support for the event is provided by Colavita USA and J. Supor & Son Trucking & Rigging Co.

Maplewood Memorial Park is located on Valley Street between Oakland Road and Baker Street. The NJFA club ([www.njfencingalliance.com](http://www.njfencingalliance.com)) is located at 50-58 Burnett Avenue in Maplewood, and offers group and private lessons for all skill levels.

For more information about the Sept. 7 fencing event please contact George Janto at: [gjanto@comcast.net](mailto:gjanto@comcast.net)