

REY FORM

*BEGINNER AND FUNDAMENTAL
TECHNIQUES FOR LIGHTSPEED SABER
FENCING*

(WORK IN PROGRESS)

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FOREWORD

Hello and welcome to Lightspeed Saber League's first true and proper technique manual. It was made with the assistance of many individuals and is the product of years of development, practical testing, and theorycrafting. I hope that it is equally beneficial to the individual learner and to the base captain seeking to start or cultivate their own squadron.

Despite the time taken to make and refine the material for this manual, and the apparent permanence of putting pen to paper, this document should not be taken as any sort of "bible" that shall remain unchallenged or unchanged. Many longstanding and regularly taught concepts were corrected, streamlined, or wholly abandoned during the writing of this manual, and this will continue to happen in future revisions as we learn more, as the sport grows, and as creative and innovative voices enter the league.

As always, thank you for being a part of Lightspeed Saber League and believing in our vision for lightsaber-inspired combat. It cannot happen without you.

Cang Snow
Lightspeed Saber League
Chief Executive Officer



This fencer poses with a full-length, two-handed Rey Saber in the Krait Guard position.

INTRODUCTION TO REY FORM & THE REY SABER

As of this writing, there are three officially recognized weapons in the Lightspeed Saber weapon canon: the crossguarded Ren Saber, the dual wielded Tano Sabers, and the unguarded, single wielded Rey Saber. Rey Saber is the most common and accessible saber available to beginners, as well as the most recognizable and “classically lightsaber” when compared to its peers.

It therefore behooves us to present a style of fencing that accentuates all the strengths of the Rey Saber, and gives beginners a taste of everything that Lightspeed Saber fencing has to offer. Rey Form is that style.

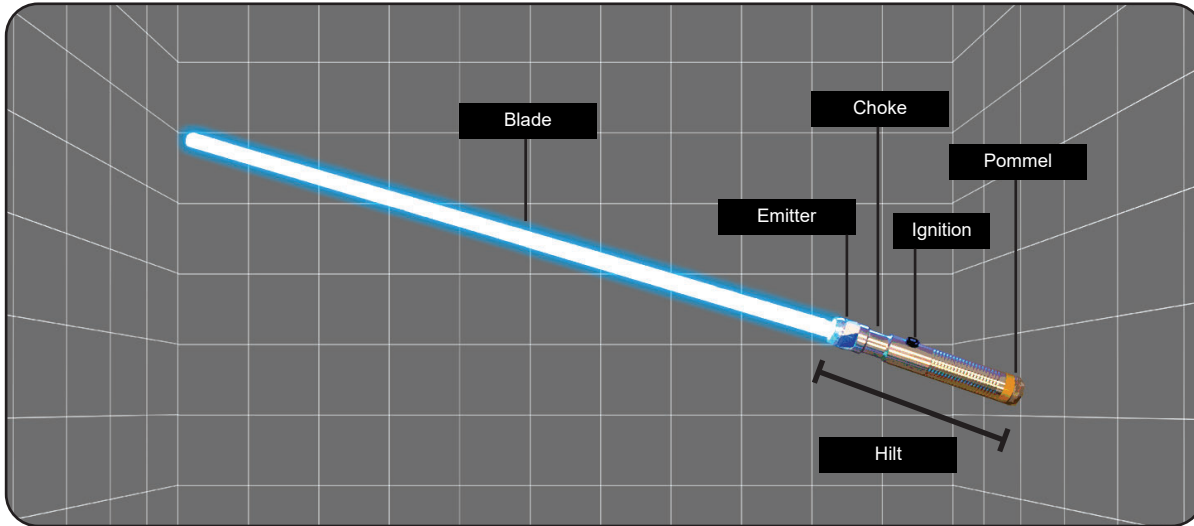
This is not to claim that Rey Form is the best or most effective manner in which to use a Rey Saber. Neither should it be said that Rey Form is merely a method for beginners. Rey Form’s versatility means that it has the largest effective moveset of all three weapons, and, in the right hands, presents a terrifying quantity of offensive and

THE REY SABER

Lightspeed Saber League considers a Rey Saber to be an unguarded LED saber with a blade that is between 32 and 36" long and a hilt that is no greater than 12.5" long. In addition, the hilt *may not* weigh less than 25 grams per inch of grippable handle.

The average fully equipped Rey Saber is 46" long, and weighs less than 1 lb, and features the following relevant components:

- **Blade:** The scoring portion of the Lightspeed Saber.
- **Hilt:** The part of the weapon that houses the electronics and serves as the gripping surface for the saber.
- **Emitter:** The portion of the hilt in which the blade is installed, and also houses the LED that illuminates the saber.
- **Choke:** An inset area of the hilt designed for greater grip comfort. A saber may have more than one choke.
- **Ignition:** The switch or button that activates the saber.
- **Pommel:** A (typically) weighted cap that adds ballast to the weapon and retains the electronics inside the hilt.



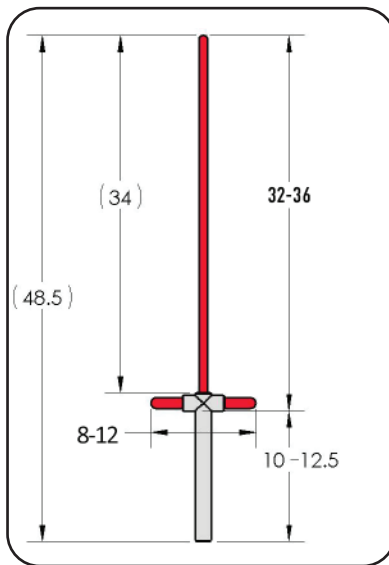
Basic diagram of the major parts of a Rey Saber.

The LED, sound-card, power source, and other electronic components are housed inside the hilt.

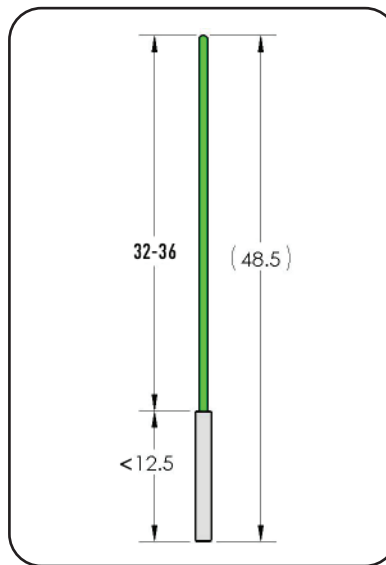
Some sabers come with a Covertac clip, for wearing the saber on your belt (not pictured).

The Rey Saber in comparison to its cousins in the Lightspeed Saber weapon canon. The Ren Saber's key distinction is its crossguard, making it a defensive heavy weapon. The Tano Sabers are quick and used in pairs.

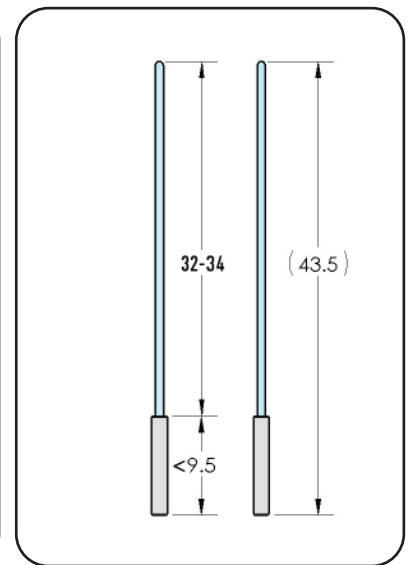
The Rey Saber is as long as a Ren Saber, but feels more similar to a lightweight Tano Saber in the hand.



REN SABER
Minimum 60 grams/inch



REY SABER
Minimum 25 grams/inch



TANO SABERS
Minimum 25 grams/inch

While it's easy to draw distinction between the slow, calculated nature of Ren Saber and the speedy, whirlwind nature of the Tano Sabers, Rey Saber's "style" is a bit harder to pin down. With the hilts running anywhere from 6" to the full 12.5", Rey Saber can feel like a faster, lighter Ren Saber, like a longer Tano Saber, or something in between. Therefore, Rey Saber's key distinction could be versatility: its ability to accommodate a myriad of styles and adapt to a range of different weapon backgrounds.

THE REY SABER: GRIP STYLES

Rey Saber's versatility is primarily described in terms of the three main methods for gripping the weapon. Each grip has its own strengths and weaknesses (see *Tri-Grip Theory*, Section 10: Theories & Principles) and can be thought to represent and appeal to various traditional weapon disciplines.

STANDARD GRIP

Good for both offense and defense, it is so named because it is the standard manner in which a similarly sized traditional weapon would be held.

This grip is favored by those with a background in military saber or similar weapon with a mind for defense.



Standard Grip, exhibited by both fencers in this photo, is very versatile. On the left, the fencer attacks from a Standard Grip, while on the right, the fencer defends from Standard Grip.

TANDEM GRIP

The Tandem Grip is a two-handed grip, for extra stability and power. It is favored by those with a background in kendo or longsword.

Tandem Grip is considered the most defensive of the three main grips.



The fencer on the right, in a Tandem Grip, deflects his opponent's attack with a powerful two-handed defense.

POMMEL GRIP

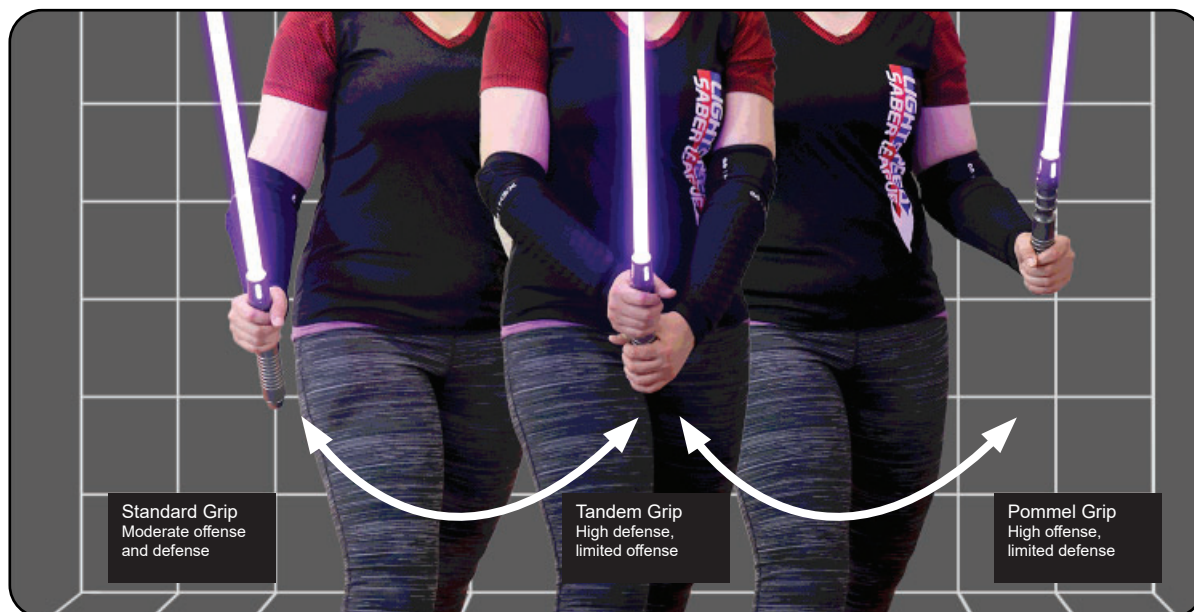
This grip is the least stable but has the most reach of all the grips. It is favored by rapierists and epeeists, and is considered the most offensive grip of the three.



The fencer on the left, in a Pommel Grip, comes in for an attack. The opponent, having a significant reach disadvantage, keeps his distance.

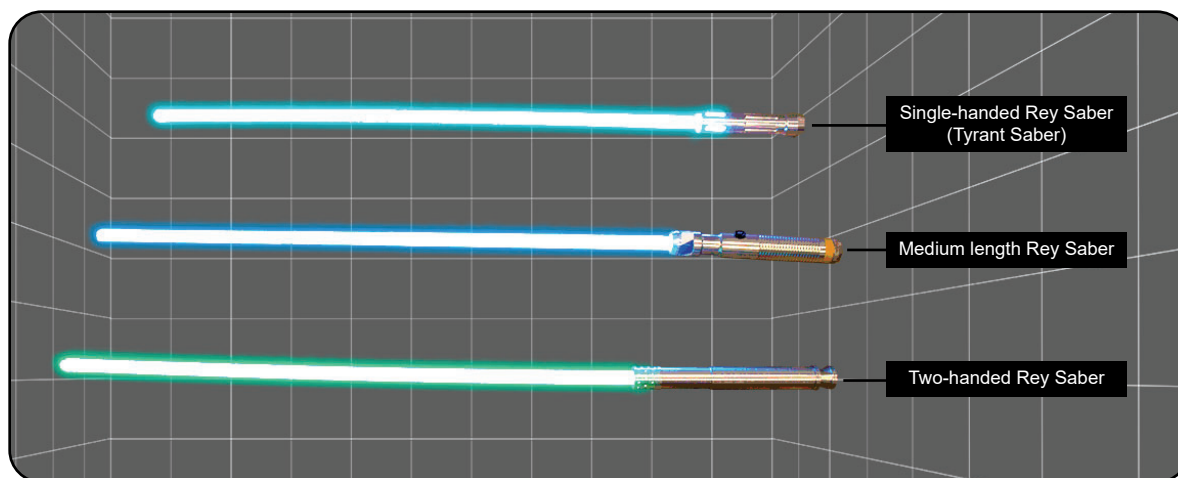
THE REY FORM WAY

While the grips of Rey Saber were presented as distinct choices that one would make, based on their offensive or defensive preferences or length of hilt, what if we didn't have to choose? This is the core idea behind Rey Form: that we can employ the advantages of all the grips at any time, between duels *or* immediately *in* the heat of battle. This is achieved through appropriate weapon selection and nimble grip-switching.



The basic paradigm of grip-switching in Rey Form. If the fencer begins in Tandem Grip (image center), they can easily change to Standard Grip (image left) or Pommel Grip (image right) by dropping their dominant hand or off-hand, respectively. In this way, any grip-- and therefore, any offensive, defensive, or balanced combat posture-- can be reached from any other grip, smoothly and at will, by the Rey Saberist.

Several lengths of Rey Sabers. The medium length saber, sitting at 10" long in the hilt, is the ideal size for expressing Rey Form; it is long enough to hold two-handed but still light enough to use one-handed, affording the maximum number of style and technical possibilities.



The goal of this manual is to show you the basics of Lightspeed Saber fencing, *and* to introduce you to Rey Form fencing, a semi-ambidextrous style of combat that is versatile, unpredictable, and showcases a little bit of everything that Lightspeed Saber fencing has to offer. It is a "lightsaber" style that takes the best of traditional fencing, kendo, and eskrima and blends them into a novel fighting form that will never run out of material to learn, and will dazzle spectators and competitors alike.

While this manual will specifically refer to Rey Form most of the time, the vast majority of what you will learn applies to *any* weapon in Lightspeed Saber fencing.

READ ME IF YOU WANT!

This is a sidenote box. They are sprinkled throughout the manual to add important but non-essential context and details to the information you're already absorbing. Many sidenotes contain theoretical or historical information, which you can read about in more detail in the Theories & Principles section (Chapter 10).



The fencer in the foreground is in a Standard Stance. The opposing fencer-- even though he is using multiple weapons-- is also in a Standard Stance.

§1 STANCES & PIVOTS

We begin our journey into Rey Form by building the literal foundation upon which we stand: your stance. Your stance informs everything from your guards to your footwork. These, in turn, inform your offensive, defensive, and evasive possibilities.

Basic Rey Form is largely stance-stable. That is, there are multiple stances available in Rey Form, but the Standard Stance is used 90% of the time, at least for beginner to intermediate practitioners. Other stances are used transitionally, and are primarily covered as *pivots* in this section.

The Standard Stance is informed by Range Theory, which is the idea that *reach* is the key advantage in a Lightspeed Saber duel, and therefore the “typical” stance taken by any Lightspeed Saber fencer must maximize that reach (for more on Range Theory, see Section 10: Theories & Principles). In this section we will review the proper formation of this stance, how to pivot off this stance, and briefly go over some miscellaneous stances and pivots to ensure a complete picture.

STANDARD STANCE

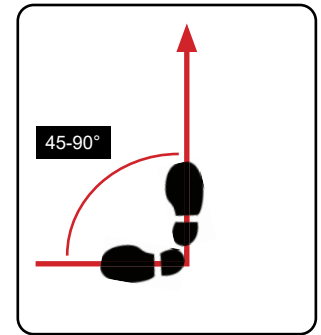
Based on Range Theory, a right-handed fencer can maximize their range by positioning their right hand, right shoulder, and right foot in the lead position toward the opponent, while a left-handed fencer shall do the opposite. Let's walk through the formation of the stance.

To form the Standard Stance:

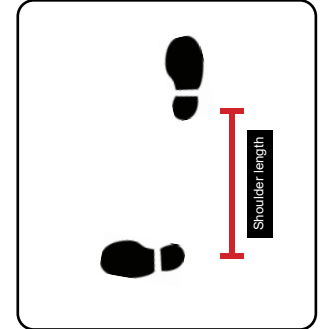
1. Make an "L" with your feet by collecting your heels together and pointing your toes about 90° apart (and no more). Be sure that the lead foot is foot corresponding with your dominant hand (right foot if you're right-handed, left foot if you're left-handed).
2. Take a step forward with your lead foot, slightly longer than shoulder width.
3. Bend your knees evenly.

Your stance informs your footwork (next section). So use this checklist to make sure your Standard Stance is formed correctly:

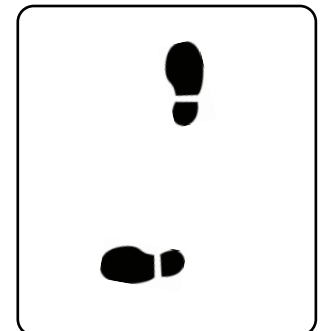
- The toes of the front foot are pointed straight forward towards the opponent (or whichever way you are facing)
- The toes of the rear foot are pointed between 45 and 90 degrees from the front toes.
- The distance between the heels is slightly longer than shoulder-length.
- The knees are evenly bent and your bodyweight is evenly distributed.



Place your heels together in an L-shape, with the dominant hand and corresponding foot placed in the lead. (Note that the angle of the back foot may be as little as 45° but no more than 90°.)



2. Step forward with your front foot about shoulder length, or slightly longer.



3. Bend your knees. This is Standard Stance!

STANDARD STANCE VS REVERSE STANCE

Many martial arts and combat sports (ie Tae Kwon Do and boxing) actually place the dominant hand and corresponding foot at the rear, not the front-- what we refer to as *Reverse Stance*. Why don't we use Reverse Stance?

As stated earlier, reach is the most important factor in a Lightspeed Saber duel, not how hard you can hit someone or how many times. This is most easily understood visually. See the picture at the right.

You can see the difference in reach available to each stance. This does not only have offensive implications; it has defensive implications as well. The Standard Stance can create a lot more distance between the opponent and the fencer's vital target areas, whereas the Reverse Stance leaves the fencer quite vulnerable.



The fencer on the left is in a Reverse Stance while the fencer on the right is in a Standard Stance. The fencer on the right clearly has a reach advantage, despite being shorter.

STANDARD STANCE MISTAKES

Your stance informs your footwork, which will be covered in the next section. Avoid making these mistakes in your stance.



A well formed Standard Stance. The knees are evenly bent, the feet are more than shoulder length apart, and there is a 45-90° angle formed between the feet.



This stance is bow-legged. There should be no more than 90 degrees between the feet.



The front foot should be pointing forward and/or toward the opponent at all times.



The stance is too short. The feet should be at least as long as shoulder length.



The fencer is not in stance because the knees are unbent. Both knees should be bent at all times to aid in readiness.



This stance is unevenly weighted (front leg is bent more than the back). While some stances do weight forward or back, the standard stance is formed with an even bend between both legs.

HEMISPHERE SYSTEM

Standard Stance allows us to divide the body into two “hemispheres”: the inside hemisphere and the outside hemisphere. The Inside Hemisphere generally refers to areas and actions occurring toward the rear / nondominant side of the body, while the Outside Hemisphere generally refers to areas and actions occurring toward the front / dominant side of the body. This terminology allows us to avoid generic terms such as left and right, which can cause confusion during instruction.

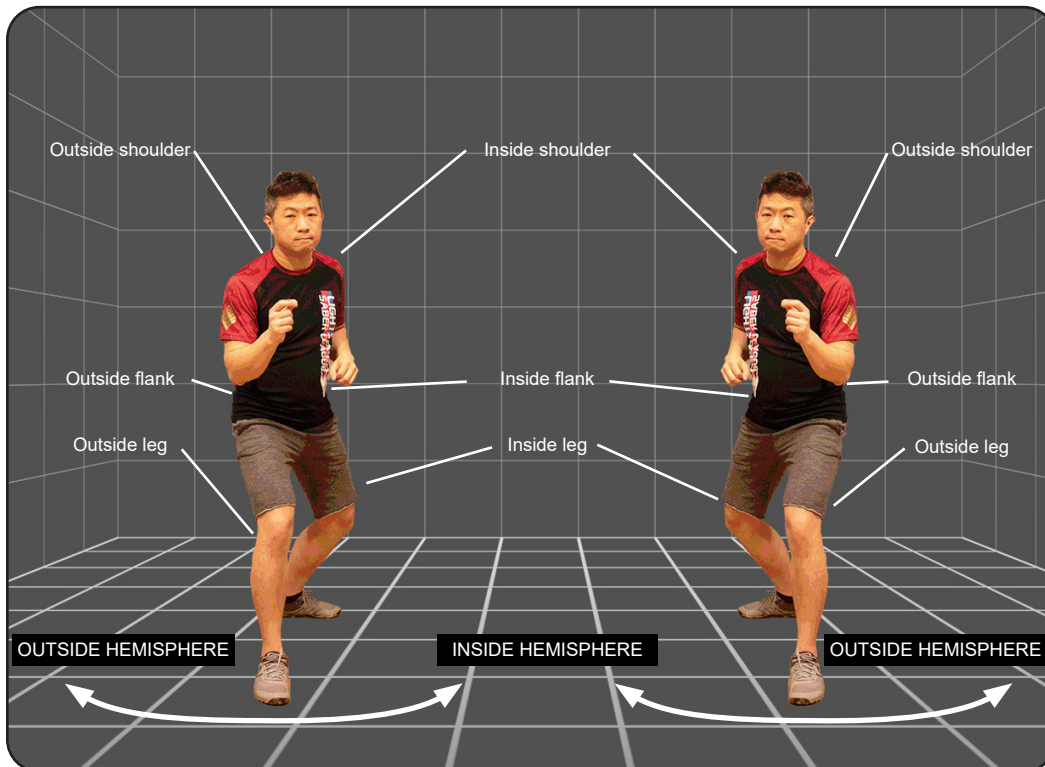
We will learn more about the hemispheres in the section on Guards. For now, it is enough to know how to identify the inside and outside shoulders, flanks, and legs, and how to describe a rotation, which may be toward the inside or the outside.

The hemisphere system shows its utility in describing fencers of different handedness.

On the left, the right-handed fencer's right shoulder, flank, and leg are on the Outside Hemisphere, so called because this area of the body is closer to the opponent (and in greater danger). The left shoulder, flank, and leg are on the Inside Hemisphere, so called because it is more distant from the opponent (and therefore safer).

On the right, the left-handed fencer's left shoulder, flank, and leg are also on the Outside Hemisphere and described as such. The right shoulder, flank, and leg are similarly on the Inside.

The curved arrows represent the potential for sideways movements and rotations, which will be useful when we discuss pivots in the next subsection. Note that a rotation to the Inside Hemisphere for left-handed and right-handed fencers will differ in whether those rotations are to the left or to the right. However, the same instruction (ie “Turn toward the Inside”) can be given to both fencers and still be understood.



PIVOTS

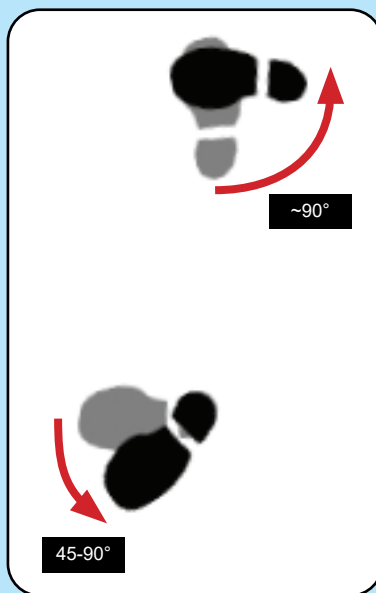
Although other stances besides Standard are viable in Rey Form, they are mostly used in a temporary fashion, either to briefly improve range of motion or to lean away from an attack. The main pivots to know for Rey Form are the Square Pivot (to Square Stance), and the Back Pivot (to Back Stance).

BACK PIVOT (TO BACK STANCE)

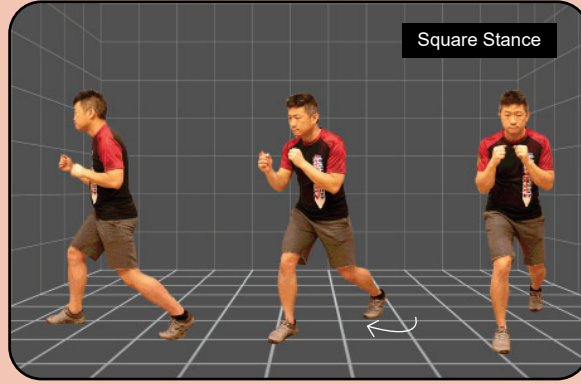
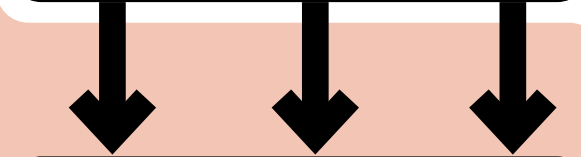
This pivot shifts the fencer into a **Back Stance**, in which the body is turned to the inside and the overall weight is shifted to the rear. To do back a Back Pivot, start from Standard Stance. Then:

1. Turn the front foot *off the toes* to the inside, about 90° .
2. Turn the back foot *off the heel* to the inside, 45° - 90° .
3. Shift your weight to the back leg by bending the back knee and straightening the front leg.

The Back Pivot adds power and mobility to certain attacks and can be used evasively to protect the upper body.



The footprints of a right-handed Standard Stance (grey) pivoted to Back Stance (black). Note that the back foot turns off the heel while the front foot turns off the toes.

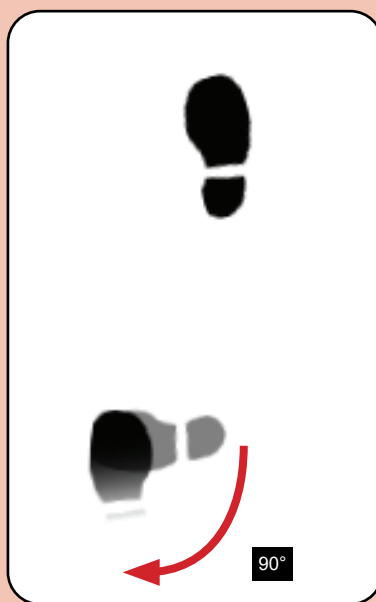


SQUARE PIVOT (TO SQUARE STANCE)

This pivot shifts the fencer into a **Square Stance**, so named because it allows the fencer to square their shoulders to the opponent.

To perform a Square Pivot, simply begin in Standard Stance, then turn the back foot a full 90° *off the toes* to the outside. Depending on your mobility, the back heel will usually lift off the floor.

Square Stance is stable enough to act as a standard stance for the fencers who prefer it.



The footprints of a right-handed Standard Stance (grey) pivoted to Square Stance (black). The back foot turns a full 90° off the toes. The back heel typically lifts off the floor (faded in the graphic).

DEPIVOT/RECOVER

Not a distinct pivot or action in itself, to “depivot” or “recover” from any position is to return to Standard Stance. For the pivots, this simply means reversing the pivot until your feet are returned to normal position.

OTHER STANCES & PIVOTS

These pivots and stances may be used in more advanced techniques not to be extensively explored in this manual, or not used at all in any actual fencing, having more utility in self training sequences.

REVERSE STANCE / REVERSE SQUARE

Reverse Stance actually has a lot of utility in Rey Form, despite it being presented as generally inferior to Standard Stance. However, it takes a lot of training and practice to become proficient in both stances, especially given that Reverse Stance employs the off-hand more heavily. Ambidexterity is key.

Alternatively, some two-handed practitioners prefer a "Reverse Square" Stance.



The same right-handed fencer presented twice, once in their Standard Stance, placing their right hand and foot in the lead (on the left), and once in their Reverse Stance, placing their right hand and foot in the rear (on the right).

DEWBACK STANCE

Named after a large, reptilian riding animal found on the desert planet of Tatooine, Dewback Stance is functionally and visually identical to the more commonly known Horse or Middle Stance, found in many martial arts.

Dewback Stance has very little utility beyond some practice sequences and training drills. Some instructors like to start beginners on a Dewback Stance before learning Standard Stance, as it is already familiar to many and very easy to form, and is symmetric.

The Dewback *Step*, on the other hand, is a critical component of some lateral movement steps. See Section 2: Footwork.

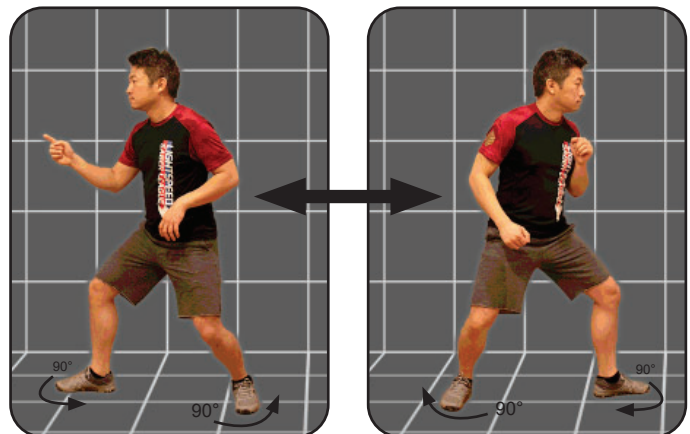


In the Dewback Stance, the knees are bent, the stance is wider than the shoulders, and the toes are pointed out about 45°.

SPIN PIVOT

The Spin Pivot is most commonly used in self training sequences, though the *Spin Escape*, from which the Spin Pivot gets its name, is a legitimate and efficient movement used in actual Lightspeed Saber fencing.

In the Spin Pivot, the fencer turns around 180 degrees with a simple 90 degree rotation of each foot. They finish the pivot in the Reverse Stance (assuming they began from Standard Stance).



The spin pivot rotates the fencer 180° with the feet in place (there is no step). The spin pivot is always done with a rotation toward the *inside* hemisphere, not the *outside*. Note that the pivots are done *off the heels*, which stay in position.

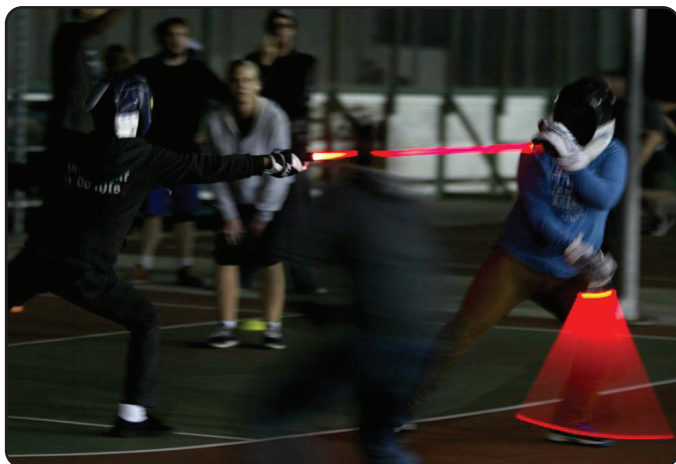
STANCE EXAMPLES



The fencer on the right is in a traditional Square Stance, to bolster their Tandem Grip, held in an Overhead Guard. Note the back foot turn forward and raised onto the toes. -- Irvine, California / November 2016



The fencer on the right defends an attack from a Standard Stance, and is in the midst of advancing on his opponent to execute a counterattack. -- Addison, Texas / March 2019



The fencer on the right uses a Back Stance fade to add speed and power to his sweep, and to narrowly escape the opponent's counterattack. -- Garden Grove, California / March 2017



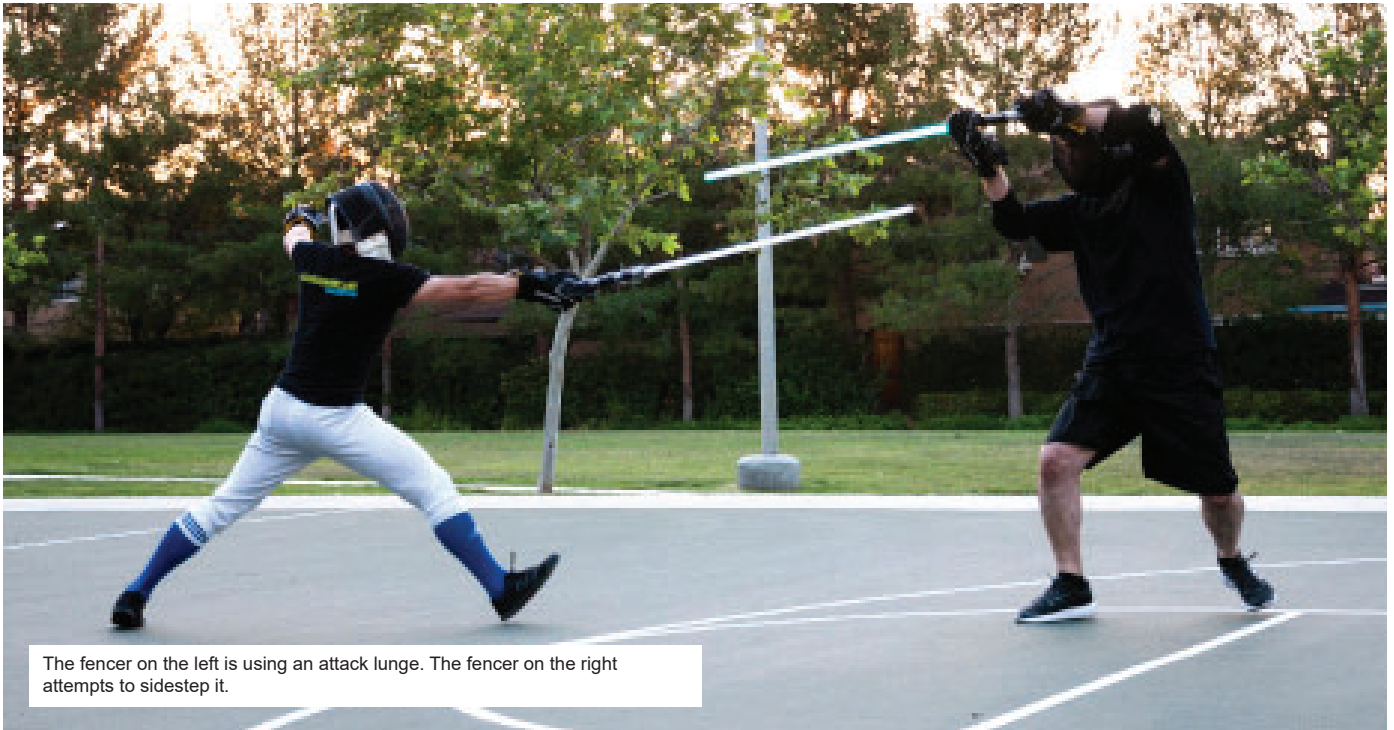
The fencer on the right is in a Reverse Stance. You can tell they are reversed rather than left-handed because the right hand is holding the dominant position of the weapon. -- Irvine, California / November 2016



The Dewback Stance used in an online virtual class.



These beginners learn basic footwork, based on the Standard Stance.



The fencer on the left is using an attack lunge. The fencer on the right attempts to sidestep it.

§2 FOOTWORK

Like traditional fencing (and in fact, most combat sports and disciplines) footwork is a key foundation to success. Being in the right place at the right time is fundamental before any movement or positioning of the blade.

Unlike traditional fencing, however, Lightspeed Saber fencers are not restricted to a narrow strip to fight on (a piste); they have full ability for three-dimensional movement. However, due to the speed of the weapon, basic Rey Form still focuses on linear movement, setting aside evasive sidesteps for careful control of distance, and powerful lunges to rapidly close the distance against the opponent.

Sideways movement and other evasive footwork are emphasized in Tano Saber, Ren Saber, and to a lesser extent, high level Rey Saber. They are included briefly in this manual for the sake of completeness.

THREE TYPES OF FOOTWORK

We'll be covering three types of footwork in this manual: linear footwork, lateral footwork, and offensive footwork. A fourth type of specialized footwork, *evasive*, will be covered in Section 9: Evasions & Stop Hits.

LINEAR FOOTWORK

This is the forward or backward movement of the fencer's body, either closer to the opponent or away from the opponent. Linear footwork is further subdivided into two types: *measured* and *freestyle*. The measured steps include the advance and the retreat. The freestyle steps include the cross, the gain step, the gathering step, the pass, and the gallop.

The measured linear steps are considered the most basic footwork for beginners to learn.



Beginning students learn the measured steps.

OFFENSIVE FOOTWORK

This is the forward movement of the fencer's body, in a manner distinct from the regular linear footworks and intended to accelerate and gain distance on the opponent as fast as possible. These footworks are used to launch *offensive* attacks. Reactionary attacks, such as counterattacks, evasive attacks, and returns, may use other kinds of footwork.

Offensive footworks include the lunge, the bolt, the U-bolt, the flunge, and the T-step.



An attack delivered via a lunge, the most basic offensive footwork taught for Rey Saber.

LATERAL FOOTWORK

This is the sideways or circular movement of the fencer, either to the left or to the right of the opponent. These steps include the traverse, the side-cross, the side-lunge, the A-step, the V-step, and the J-step.

The lateral steps are often associated with evasive maneuvers and counterattacks.



A fencer sidesteps her opponent.

A FOCUS ON LINEAR MOVEMENT

The lateral steps allow a fencer to effectively sidestep and circle their opponent. However, due to the speed and unpredictability of a Lightspeed Saber, lateral moves are generally only effective among the more experienced Rey Saberists (lateral movement is a staple of Tano Saber, however). Therefore, these moves will not receive a lot of coverage in this basic manual.

By far, the most important footworks for beginners to learn are the *measured linear steps* and *basic offensive footwork*. The most direct path to victory in a one-on-one fight is still a straight line.

LINEAR FOOTWORK: MEASURED STEPS

The measured steps are the preferred method for carefully controlling the distance between yourself and your opponent. In a duel, the fencer who controls the distance controls the fight, deciding where and when engagements occur at will.

To perform this footwork, move forward (advance) or backward (retreat) in a “shuffle”-like manner, with a low center of gravity (bend your knees, lengthen your stance). The “lead” foot always steps first, followed by the trailing foot. (When going forward, your front foot is the lead foot. When going backward, your back foot is the lead foot.)

Please note that the linear steps are only shuffle-like and not a literal shuffle. Lift the feet as a minimally as possible WITHOUT scraping or sliding on the floor. Close proximity to the floor ensures that you can stop and change your direction at will.

ADVANCE

The advance moves the fencer forward. The front foot moves, then the back.

The bend of the knees should finish the same as they begin, and the distance between the feet should remain the same.



To begin your advance, make sure you have a good Standard Stance to start.



Advance the front foot and plant the heel down first.



Put down the front toes and begin to pull the back foot forward.



Fully plant the front foot and back foot together.

RETREAT

The retreat moves the fencer backward. The back foot moves, then the front.

Like the advance, the bend of the knees finishes the same as they began, and the distance between the feet remain the same at the completion of the step.



Your advance should finish in Standard Stance, from which we will start the retreat.



Reach back with the back foot while lifting the front toes.



Plant the back foot while bringing back the front foot.



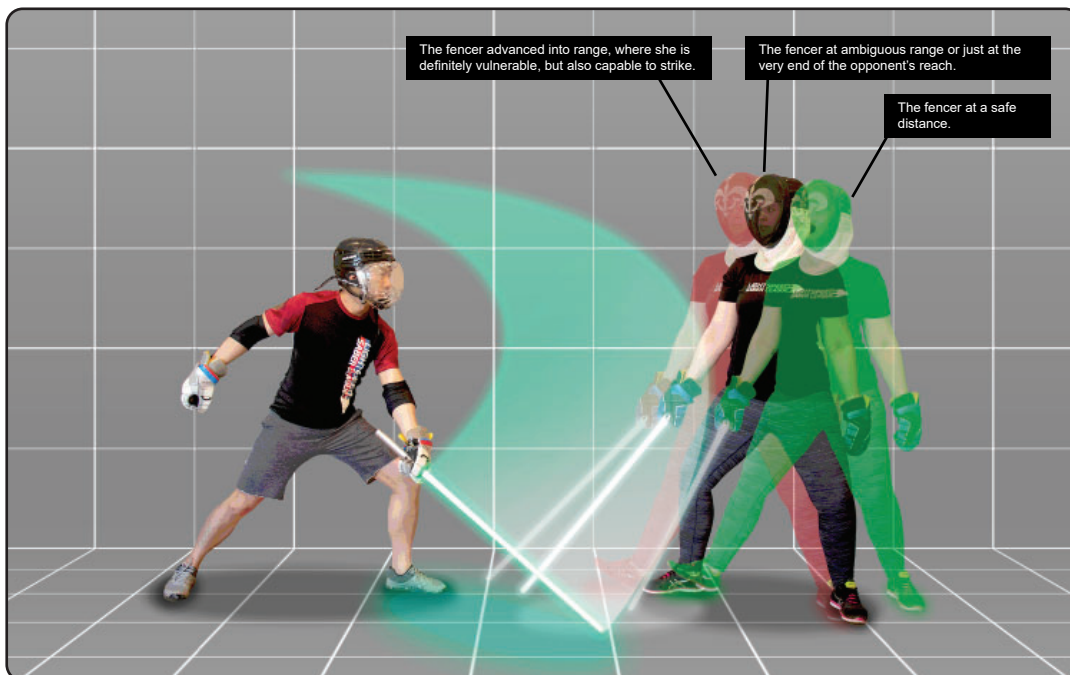
Plant the front foot.

MEASURED STEPS: LENGTH VARIATIONS

The measured steps can be long, short, or anywhere in between, depending on your needs. In general, step *length* will scale inversely with step *rate*.

Short steps can be performed rapidly, allowing you to *steadily* close the distance between yourself and your opponent.

But they are best used for fast, frequent, and unpredictable changes at attack range. Such footwork makes it difficult for your opponent to know when or *if* you are in range, and can do everything from inhibiting their attack, to goading them into making a *bad* attack, or “sneaking” yourself into range to launch a surprise attack.



With small, rapid advances and retreats, the fencer on the right constantly changes her distance to the opponent. In this way, her attack vulnerability and attack capability change constantly and unpredictably. Done correctly, the opponent's attack will miss and leave them exposed.

Long steps can be performed by simply taking a larger step or doing so in tandem with propulsion from the trailing leg. Naturally, long steps have more momentum than short steps, and so cannot be performed in rapid succession, nor change directions as quickly as short steps. But they cover a lot of ground and allow for catching your opponent off guard or quickly escaping danger.



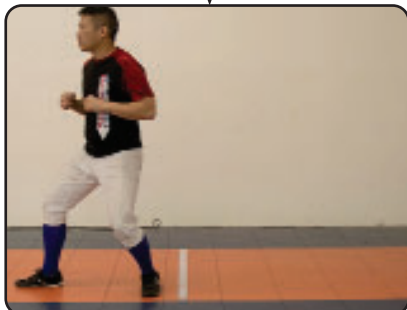
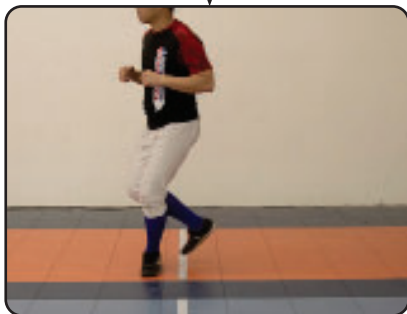
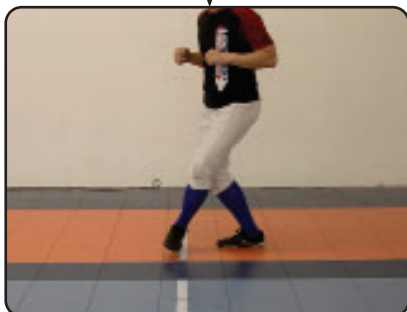
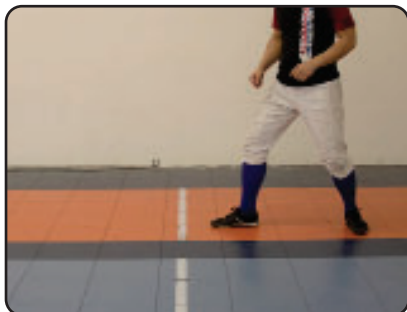
The fencer on the right breaks out from small, rapid footwork changes with longer, committed actions. In the red, she has chosen to counterattack, and uses a long advance to quickly capitalize on the opponent's brief vulnerable state. In the green, she has instead opted to create more “permanent” distance from the threat. Note that for both the long advance and retreat, much more ground is covered with a single stride than the short steps.

LINEAR FOOTWORK: FREESTYLE STEPS

The freestyle steps can be distinguished from the measured footwork in that they all begin with the *trailing foot* rather than the *lead*. (When going forward, the back foot is the trailing foot. When going backward, the front foot is the trailing foot.) While not very good for controlling combat distance, they are generally faster as they can cover so much ground with a single stride. It's not at all uncommon for a duel to begin in freestyle only to tighten into measured footwork once the fencers reach attack range.

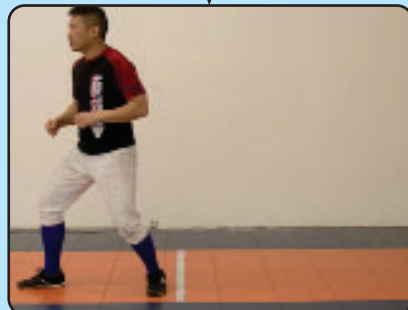
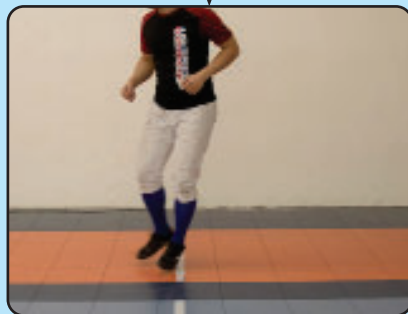
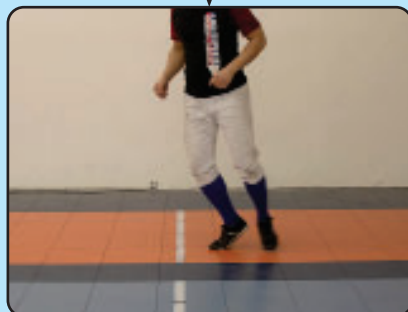
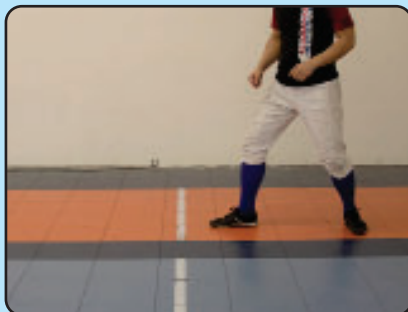
CROSSOVER

Each foot crosses over the other once.



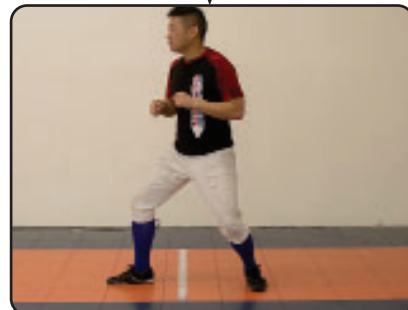
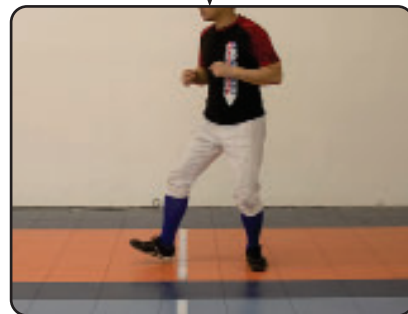
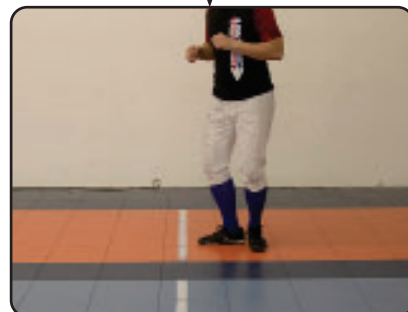
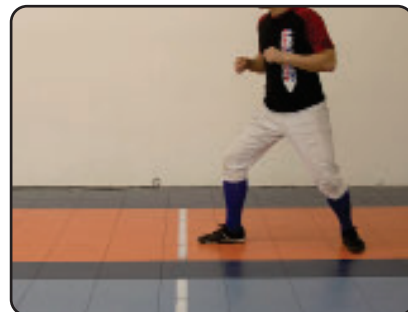
GALLOP

Bodyweight momentum is used to carry the fencer forward.



GATHER

Both feet gather together directly under the body.



OFFENSIVE FOOTWORK: THE LUNGE

While an attack in Lightspeed Saber does not explicitly include footwork, it is generally unusual to deliver an attack from a standing position, instead usually being paired with offensive footwork. In this section we'll cover the most basic offensive footwork, the lunge, so that when you learn about attacks in Chapter 5, you will be ready with a simple but strong offense.

THE LUNGE

The lunge is the primary offensive footwork taught in Rey Saber. Done correctly, the fencer rapidly closes the distance to the opponent. There are many different types of lunges, varying in their level of propulsion and difficulty. For this basics manual, we will describe the *simple lunge*, designed for simplicity, efficacy, and safety, ideal for beginners and anyone not familiar with lunging. With experience and practice, more advanced lunges can be performed, including flying lunges, explosive lunges, and smear lunges.

In a simple lunge, the front foot takes a large step forward but the back foot remains in place. The performance points are as follows:

- The front leg is bent so that the knee comes to rest above the ankle (CRITICAL SAFETY POINT). Past this point, the knee is *hyperextended*.
- The front toes are pointed forward toward the opponent (CRITICAL SAFETY POINT).
- The back leg straightens.
- The body is not leaning in any direction excessively.
- The back foot is flat on the ground and did not slide, smear, roll, or come off the floor during the movement.



THE RECOVERY

Unlike the advance and retreat, the lunge does not finish the way it begins. However, the lunge leaves the fencer with a bent knee in the front, providing a source of potential energy to recover back to the starting position.

To recover, push off the front foot, bend the back leg, and plant the front foot back in its original position.



CRITICAL LUNGING ERRORS

The lunge is potentially a very powerful and effective movement. However, performing it incorrectly can lead to injury, or hold back your potential. Be cognizant of the following possible mistakes.

MISALIGNED TOES

For the most part, the front toes should point toward the opponent at all times. Lunging with misaligned toes can result in a rolled ankle.



HYPEREXTENSION

Hyperextension occurs when the length of the lunge does not match the forward weight or momentum of the upper body. It is evidenced by a knee which is extended past the toes, as seen on the right.

Hyperextension results in long term damage to the knees over time.

A hyperextension can be fixed by lengthening the lunge. The fencer on the right would need to place their front further forward.



TEAPOTTING

An extreme version of the excess upper body momentum pictured previously. In this case, the fencer is so off-balance the back foot comes off the floor.

This can be fixed by taking a deeper, longer stance, thus lowering the fencer's center of gravity.

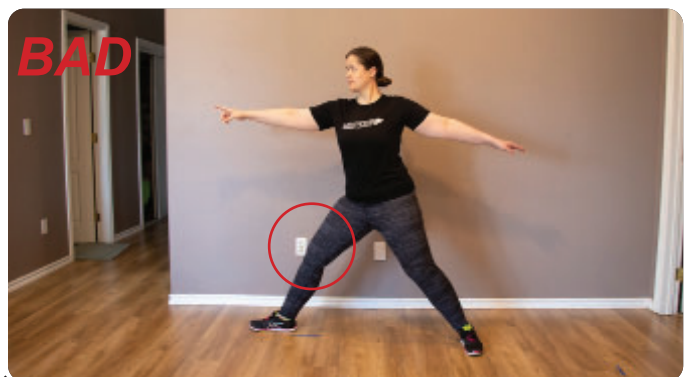


HYPOEXTENSION

Opposite to hyperextension is the phenomenon of an underextended knee. This can lead to slipping or splitting and pulled muscles.

The most common way this occurs is by taking a lunge that is too long. It can also result from planting the toes on the ground before the heel while lunging. The heels should always land first.

The hypoextension on the right can be fixed by having the fencer retract the front foot back, shortening the lunge.

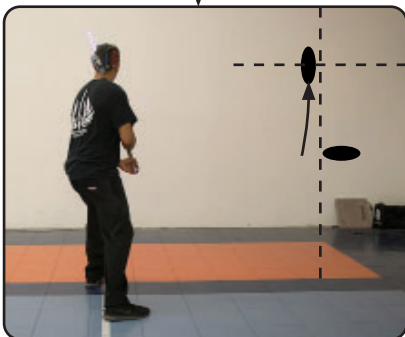
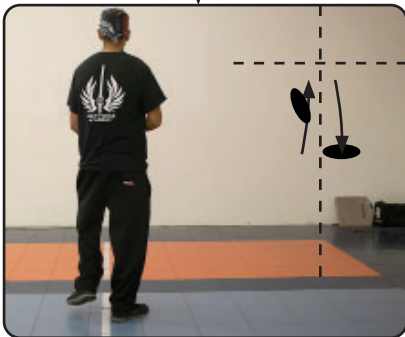
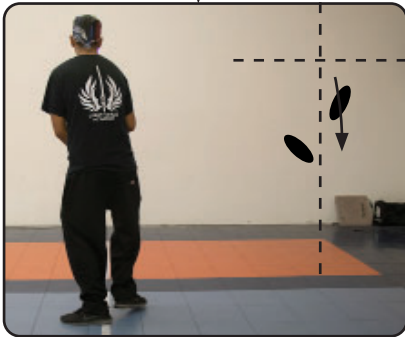
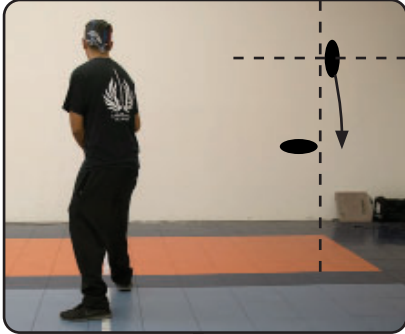


LATERAL FOOTWORK (ALPHA STEPS)

Even though lateral stepping is not featured prominently in Rey Form, it is included briefly in this manual for completeness.

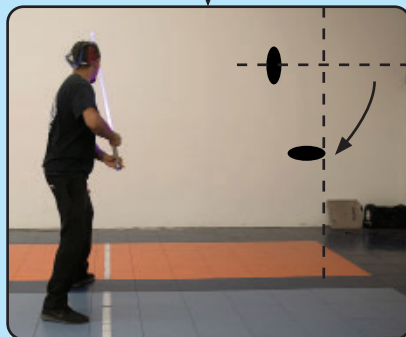
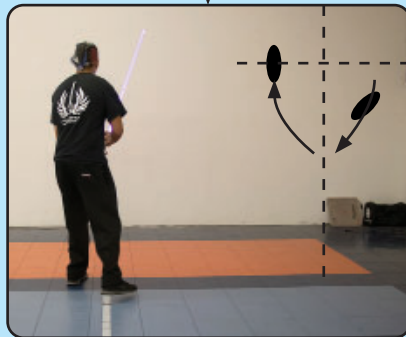
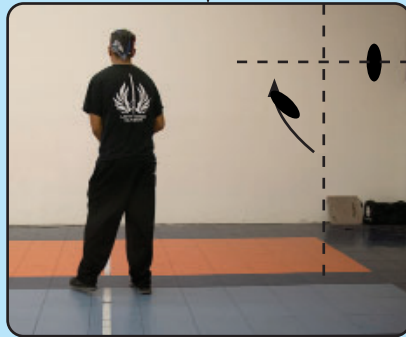
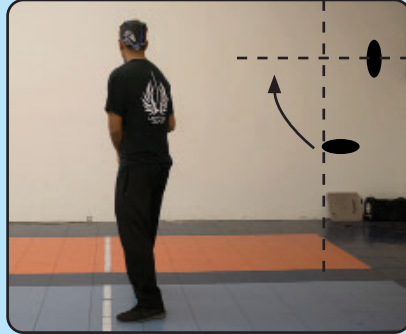
A-STEP

The fencer reverses their stance in place.



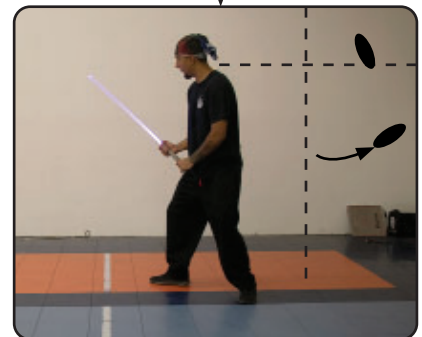
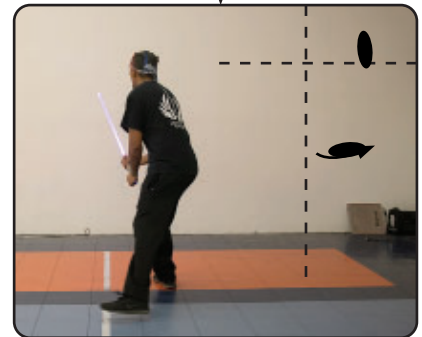
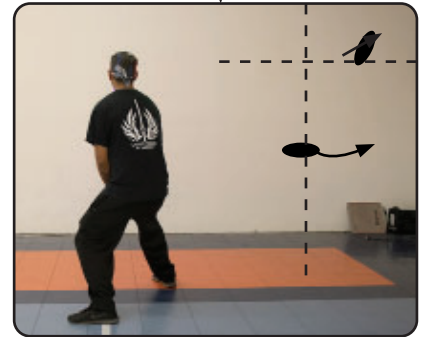
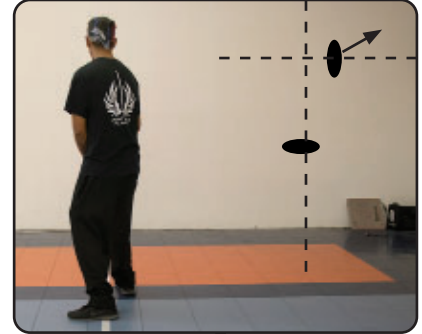
V-STEP

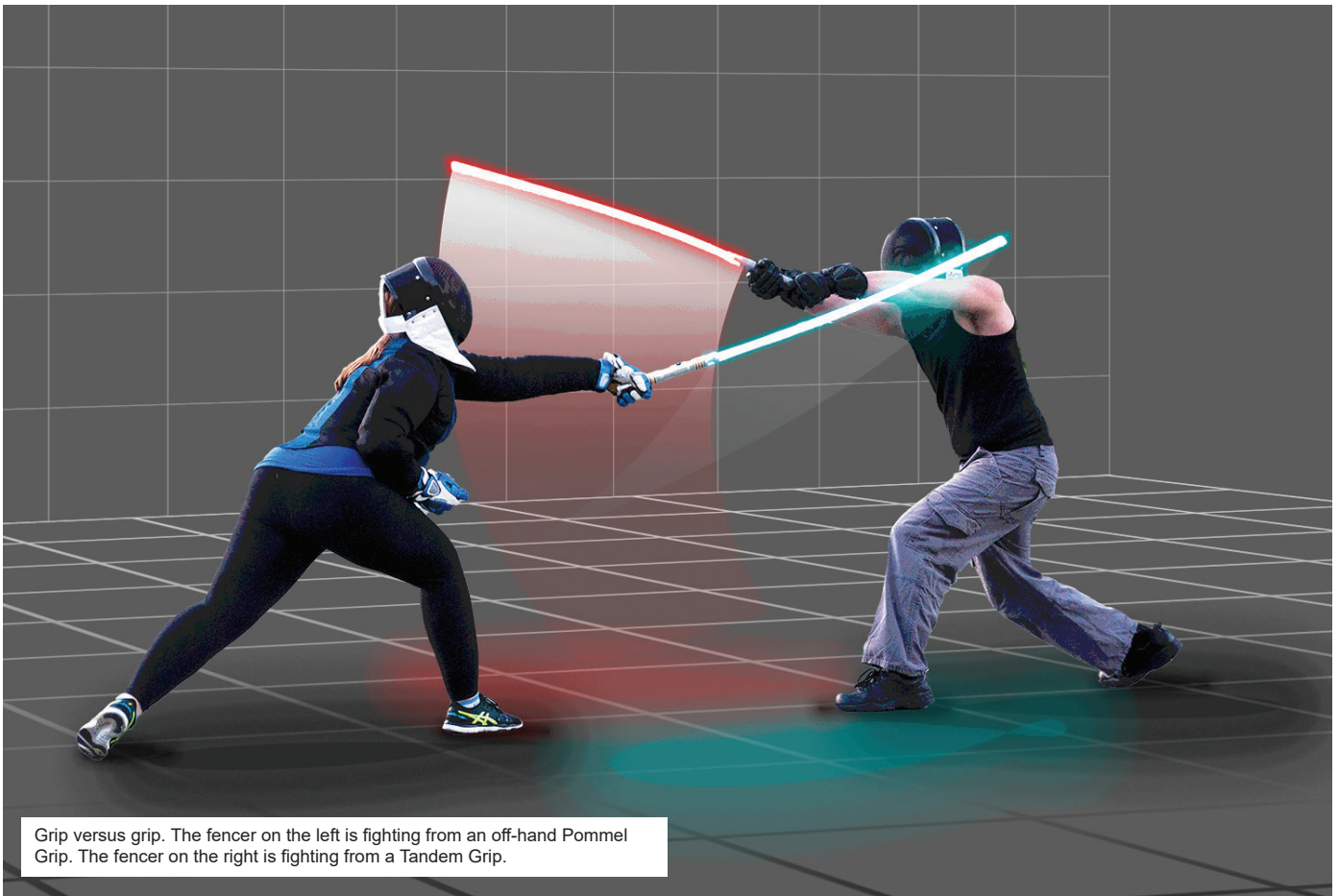
The fencer takes a lateral step while switching stances.



J-STEP

The fencer takes a "curved" step around the opponent.





Grip versus grip. The fencer on the left is fighting from an off-hand Pommel Grip. The fencer on the right is fighting from a Tandem Grip.

§3 GRIP FORMATION

It's been two chapters all about your feet. Now, it is time to put the saber in your hands and *grip* it.

Grip is such a key part of Rey Saber's identity that we already teased the three main grip styles to you in this manual's introduction. These styles-- Standard, Tandem, and Pommel-- and their strengths and weaknesses are based on *Tri-Grip Theory*, a concept that places each grip on a spectrum, where *reach* occupies one extreme and *blade control* occupies the other.

While much can be parsed about the ways in which reach and blade control affect combat, these two extremes can basically be summed up as offense and defense, respectively. Therefore, mastery of Rey Form represents a versatile and holistic approach to Lightspeed Saber fencing.

In this short but important section, we'll look at the three aforementioned grip styles and how to properly form them for execution in Rey Form (it can vary in other styles). We'll also touch on the crucial aspect of wrist malleability, which will be important later for protecting you from long term damage to your joints.

THE THREE GRIP STYLES OF REY FORM

STANDARD GRIP

Standard Grip is called Standard because it's the most "traditional" one-handed grip and because it's the default grip prescribed for Rey Saber, since it's well balanced for both offense and defense.

To form the Standard Grip, grip the weapon with your *dominant hand* at the uppermost choke, wrapping all your fingers around the weapon (this is called the Hammer Method). If you don't have a choke, grip at the very top of the hilt.



TANDEM GRIP

To form Tandem Grip, begin in Standard Grip, then add your *off-hand* (non-dominant hand) to the saber, gripping at the very bottom of the hilt. It is important that your hands be separated as much as possible in order to generate *leverage*. Leverage helps generate power, and enhances control and maneuverability of the weapon.



POMMEL GRIP

In Rey Saber, the Pommel Grip is deployed *exclusively* from the off-hand. To form it, simply start in Tandem Grip, then remove your dominant hand from the saber.



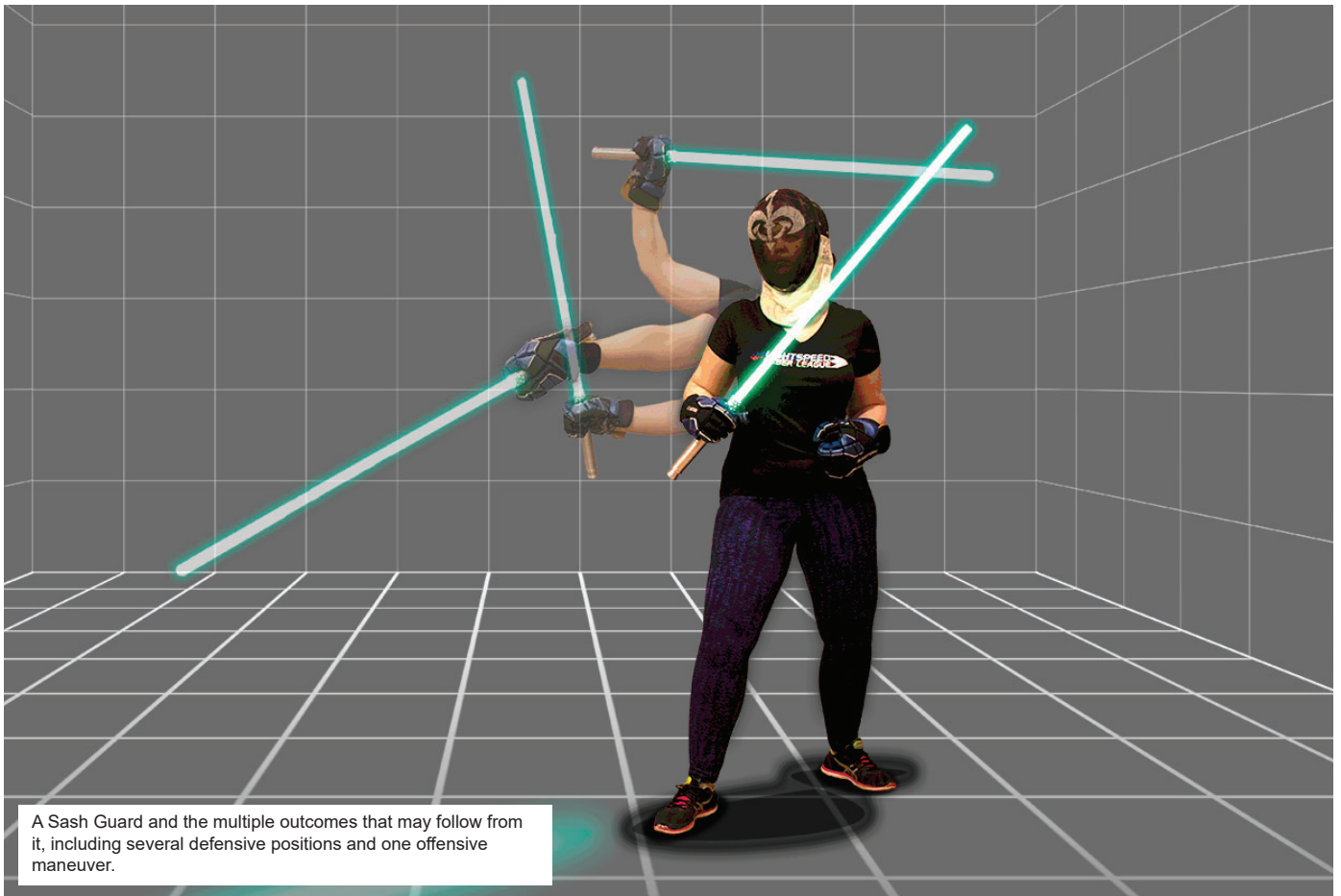
SAFETY! STAY LOOSE

For all the grip styles above, the grip(s) should be *firm* but not *tight*. This will make the weapon more maneuverable and is crucial for more complex maneuvers later.

In addition, it's crucial for the wrist(s) to be loose and malleable. Like a properly firm grip, this will help you achieve some more advanced techniques down the road. But more importantly, loose wrists will help prevent injury, especially when attacking and hitting a target. Flexible things bend. Rigid things break. Stay loose!



The wrist should be almost completely malleable when at rest, as pictured above. It should even be malleable when attacking, so that the blade can absorb some of the impact rather than your wrist absorbing it all. A rigid wrist is only recommended for defensive actions, which will be covered later.



A Sash Guard and the multiple outcomes that may follow from it, including several defensive positions and one offensive maneuver.

§4 GUARDS

Your guard is to your *bladework* what your stance is to your *footwork*. That is, it is the starting position from which all blade-based actions-- both offensive and defensive-- will be based.

Your guard determines everything from which defensive actions will be viable, which attack angles will be the most natural, which areas of your body will be most vulnerable, and whether your combat strategy will favor offense, defense, counteroffense, bladework, or footwork.

As such, guards are effective only in terms of their *potential action*, and not in and of themselves. A guard that is not translated into an attack or a "block" can neither kill the enemy nor thwart the enemy's attempt to kill you. The guard is merely a starting position. (There are a few exceptions.)

Guards are by no means permanent. They can be changed at any moment, based on the needs and preferences of the fencer.

In this section, we will look at some basic guard positions, how to form them, some of their offensive and defensive outcomes, and some of their strengths and weaknesses.

TWO TYPES OF GUARD

The guards are divided into two fundamental types: unchambered and chambered (also called charged, armed, or loaded).

UNCHAMBERED GUARDS

Unchambered guards generally place the weapon *in the front* of the fencer, usually with some distance between the weapon and the body. This configuration forces the opponent to deal with the blade and keeps the fencer's vital areas away from the opponent. It is also ideal for delivering *stop-hits* (see Section 9). Such guards do place the hand in a vulnerable position, however, and are susceptible to *sniping* attacks. Therefore, a good command of bladework and defense are necessary to using these guards well. Thankfully, unchambered guards are rich in defensive outcomes.

Beginners are generally recommended to focus on unchambered guards first.

Unchambered guards include:

- Center Guard (aka Middle Guard)
- Low Guard (aka Fool's Guard)
- 7-Guard
- 8-Guard.



This two-handed Center Guard places the weapon right in front of the fencer, giving his body a measure of distance and safety from the opponent. His hands are exposed, however.

CHAMBERED GUARDS

Chambered guards place the blade to the side, behind, and/or near the body. While these guards leave large areas of the body undefended, they force the opponent to come closer, where a wide range of very swift attacks can be thrown. Duelists using such guards must have an excellent command of footwork and/or distance control.

Very few chambered guards have any blade-based defensive options, and therefore are a poor choice if your opponent is faster than you, considering how much target area is exposed when using one. But they are intimidating, and prevent sniping attacks by removing the primary target of a snipe: your hand/weapon.

Chambered guards include:

- High Guard (aka Jedi Guard)
- Krait Guard, Overhead Guard
- Tail Guard.



This Inside High Guard places the weapon to the side of the fencer, priming him to deliver a powerful attack. By taking this posture, he accepts that his face, elbow, and torso are vulnerable.

FOR YOUR REFERENCE

In the following pages, we will look at the most important guards for beginners to know, as well as their most common offensive and defensive outcomes. Given that offense and defense are covered in the *next* three chapters, the outcomes listed for each guard are for your reference once you have completed those chapters.

UNCHAMBERED GUARDS

The unchambered guards are meant to keep a weapon between yourself and your opponent. They prevent the opponent from charging, from getting too aggressive, and keep your most vital areas away from harm.

CENTER GUARD

Also called Middle Guard, this is the first guard one should learn as a Lightspeed Saber beginner. It protects the upper half of the body well, and is generally easy for anyone to form right away. It can be formed with either one or two hands (be sure to follow the proscriptions laid out in Section 3 for how to grip the weapon).

To form the Center Guard, hold your weapon about waist-level with arm bent, with the tip up 45-60 degrees. Make sure to hold the weapon out in front of you rather than hugging the weapon near your torso or some of the Center Guard's advantages will be neutralized.

Center Guard is great for attacking down the centerline, delivering stop-hits, and for defending against diving attacks to the upper body and hands. It tends to be vulnerable to rising cuts, flat attacks, and swift sniping attacks.

Two views of Center Guard and some offensive and defensive options. On the left: a basic attack option. On the right: two basic defensive options.

ATTACKS
Straight cut
Straight strike

DEFENSES
Shield 3
Shield 4
Deflector 3
Deflector 4

VULNERABILITIES
Sniping attacks
Rising attacks
Flat attacks
Low attacks



LOW GUARD

Also called Fool's Guard, this understated guard is a surprisingly strong defensive posture. To form it, start from Center Guard, then simply lower the weapon so it slightly exceeds the front toes. From here the guard easily transitions into defenses for the legs. More experienced fencers are also able to defend the head and deflect mid level dives.

Most attacks from Low Guard are rising cuts and sweeps to the hands.

Low guard leaves the head vulnerable and can be defeated by high bolt and flying attacks and hooks.

ANY END FROM ANY BEGINNING

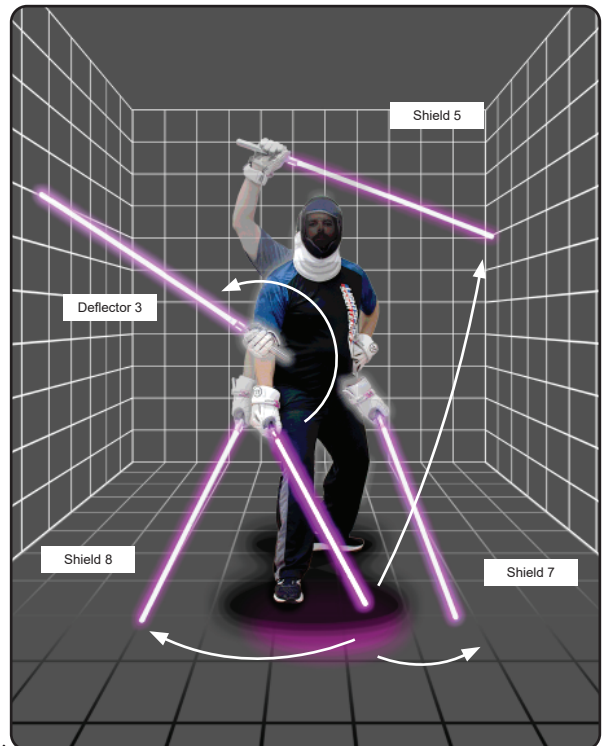
Whether from a chambered or unchambered guard, virtually any offensive or defensive move can be executed from any starting position, the only difference being how quickly and how naturally those moves are achieved. The moves listed are only the most natural, direct moves or most common for that particular guard, and *not* your only options. Be creative!

Low Guard and just some of its many defensive choices.

ATTACKS
Rising cuts & sweeps

DEFENSES
Shield 5
Shield 7
Shield 8
Deflector 3

VULNERABILITIES
High bolting attacks
Flying attacks
Skyhook



CHAMBERED GUARDS

The unchambered guards place the weapon to the side or the rear of the fencer, “charging up” the attack. While this leaves the body completely open, it removes the hands as a target, which can be preferable depending on the fencer’s style.

HIGH GUARD (AKA SHOULDER GUARD AND CHEST GUARD)

Unlike Center Guard and Low Guard, High Guard is asymmetric and therefore has two variations: inside and outside. When formed with two hands, it is nicknamed “Jedi” Guard.

To form the Inside High Guard, simply hold your weapon over or near your rear shoulder. To form the Outside High Guard, do the same over the lead shoulder.

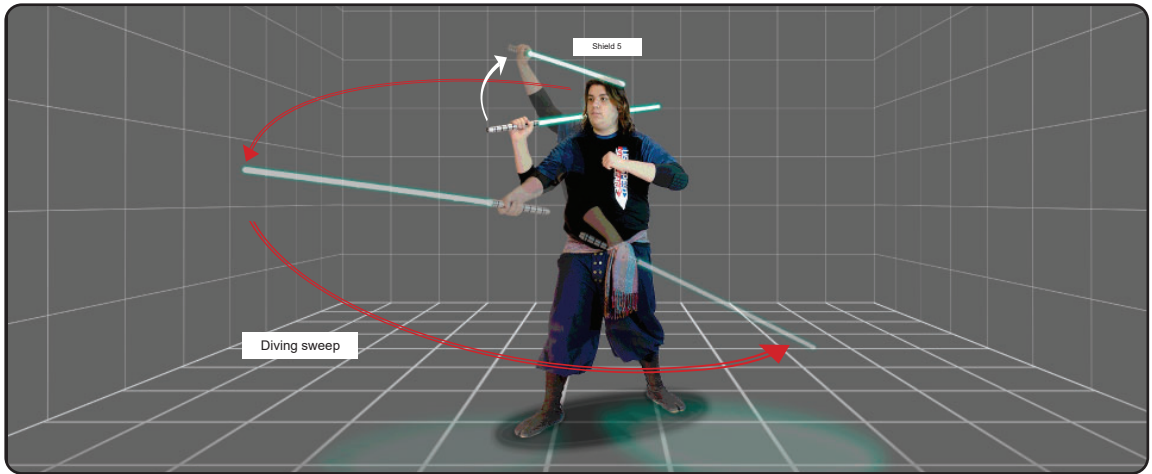
High Guard is good for delivering diving attacks and high lateral cuts to the shoulder, neck, or head.

Shoulder Guard is particularly difficult to pull any defensive positions from, but it delivers powerful diving sweeps.

ATTACKS
Diving
High laterals

DEFENSES
Shield 5

VULNERABILITIES
Fast attacks, anywhere



BELLY GUARD (aka FLANK GUARD)

This is the mid to low elevation equivalent to High Guard. Unlike the high guard, it is mono-sided, chambering to the mid inside hemisphere. To form the Belly Guard, hold your weapon underneath your rear arm.

Unlike High Guard, it is generally uncommon to hold flank guards with two hands in Rey Saber (slightly more common in Ren Saber).

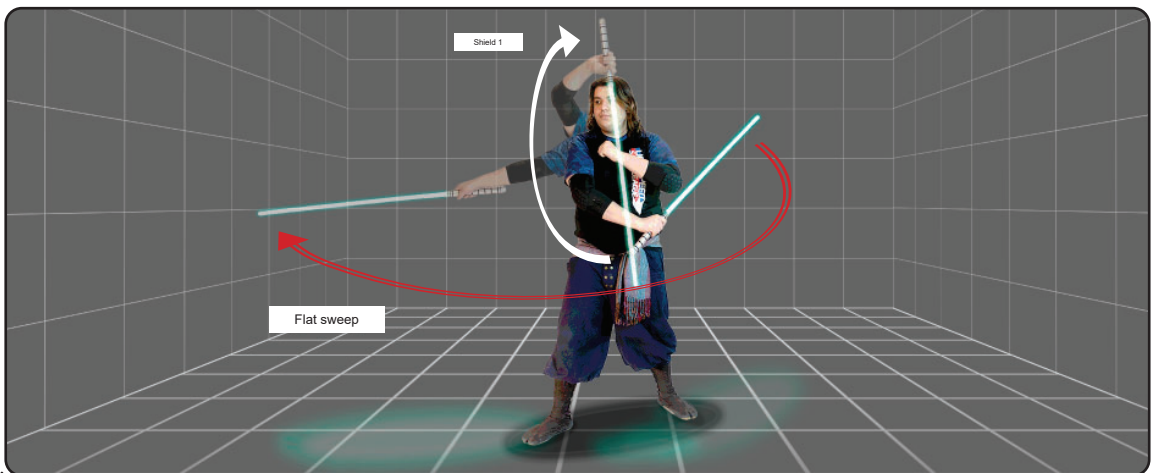
Flank Guard is particularly good for delivering flat attacks and utilizing some counter-time strategies.

Belly Guard with one of its most common attacks, and one of its few defensive options.

ATTACKS
Rising
Flat sweeps

DEFENSES
Shield 1

VULNERABILITIES
Fast attacks, anywhere



OTHER GUARDS

These are good guards to know, although they will not be referred to again in this manual.

SASH GUARD

Sash is a specialized “hybrid” guard very good for protecting the outside hemisphere and shielding the head. It is moderate between Center Guard and Inside Flank Guard, and as such can efficiently deliver a centerline attack or a flat or lateral attack.

To form Sash Guard, begin in a one-handed Center Guard, then tilt and position your saber until the blade is crossed diagonally over your torso. The hilt should be held near your outside hip.



Sash Guard is great for protecting the high and outside target areas.

OVERHEAD GUARD

This is a classic position in kendo and longsword, delivering powerful centerline slashes. It is a very intimidating posture, though it can be vulnerable to swift leg snipes. The response is so common, in fact, that most users of this guard are already prepared to evade the predictable countermeasure, and respond with a powerful blow on their opponent's head.

To form the Overhead Guard, begin in a two-handed Center Guard, then bring the saber over your head. It's important not to “overwind” the saber, as if drawing the sword from a back scabbard. The blade should remain hovered *above* the head, and not behind it.



Overhead Guard is scary, though the legs are rather vulnerable.

KRAIT GUARD

Krait Guard loses a lot of efficacy in Lightspeed Saber fencing due to the ban on thrusting attacks, however, it does have the distinction of being the only chambered guard with a defensive option: Shield 6.

To form Krait Guard, begin in a two-handed Center Guard, then invert the entire guard so that it comes to rest near your cheek. The weapon should be horizontal and pointed toward your opponent (but do not point it in your opponent's eyes, as this is illegal in competition and bad form in sparring).



On the left: a long windaround attack from Krait Guard. On the right: A Shield 6 transition from Krait Guard.

GUARD EXAMPLES



Marc Zipper, left, of Kyber Combat, holds an inside flank guard against teammate Kyle Mason in Center Guard.



Atzin Rafael-Farias, left, moves into a tail guard while Elizabeth Panos, right, counters with an inside flank guard.



Daniel Delgado, right, of Lightspeed Saber Academy, holds a tandem Center Guard against teammate Wendy Watson in a low guard.



Angela Pereda, left, holds a sash guard against her opponent and Lightspeed Saber Academy.



Teohua Martinez of Knight Club holds an outer Jedi Guard.



A beginner at Lightspeed Saber Academy holds a Krait Guard.



§5 ***BASIC ATTACKS***

In Section 4, you learned about guards--static positions used to prepare for and to launch attacks. In this section, you will learn about those attacks.

Due to the power and omnidirectional nature of a lightsaber blade, Lightspeed Saber attacks are highly varied and versatile, and can be characterized by grip style, angle, elevation, orientation, and travel arc.

This section will start by introducing the many possible characteristics of an attack, so that you will have the appropriate language to talk about and understand attacks; then it will go over some basic and fundamental attacks so that you will be ready to put attacks to use.

ATTACK ORIENTATIONS

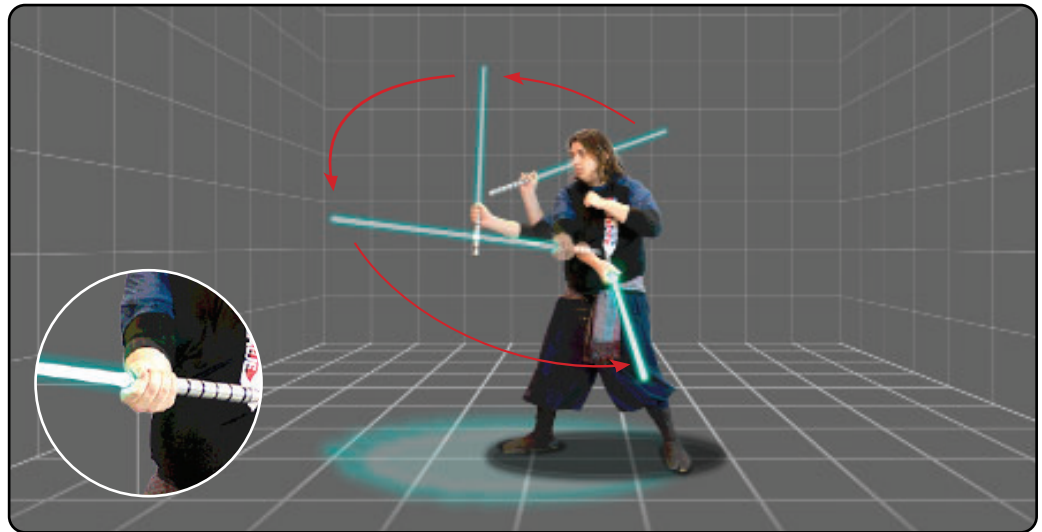
Attacks can generally be described in three orientations: forehand, backhand, and neutral. This is applicable to both one-handed and two-handed attacks.

FOREHAND

Forehand attacks generally originate from the outer hemisphere. Properly performed, the dominant hand is turned upward or outward, such that the palm or fingers are oriented upward toward the face. This is functionally similar to a forehand swing in tennis.

If you are right handed, then this attack would be coming from your right side.

Pictured on the right: A forehand diving attack originating from a high guard on the outside hemisphere and sweeping through to the inner hemisphere.

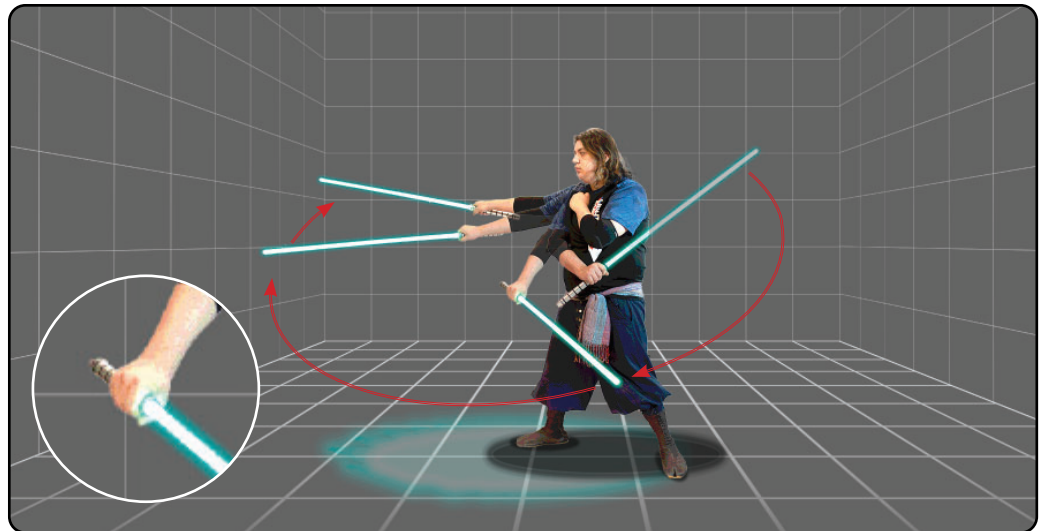


BACKHAND

Backhand attacks generally originate from the inner hemisphere. Properly performed, the dominant hand is turned downward or inward, such that the palm or fingers are oriented away from the face. This is functionally similar to a backhand swing in tennis.

If you are right handed, then this attack would be coming from your left side.

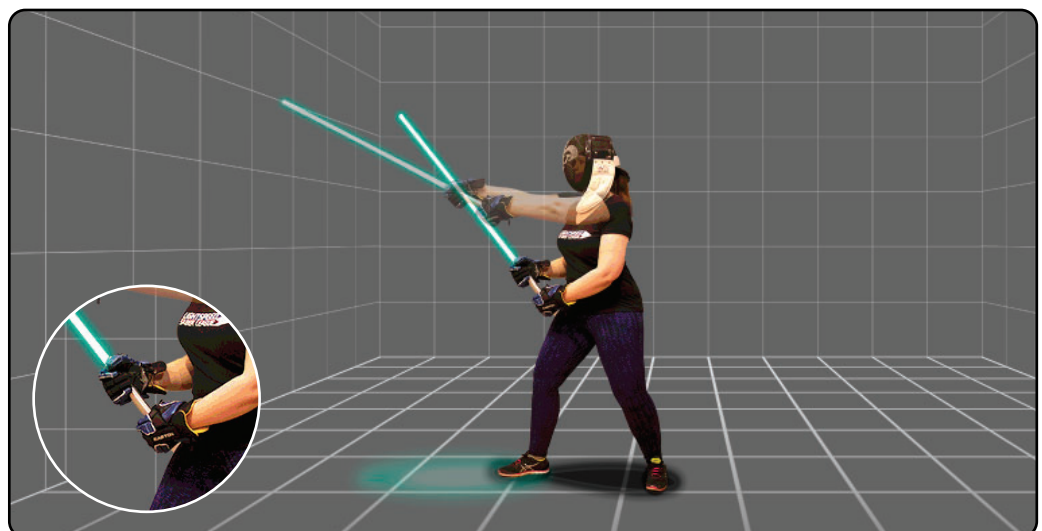
Pictured on the right: A backhand lateral attack originating from a flank guard on the inside and sweeping through to the outer hemisphere.



NEUTRAL

Neutral attacks generally originate from the fencer's centerline. The hand(s) are upright and not turned to the left nor right.

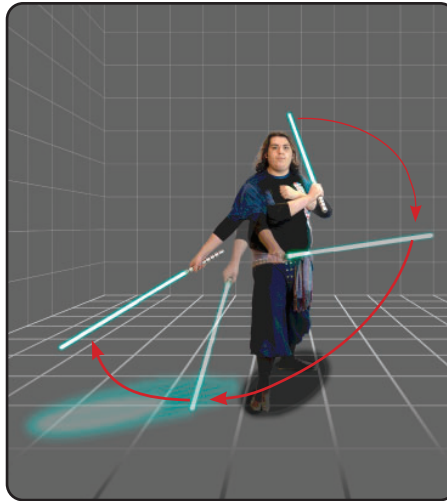
Pictured on the right: A straight strike originating from center and finishing in the center.



ATTACK ANGLES

While attacks can occur at almost any angle in Lightspeed Saber, they are generally categorized into 8 basic angles:

1. Backhand dive (downward)
2. Forehand dive
3. Backhand lateral (horizontal)
4. Forehand lateral
5. Backhand rise (upward)
6. Forehand rise
7. Center dive
8. Center rise



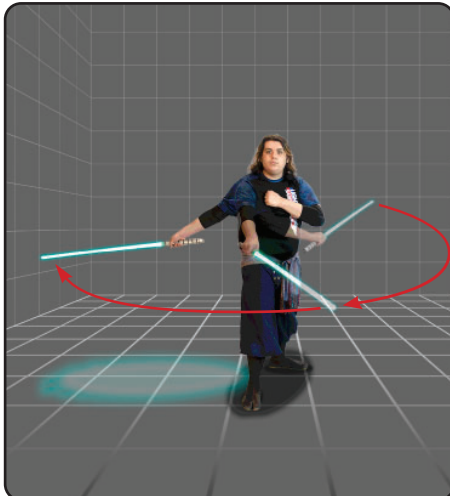
Angle 1: Backhand dive

This attack starts in an inside High Guard and sweeps downward toward the outside hemisphere.



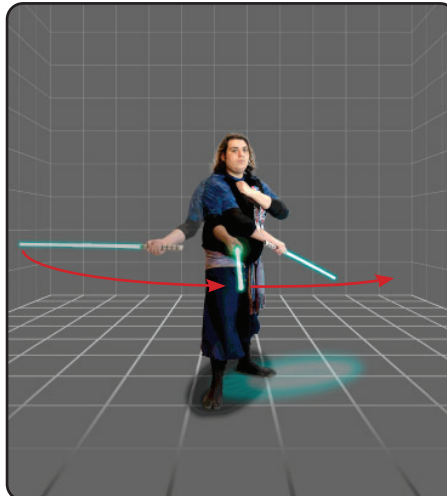
Angle 2: Forehand dive

This attack starts in an outside High Guard and sweeps downward toward the inside hemisphere.



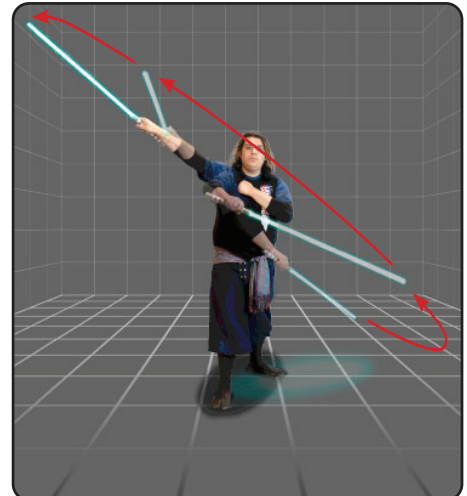
Angle 3: Backhand lateral

This attack starts in an inside Flank Guard and sweeps horizontally toward the outside hemisphere.



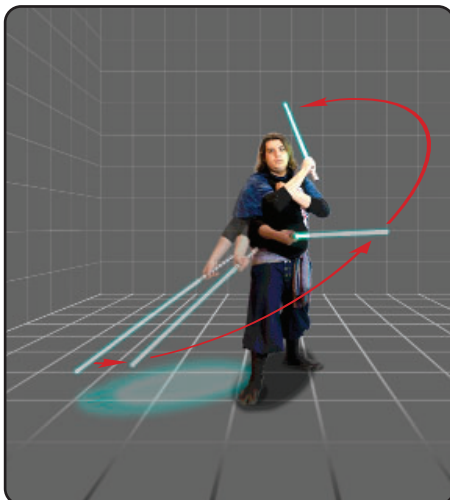
Angle 4: Forehand lateral

This attack starts in an outside Flank Guard and sweeps horizontally toward the inside hemisphere.



Angle 5: Backhand rise

This attack starts in an inside Flank Guard and sweeps upward toward the outside hemisphere.



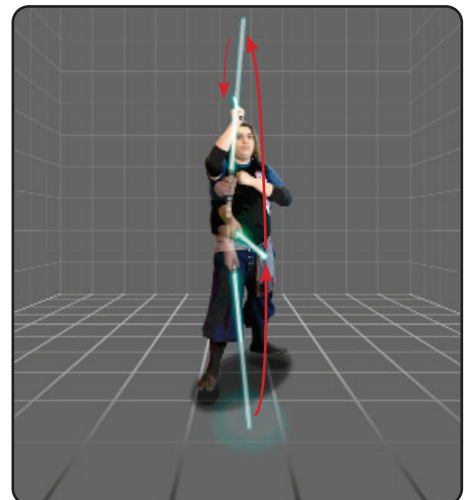
Angle 6: Forehand rise

This attack starts in Outside Low Guard and sweeps upward toward the inside hemisphere.



Angle 7: Center dive

This attack starts in Overhead Guard and sweeps downward on the centerline.



Angle 8: Center rise

This attack starts in Low Guard and sweeps upward on the centerline.

ATTACK ELEVATIONS

Since nearly the entire body of a Lightspeed Saber fencer is valid to hit for scoring, it is natural that attacks will be delivered at different heights or elevations. Therefore, this attack characteristic must be defined by the target body rather than the attack itself.

In general, the body is divided into three such elevations for the purposes of attack and defense:

High:

Approximately covers the entirety of the deltoids and everything above them.

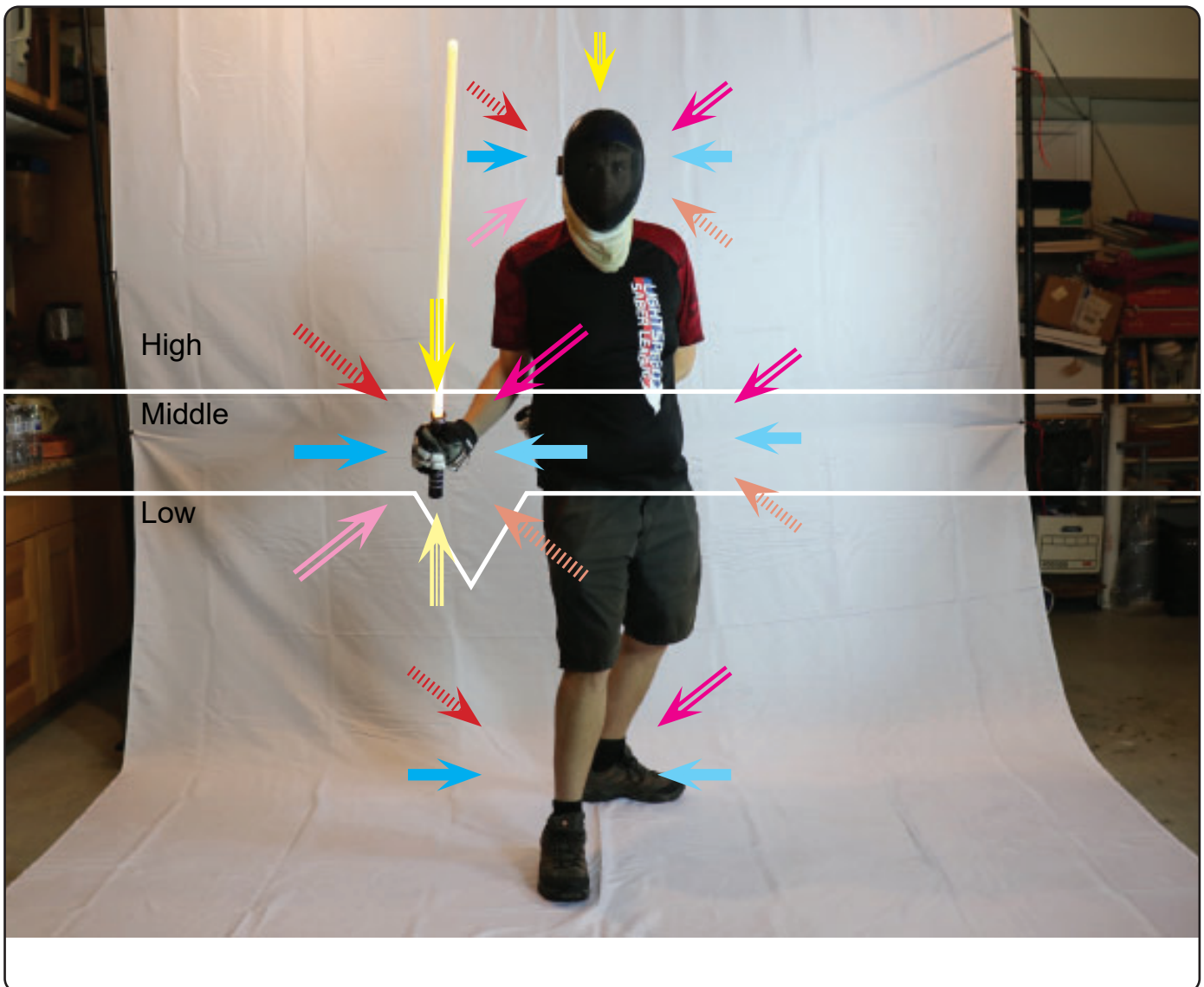
Middle:

Everything below the deltoids to about the waist. Generally considered to include all parts distal to the deltoids, meaning the bicep, forearm, hand, and weapon.

Low:

Everything below the waist.

(Note that these definitions may not match definitions used in competition. Always check the most up to date rules.)



The combination of attack angles and target elevations create a long list of possible attacks. Note that rising attacks to the low sections and center rises to the body are not depicted because they are illegal.

CUT TYPES

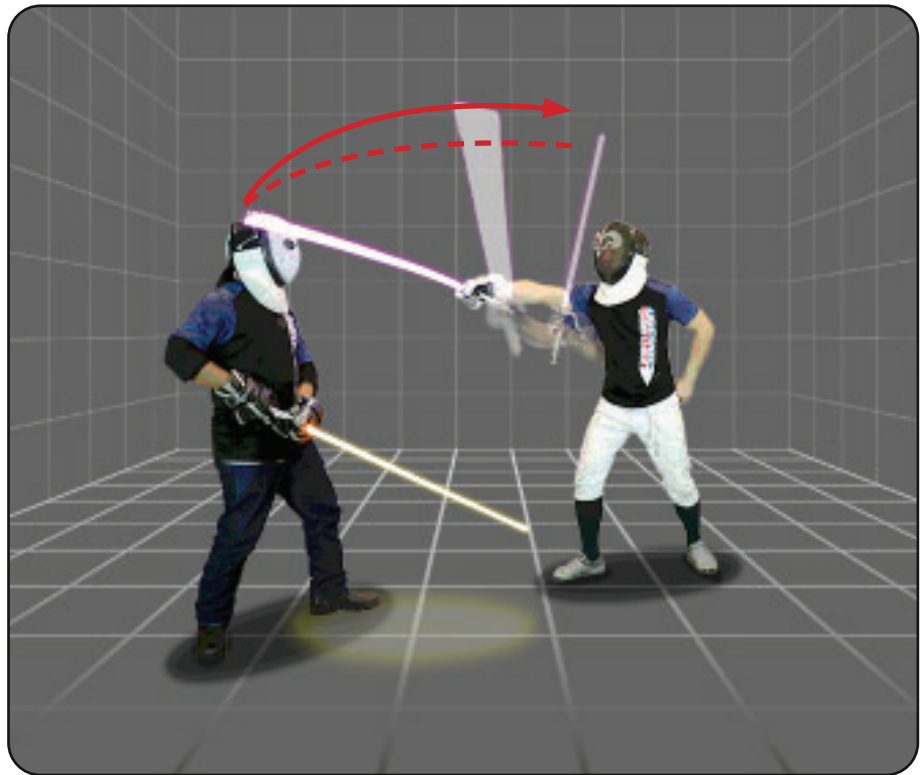
Traditionally, sword attacks are divided into two basic types: cuts and point-attacks (also referred to as thrusts). Since point-attacks are illegal in Lightspeed Saber, this manual will focus on the wide variety of cuts available. They are primarily classified based on their style of travel (or arc) and their grip.

SEMI-CUTS & STRIKES

Semi-cuts (also just called “cuts”) and strikes are attacks that go through a “boomerang arc”. From guard, the attack is launched, makes contact with the opponent, and then “bounces off” to return to guard (cuts can also transition to a shield; see *Shields*). Canonically speaking, these are wounding attacks.

Pictured to the right, a semi-cut is thrown from an outer High Guard. After making contact, the attack returns backwards through its original arc back to outer High Guard. This is an archetypal semi-cut, although most semi-cuts are not necessarily this rigidly performed. Semi-cuts can also transition to another semi-cut, a shield, a deflector, or a different guard. (The unifying feature is usually that the attack returns backward with a bending of the elbow.) It is this feature that makes semi-cuts extremely versatile.

A strike is simply a two-handed semi-cut (though slightly mechanically different).



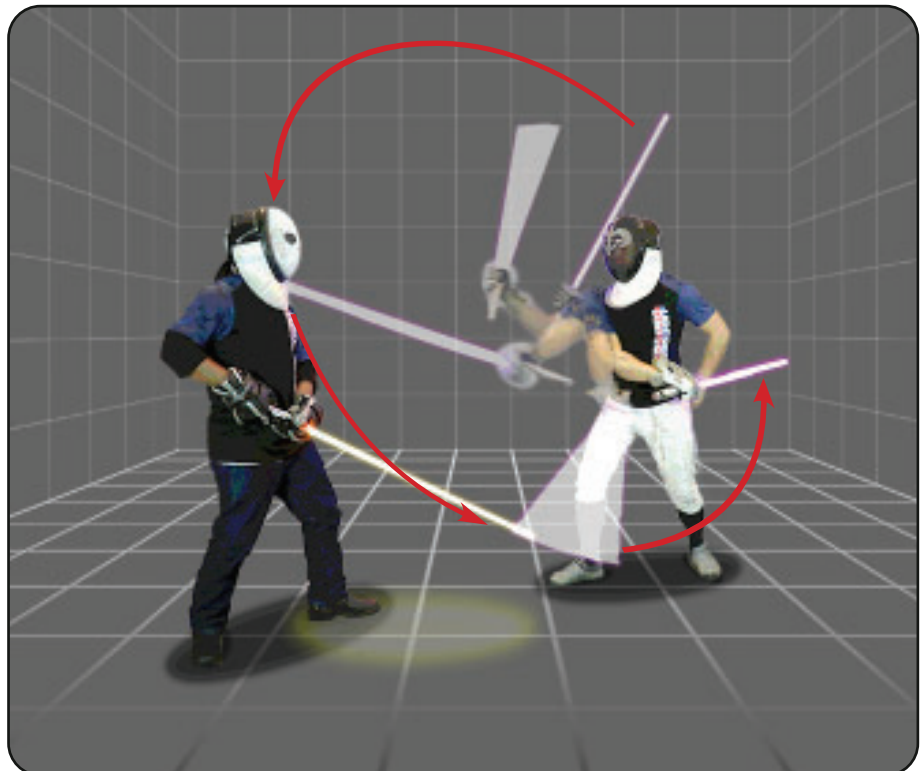
SWEEPS & SLASHES

Sweeps and slashes are cuts that go through a full arc. They start in one guard, hit the opponent, and then continue on their original trajectory to end in a different guard, (usually *hemispherically opposite* to the original guard). Canonically speaking, these are killing or maiming attacks.

Pictured to the right, a diving sweep is thrown from an outer High Guard. In contrast to the semi-cut, the attack's momentum is allowed to continue on after making contact with the opponent. The attack then completes its circular arc and arrives on the opposite side of the attacker's body and forms a Flank Guard.

Sweeps generally have too much momentum to transition to anything but a chambered guard. As such they are swift and powerful, but lack versatility and defensive potential.

A slash is simply a two-handed sweep.



OTHER ATTACKS

Outside of the four basic attack types there exist a few other offensive options. Some of these are covered in more detail later in the manual, some are not covered in this manual, and some are simply not legal competitive Lightspeed Saber. But for the sake of completeness, they are shown here.

HOOKS

Hooks are most commonly evasive counterattacks and therefore not considered “basic” attacks but they can be used offensively.

A hook is an attack that hits an offline target, usually by torquing the wrist.

For more on hooks, see §8 Evasion & Counterattacks.



POINT-ATTACKS

Point-attacks refer to thrusting or stabbing attacks, delivered either by power of the arm, foot, or both. The point of the blade is driven into the target. Point-attacks are not legal in Lightspeed Saber League.



SHOTS

The point is thrust to the side of the target then swung in with a straight arm, hitting the target with the broadside of the blade and not the point.

Despite being a safer, legal alternative to the point-attack, care must be taken to shoot safely so as to not accidentally stab the opponent.

Shots are not covered in any further detail in this manual.



ATTACK EXAMPLES



Marc Zipper of Kyber Combat attacks teammate Presten Woodlee with a floating center dive.



Nick Grange, right, demonstrates a lateral forehand cut with David Walker.



Bea Nguyen of Knight Club, left, demonstrates a mid-lateral forehand cut with teammate John Arden, right.



Wendy Watson, left, lunges at Batty Loco, right, with a backhand dive.



Angela Pereda of Lightspeed Saber Academy, left, lunges with a straight cut through teammate Jacob Areias' centerline.



Amy Rooney of Penguin Saber Academy, left, delivers a low lateral cut at teammate Anthony Quevedo.



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§6 *EVASIONS*

Now that we know some of the basic attacks, we must learn methods to protect ourselves from those attacks. While action movies are full of fancy bladeplay and blade-based defense, in reality, evasive action and distance-- in other words, not being there to be hit in the first place-- are the first lines of defense.

Evasions also allow the fencer to keep their weapon free, granting the opportunity to counterattack in the midst of the evasion.

In this chapter, you'll learn some of the most common evasive maneuvers in response to an attack, and their accompanying counterattacks that allow one to gracefully kill and not be killed.

WHAT IS AN EVASION?

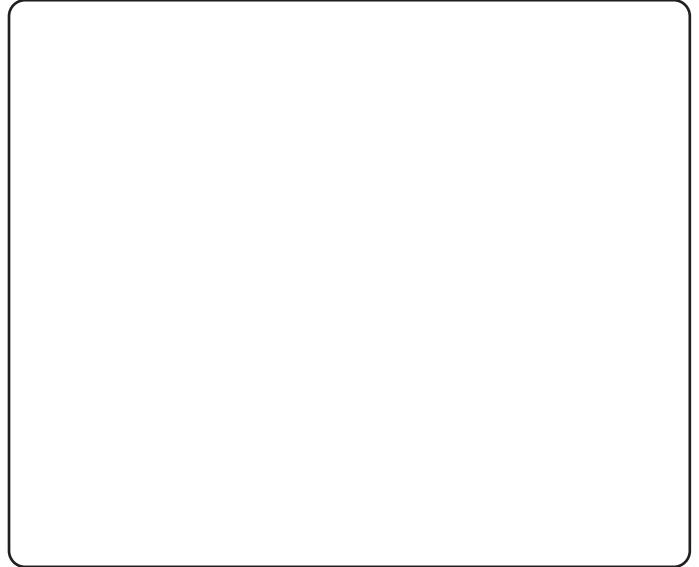
An evasion is the displacement of a vulnerable body part or parts in order to avoid being struck by an opponent. They can involve the entire body or just the body part under threat. Some evasions can be paired with a counterattack, allowing the defender to avoid the opponent's attack while also striking back simultaneously.

Evasions are broadly divided into two types: distance evasions and displacement evasions.

DISTANCE EVASIONS

Distance evasions work by creating space between the opponent and the target. This can be done with solely the hand or the entire body, depending on the depth of the attack.

Distance evasions are versatile and broadly work no matter what the target or the attack is. However, they are not very good for delivering counterattacks, since a longer distance must now be crossed.



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DISPLACEMENT EVASIONS

Displacement evasions, instead of creating space, intentionally remain within the opponent's range but avoid the hit by moving the target out of the way. This makes each displacement evasion very specific to the target and the attack, but superior for counterattacking. Broadly speaking, displacements are harder to pull off than distance evasions, but superior when done right.



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DISTANCE & DISPLACEMENT

Distance vs displacement is not a choice you make. The two types of evasion are used together, at different times. Most fencers will use distance evasions 75% of the time, with displacements making up the remainder when they are able to properly read the opponent's actions.

DISTANCE EVASIONS

PULL

Target: Hand / hilt / forearm

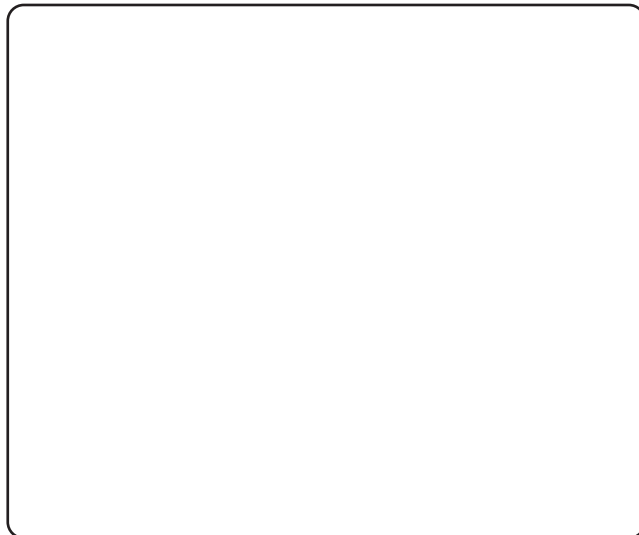
Attack: Any

Best counterattack: Straight cut

The pull is probably the simplest evasion recognized in Lightspeed Saber, and the first one learned by beginners. It protects the hand while in Center Guard, and is performed simply by withdrawing the hand and weapon to the side of the torso. This puts the weapon in position to follow up with a straight cut once the initial attack passes. Strictly performed, the body and feet do not move or lean, in order to stay in range for the counterattack.



Standard Shield 2 from the front. The blade is held as vertically as possible.



Standard Shield 2 from the side.

BACKHOP

Target: Body

Attack: Any

Best counterattack: Straight cut

The backhop combines a pull with a long retreat, ensuring that both the hand and the body are moved away from the threat. It makes a return nearly impossible, but is generally safer than just a strict pull.



Standard Shield 2 from the front. The blade is held as vertically as possible.



Standard Shield 2 from the side.

DISPLACEMENT EVASIONS

SLIP / SLIPCUT

Target: Front leg

Attack: Any

Best counterattack: Forehand dive

This is one of the most satisfying, crowd-pleasing evasions in Lightspeed Saber. The front leg is withdrawn to the rear while keeping the fencer's weight and dominant shoulder in the front. This allows for a swift counterattack to be thrown at the opponent's head or hand.

Start in an outer high guard. When you read the attack, "slip" the front leg behind you while simultaneously throwing the dive. It is crucial to slip and attack *at the same time* for maximum effect.



Standard Shield 2 from the front. The blade is held as vertically as possible.



Standard Shield 2 from the side.

FLOAT

Target: Front leg / torso

Attack: Low to mid laterals and dives

Best counterattack: Straight cut

The term "float" generally applies to any evasive action where the defender withdraws the legs and abdomen while leaning forward with the upper torso. This allows the defender to protect the lower parts of the body while counterattacking from above.



Standard Shield 2 from the front. The blade is held as vertically as possible.



Standard Shield 2 from the side.

DISPLACEMENT EVASIONS (continued)

LIFT / SKYHOOK

Target: Hand / hilt / forearm

While protecting the same target as the Pull, the lift trades versatility for a superior counterattack: the skyhook.

Attack: Flat sweep (mid-lateral)

To perform a lift, simply raise the weapon above the level of the attack. The attack *must* be a flat sweep. It is not necessary nor ideal to retract the hand during the evasion.

Best counterattack: Skyhook

To perform the skyhook, turn your wrist to the left or right, striking downwards with the blade at the opponent's hand or hilt.



Standard Shield 2 from the front. The blade is held as vertically as possible.



Standard Shield 2 from the side.

FADE / BACK STANCE

Target: Head / shoulders

The fade is like the opposite of the slip, moving the upper body out of the way while more or less remaining in place.

Attack: High lateral / high straight cut

Start in an outside high guard. As the attack is arriving, pivot to a back stance and throw the attack at the opponent's hand/hilt.

Best counterattack: Forehand dive



Standard Shield 2 from the front. The blade is held as vertically as possible.



Standard Shield 2 from the side.

DISPLACEMENT EVASIONS (continued)

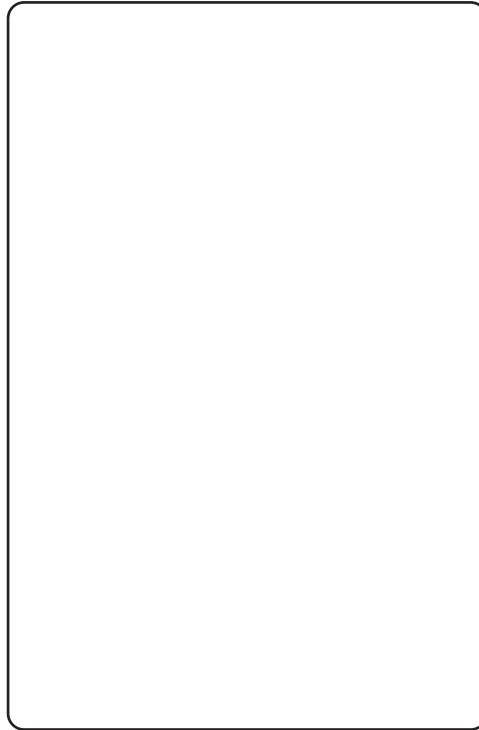
DUCK

Target:
Head

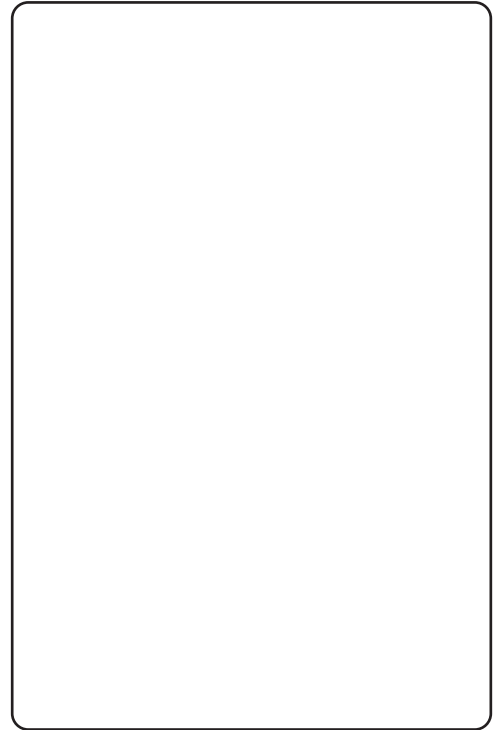
Attack:
High lateral

Best counterattack:
Backhand cut

The duck is fairly common, though most often used as a proactive attack to the legs rather than as an evasion.



Standard Shield 2 from the front. The blade is held as vertically as possible.



Standard Shield 2 from the side.

REVERSE LUNGE

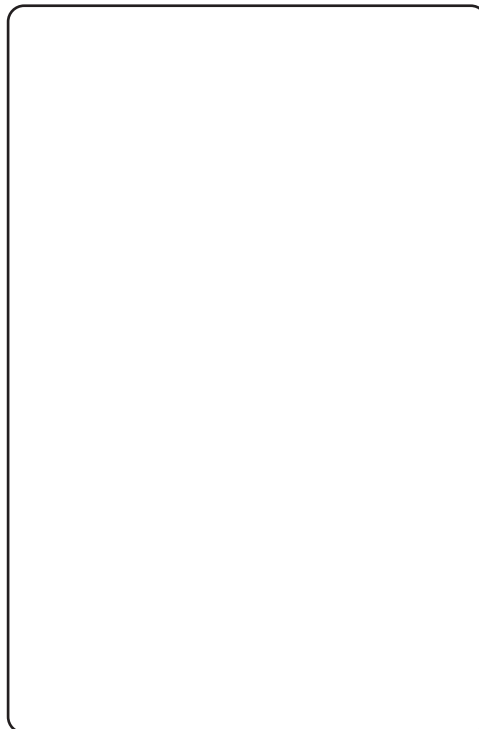
Target:
Head

Attack:
High lateral

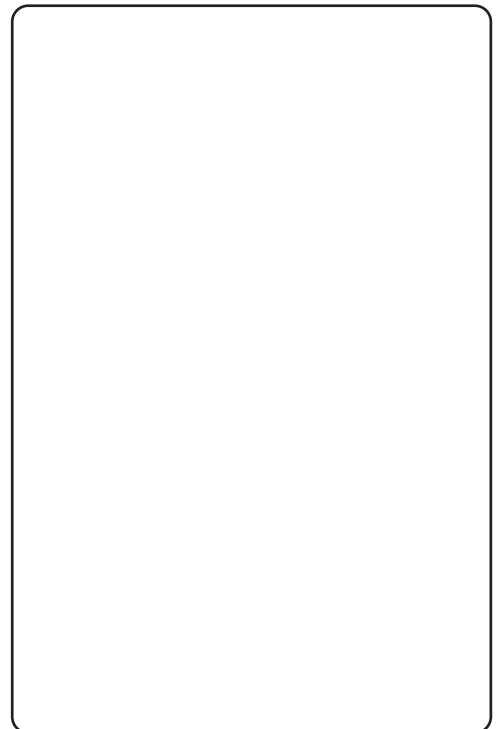
Best counterattack:
Backhand sweep

The reverse lunge can be easier to perform than the duck, depending on the defender's mobility.

To do the reverse lunge, recede the back foot while keeping your weight forward on the front leg. It should completely functionally looking exactly the same as the standard lunge. This should lower your profile below the attack.



Standard Shield 2 from the front. The blade is held as vertically as possible.



Standard Shield 2 from the side.

SLIP / SLIPCUT

This is one of the most satisfying, crowd-pleasing evasions in Lightspeed Saber. The front leg is withdrawn to the rear while keeping the fencer's weight and dominant shoulder in the front. This allows for a swift counterattack to be thrown at the opponent's head or hand.

Start in an outer high guard. When you read the attack, "slip" the front leg behind you while simultaneously throwing the dive. It is crucial to slip and attack *at the same time* for maximum effect.

Target:
Front leg

Attack:
Any

Best counterattack:
Forehand dive



§7 SHIELDS

During the early development of Lightspeed Saber fencing, it was found that the traditional defensive blade action-- a parry-- could not be performed reliably, primarily due to the lack of a handguard, which allows for “taking” the opponent’s weapon and controlling it for one’s own advantage.

In the absence of the parry, two defensive methods were developed for Lightspeed Saber: the active system and the passive system. The active system is populated by *deflectors*, and the passive system is populated by *shields*. Each system protects different areas of the body and in different ways. Used together and in conjunction with evasive movements, they create a complete defensive paradigm.

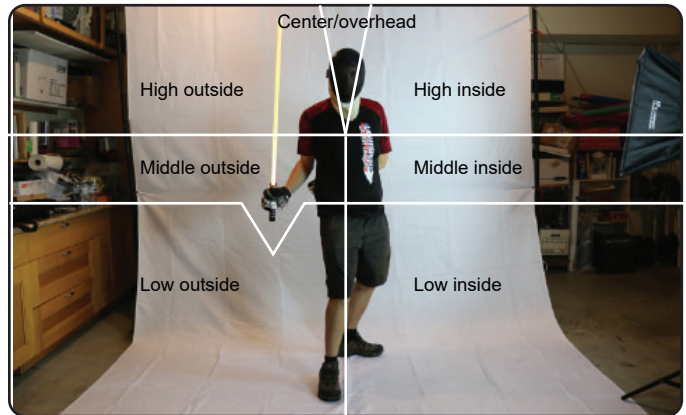
WHAT IS A SHIELD?

A shield is a defensive blade *position* which prevents an attack from connecting with the defender's body, head, or legs. This can work through direct opposition or via yielding, in which the defending blade is sloped in such a way as to allow the attack to slide harmlessly away from the target.

AREA CLASSIFICATION

In Chapter 3, you learned about the two hemispheres and the centerline. And in Chapter 5, you learned about the three elevations that attacks fall into. These two area classification systems combine to create the seven main target zones that the shields defend. These areas are:

1. High outside
2. Middle outside
3. Low outside
4. High inside
5. Middle inside
6. Low inside
7. Center/overhead



A shield protecting the high inside section from lateral attack. The example on the left shows the elbow and forearm expose. On the right, the target areas are properly placed behind the shield.

PASSIVE DEFENSE

Given the correct shield against the correct angle of attack, the shield should be able to protect its target region indefinitely and passively (without moving).

SHIELDS AS GUARDS

The passive nature of the shields allows them to be used as guards in their own right. This has the effect of closing off that region to attack.

While shields-as-guards do not have nearly the equivalent efficacy they do in traditional fencing, the principle still does see some use in competitive play.

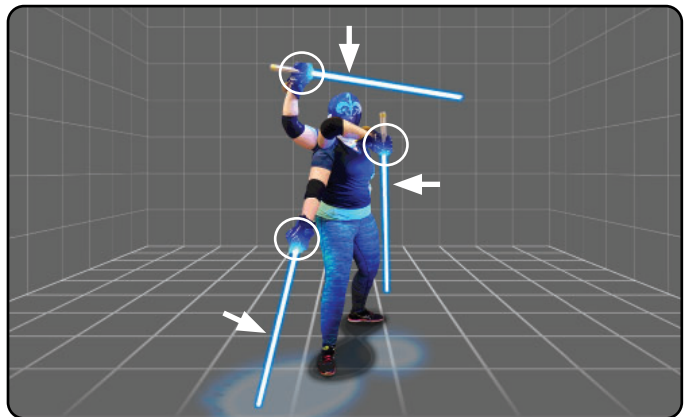
The most common shield-guards are Shields 5, 7, and 8.



As long as this shield is held, the defender is protected indefinitely from any diving attack down the centerline.

DEFENSIBLE AREAS

Shields are a useful tool. But they do not represent a complete defensive system on their own. Every part of the body can be protected via shield *except the hands*. Protection of the hands requires *active* defense (see Chapter 7).



Any attacks to the body, represented by arrows, can be fended off by the ten shields (three shields pictured). However, no shield can protect the hand holding it (circled).

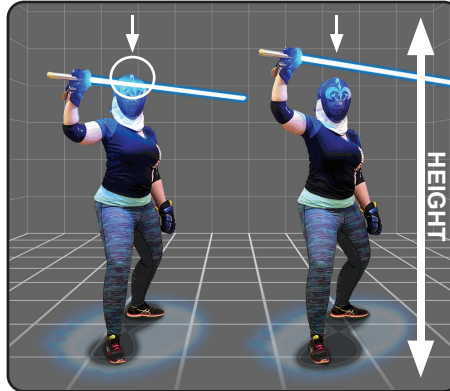
OPTIMAL SHIELD FORMATION: DEFENSIVE GEOMETRY

Due to the lack of handguards, the *geometry* of a shield is crucial to its proper functioning. Good defensive geometry obeys the following three rules, **in order of importance**:

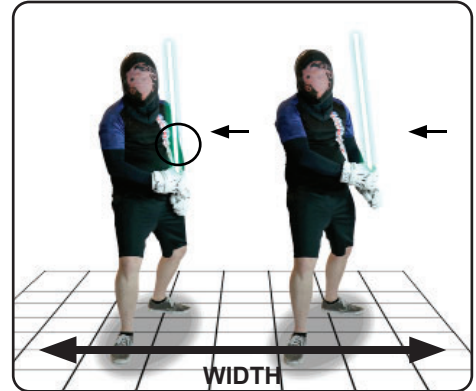
RULE 1

The blade exceeds the indicated target(s) width or height wise.

Because the slightest touch is valid for scoring points in Lightspeed Saber fencing, the smallest amount of exposed target area is a liability to the defender. Therefore, the blade must exceed the target in the direction of threat. In other words, for a shield to be effective, the target area must be *behind the shield*. Depending on the direction of the attack, this could mean placing the target to the left, to the right, or below the defending blade.



A shield defending against an overhead centerline attack. The shield on the left does not exceed the target by height, and therefore the head is vulnerable. On the right, the target areas are properly hidden behind (underneath) the shield.



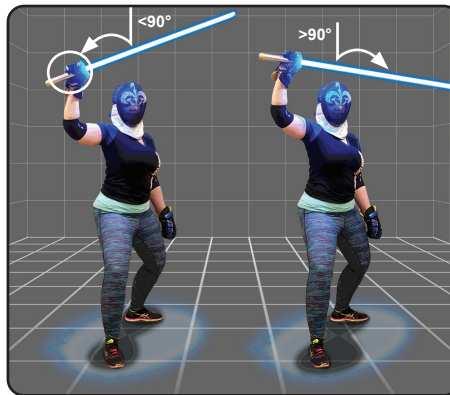
A shield protecting the high inside section from lateral attack. The example on the left shows the elbow and forearm expose. On the right, the target areas are properly placed behind the shield.

RULE 2

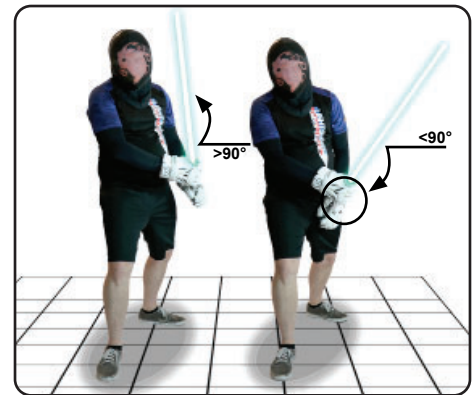
The blade is oriented perpendicular or obtuse to the angle of attack.

It is not enough to get behind a shield. A defender must also protect themselves from collateral hits. A collateral hit occurs when the shield stops the attack but redirects the attack into a collateral target (usually the hand or hilt). This is due to poor angling of the defending blade.

To satisfy Rule 2, the blade must form a 90° angle or greater (obtuse) with the direction of the attack. This allows the shield to direct the attack away from collateral targets.



The shield on the left exceeds the target by height but its angle redirects the attack to a collateral target, the hand. The shield on the right is appropriately angled, directed the attacking blade away from the hand instead.

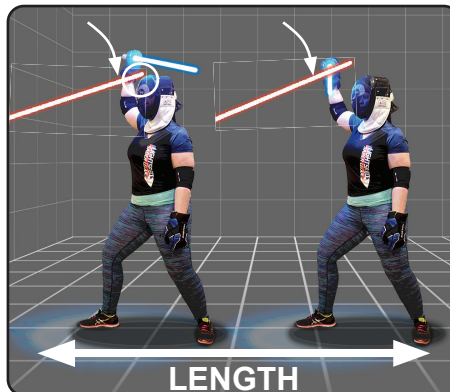


The shield on the left ensures that any attack will bounce or slide away from the hands. On the right, the blade creates an acute angle, causing the attack to bounce or slide into the hands or legs.

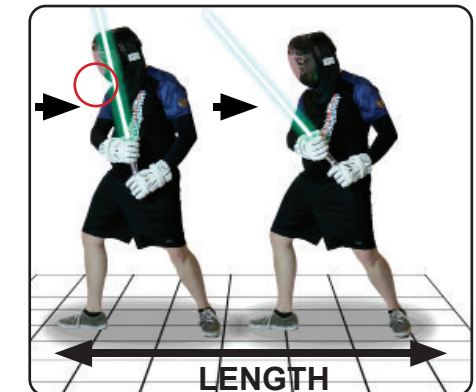
RULE 3

The blade exceeds the indicated target(s) lengthwise.

In addition to exceeding the target heightwise or widthwise, the shield must also be ahead of the target lengthwise. This protects the defender from sweeping attacks, presses, and attacks that may fall short.



The shield on the left is high enough and angled appropriately, but it does not exceed the target lengthwise, allowing the shallow attack through. The shield on the right is in the lead of the target and able to stop the same attack.



The shield on the left will stop the initial contact from a lateral attack. But, if the attack continues by sweeping "over" the shield, the front of the mask will be struck. The shield on the right properly covers the target.

THE SHIELDS

There are ten shields in the Lightspeed Saber passive defense system. Many can be held comfortably one or two-handed, in different stances, and some include elevational variations.

The following is a detailed look at each shield, including the most generally accepted way to perform and use them, plus a few variations and potential mistakes to avoid.

A NOTE ABOUT THE PRIMARY GRIPPING HAND

Included in the details about each shield are that shield's Primary Gripping Hand. The PGH is important in the formation of a two-handed shield because "fully gripping" a tandem shield and maintaining optimal geometry is not always possible. Therefore, one hand must be the PGH for that shield.

The PGH grips the weapon firmly (see Chapter 3 on grip). The other hand should only grip as firm as necessary to maintain proper defensive geometry. It is not unusual in some cases for the secondary hand to barely grip the weapon at all.



SHIELD 1

Protected area:

Middle inside

Protected angles:

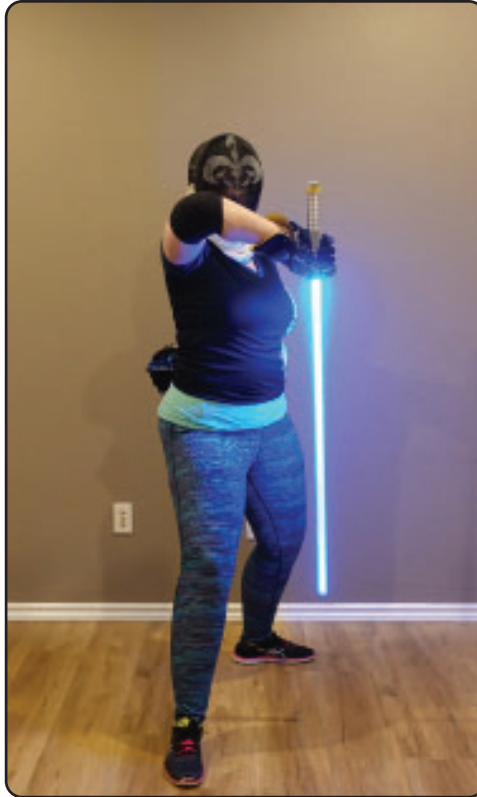
Lateral & diving

Primary grip:

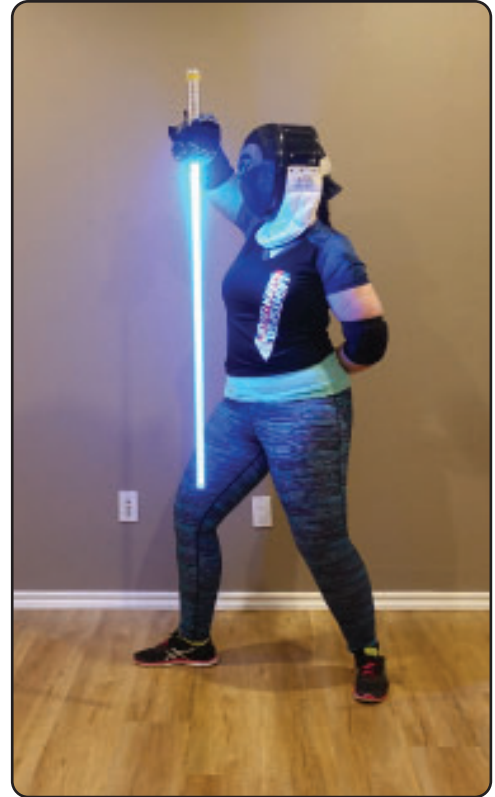
Dominant hand

Shield 1 is extremely versatile, with many variations, and is good at delivering returns (counterattacks). It is a very common shield in competition.

To perform Shield 1, invert the saber and hold it to your inside hemisphere as vertically as possible. Be sure not to cover your eyes with your forearm when doing so. Some amount of obscuration is normal.



Standard Shield 1 from the front. The blade is held as vertically as possible. Note that the forearm is positioned just below the eyes to ensure a view of the opponent.

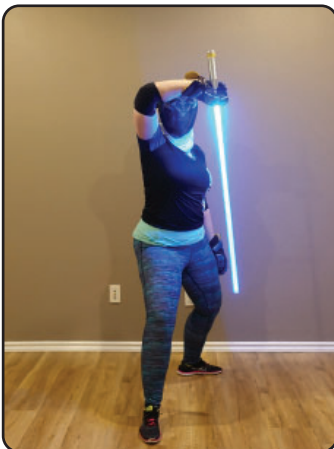


High Shield 1 variant from the side. The forearm is placed above the eyes for better protection of the inside shoulder.

VARIATIONS

Shield 1 has many variations, especially with regard to elevation. It can be placed higher up to better protect the shoulder, or straight on the ground to protect the front foot.

Back Stance can be used to shrink the body's profile, making it easier to move target behind the shield.

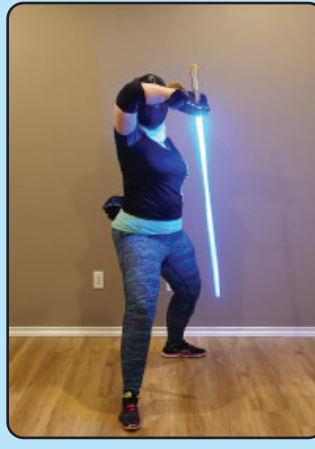


A high Shield 1, emphasizing greater protection of the inside shoulder than the standard version. It is slightly more difficult to hold vertically.

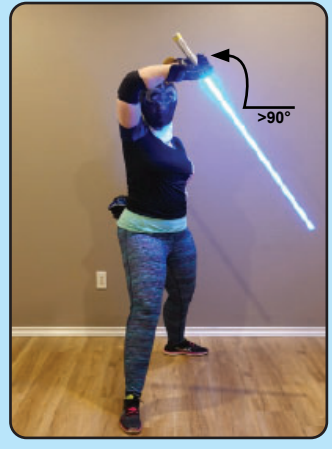


Shield 1 in a Back Stance. The Back Stance shrinks the body's profile, making it easier to move target behind the shield, and hold vertically.

COMMON MISTAKES



Shield 1, but with the forearm covering the eyes. Place the forearm above or below the eyes to ensure you maintain sight of the opponent.



Shield 1 but with an acute angle, redirecting attacks to the hand or head. Hold the blade vertically.

SHIELD 2

Protected area:

Middle outside

Protected angles:

Lateral & diving

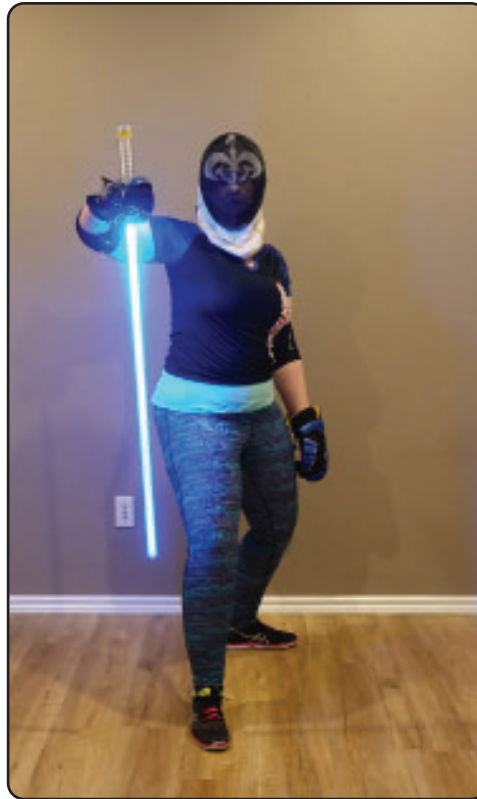
Primary grip:

Dominant hand

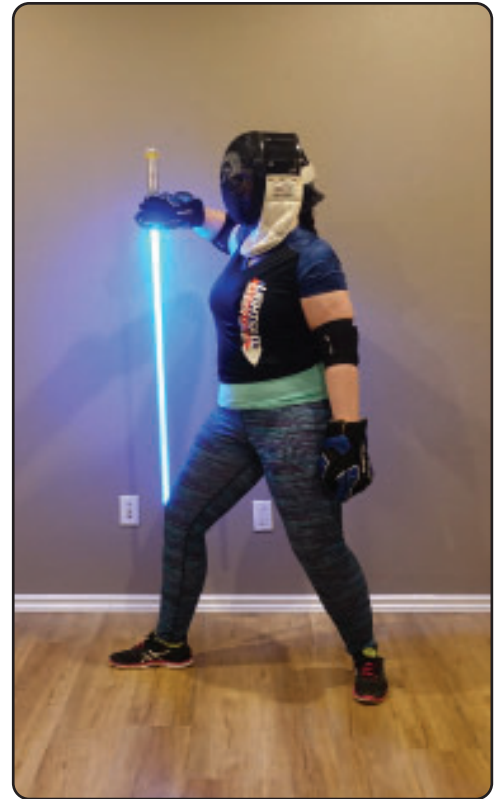
Shield 2 is Shield 1's twin that protects the opposite side of the body. It is generally not used often as it has few natural returns.

Perform Shield 2 by holding the saber to your outside hemisphere as vertically as possible, as close to yourself as possible while obeying Rule #3 (see defensive geometry).

For some fencers, this position is uncomfortable or not possible due to poor shoulder mobility. For those fencers, the long variation is possible. See below.



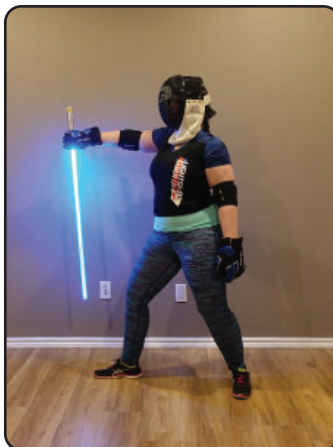
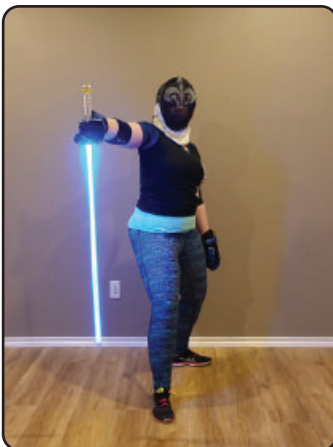
Standard Shield 2 from the front. The blade is held as vertically as possible.



Standard Shield 2 from the side.

LONG VARIATION

If you lack mobility in your shoulder, you can perform this variation instead. The weapon is held forward with a straight arm and slightly to the side. It is important not to place the weapon too far out to the side, however, or the shield will be so far displaced from the body as to be worthless, or make the fencer susceptible to feints.



Long Shield 2 from the front and from the side. It is mechanically weak compared to the standard version, and places the dominant hand in danger. But it is easier to perform for some fencers.

COMMON MISTAKES



This Shield 2 is too wide, making the fencer vulnerable to feinting attacks.

SHIELD 3

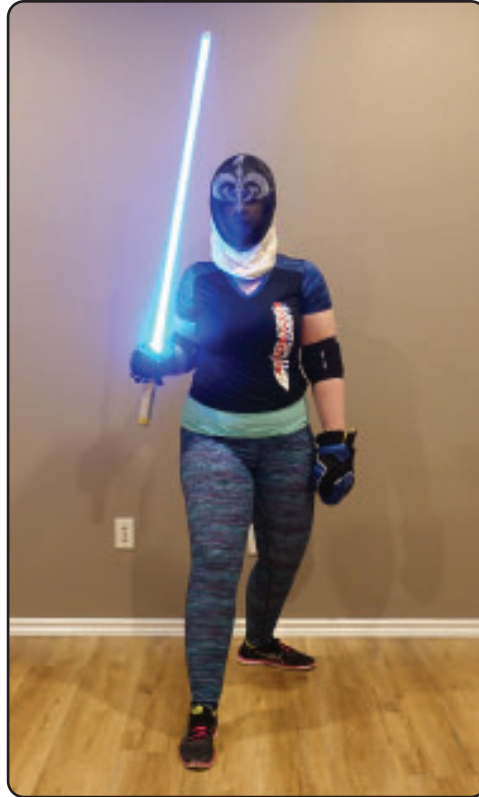
Protected region:
High outside

Protected angles:
Lateral & rising

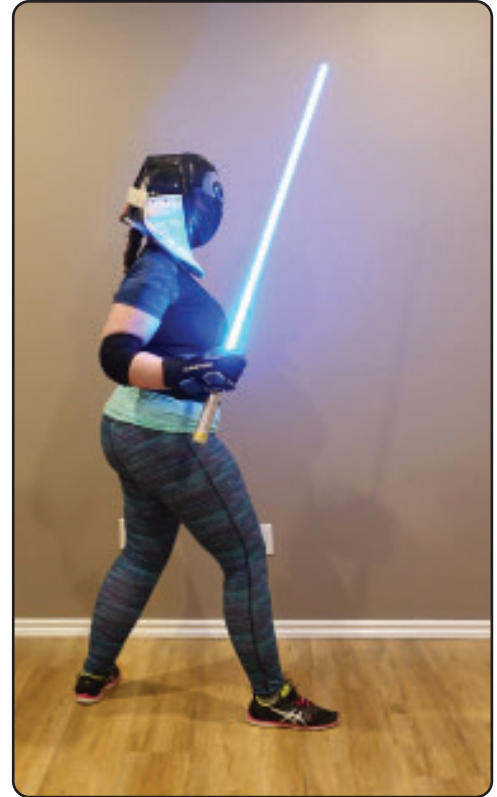
Primary grip:
Dominant hand

Shield 3 is usually used one-handed, and is deployed competitively to stop lateral headshots.

To execute Shield 3, pull the hands in by your side, tuck the elbow in, and tip the blade just slightly toward the opponent.



Standard Shield 3 from the front. The blade should be angled in slightly toward the head, to protect the hand. Note that the elbow is tucked in to the trunk.



Standard Shield 3 from the side. The blade should be held upright with a slight tip toward the opponent. Note that the hand is withdrawn close to the body.

TWO-HANDED VARIATION

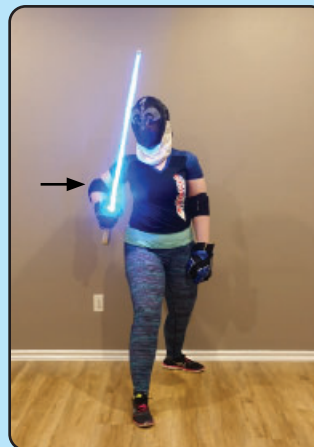
Tandem Shield 3 is highly impractical in competition. However, learning how to perform a tandem Shield 3 is instructive.

To perform this variation, pivot to Square Stance, loosen the pommel hand, and then bring the saber to your outside hemisphere. Tip it in slightly toward yourself. Make sure the hands and elbow are tucked in to your trunk or hip.

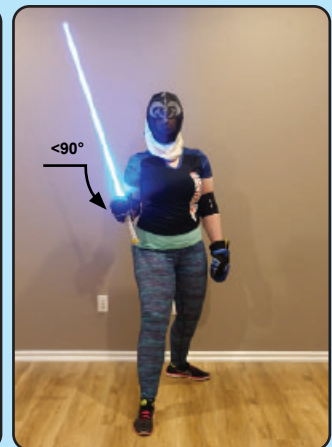


Tandem Shield 3 from the front and side. Note the full turn of the back foot toward the front for maximum hip rotation. This allows for the mobility necessary to fully cover the outside hemisphere. Also note the very slight grip of the pommel hand on the weapon, ensuring proper geometry.

COMMON MISTAKES



Shield 3 but with the elbow exposed. Remember to tuck your elbow in toward your trunk.



Shield 3 held at an acute angle, which will bias incoming attacks toward the hand rather than away.

SHIELD 4

Protected target:

High inside

Protected angles:

Lateral & rising

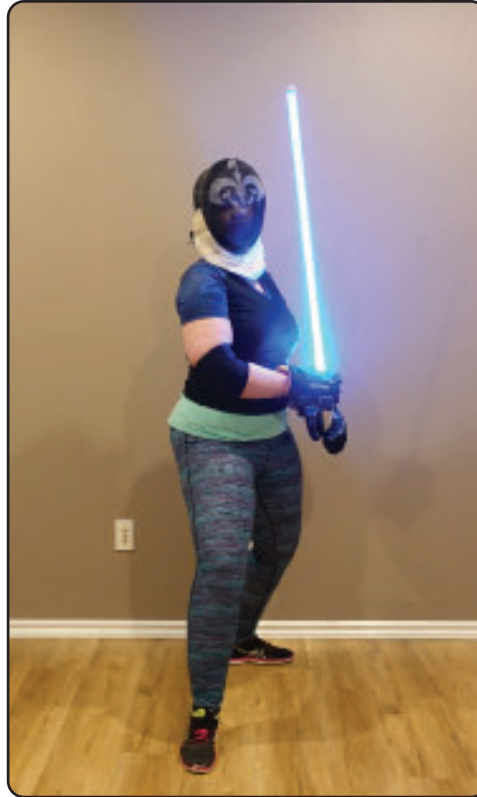
Primary grip:

Either

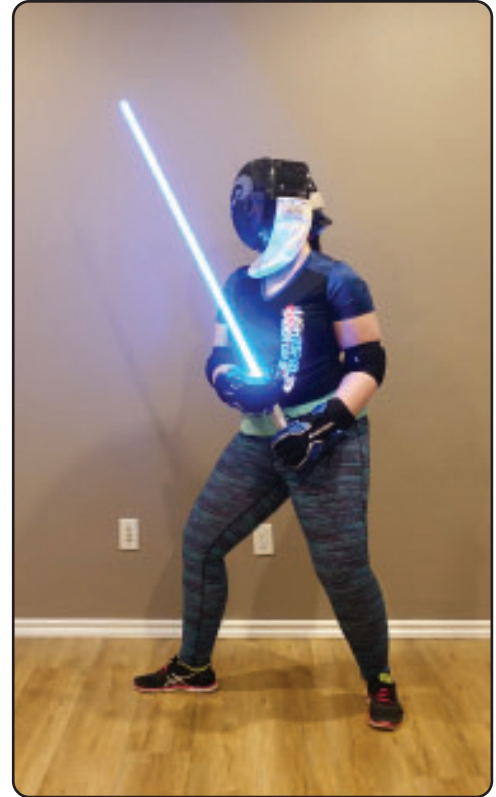
Shield 4 is a twin to Shield 3, protecting the opposite side of the body. Like its brother, Shield 4 is used to defend the head from high lateral attacks.

Shield 4 works fairly well either one or two-handed. The two-handed version is slightly more comfortable and stable.

Like Shield 3, the hands and elbows must be pulled in toward the trunk to protect from collateral contact.



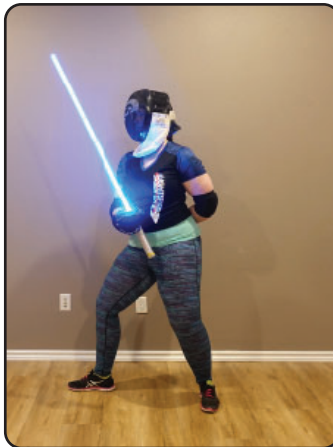
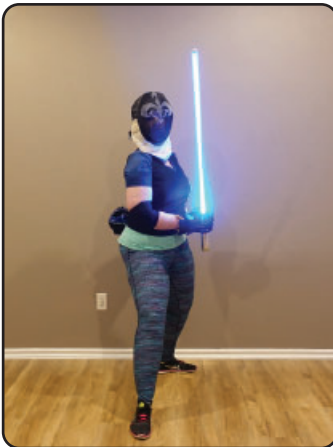
Standard Shield 4 from the front. The weapon is held upright with a slight tilt toward the head.



Standard Shield 4 from the side. The weapon is held upright and with a slight tip toward the opponent.

ONE-HANDED VARIATION

In general, the standard version of Shield 4 is superior. However, for those using smaller sabers that are obligate one-handers, the one-handed Shield 4 is important to know.

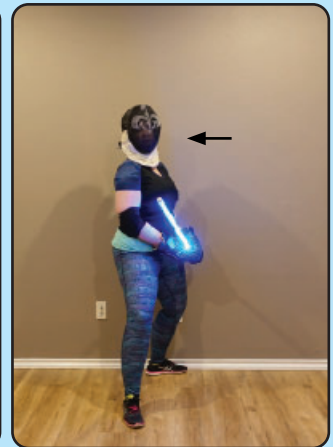


One handed Shield 4 from the front and from the side.

COMMON MISTAKES



Shield 4 but angled too far in, leaving part of the head outside of the shield.



Shield 4 but it is tilted too far forward, exposing the shoulder and head to a high lateral attack.

SHIELD 5

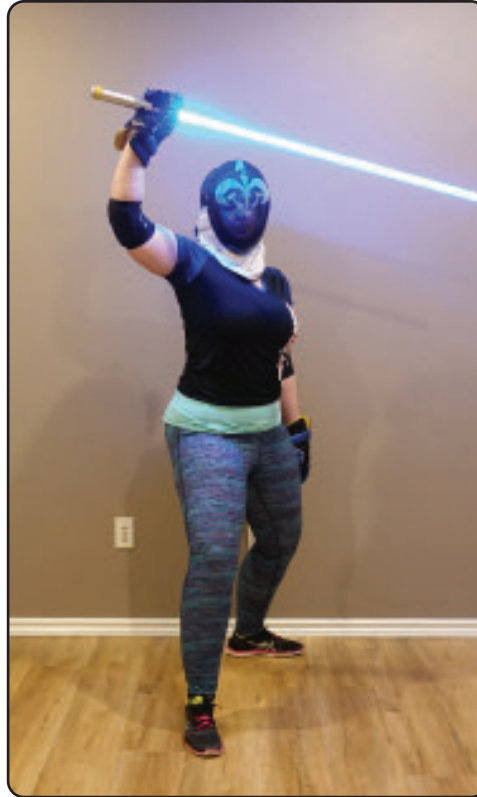
Protected target:
High center

Protected angles:
Diving

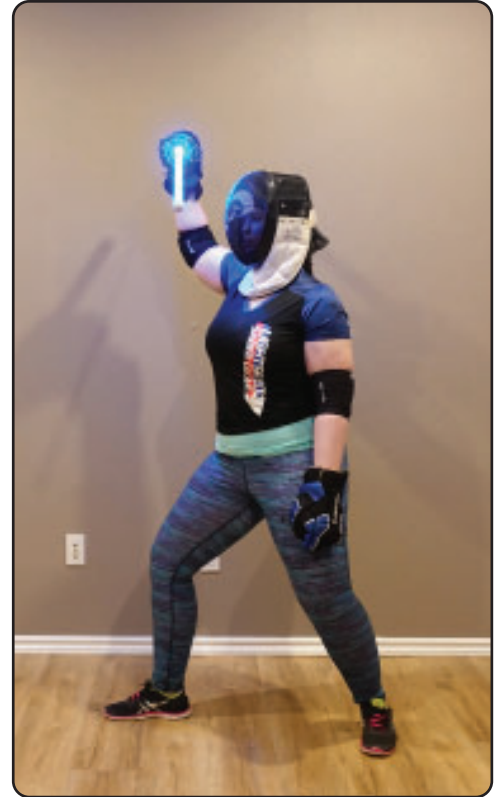
Primary grip:
Dominant hand

Shield 5 is probably one of the most common shields used in competitive Lightspeed Saber.

Hold your saber over your head with the tip slanted downward. Your arm should be slightly bent. Keep your hand away from the center meridian as much as possible.



Standard Shield 4 from the front. The weapon is held upright with a slight tilt toward the head.

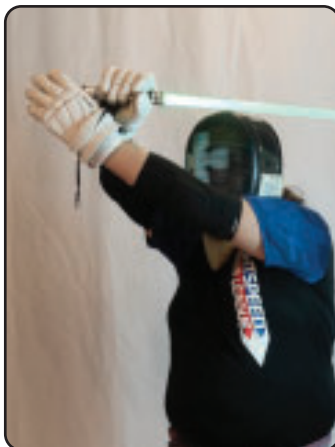


Standard Shield 4 from the side. The weapon is held upright and with a slight tip toward the opponent.

TWO-HANDED VARIATION

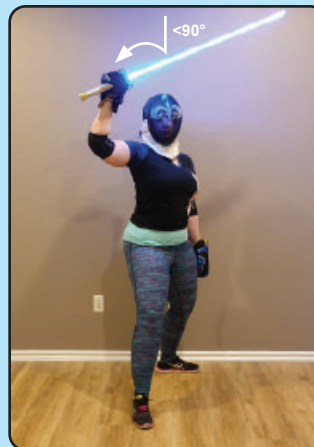
The two-handed variant of Shield 5 is largely inferior to its standard version, and is most often executed by beginners confusing it for Shield 6.

If you find yourself confused, remember that no standard shield in the passive defense system proscribes *crossing your wrists*. If your wrists are crossed, your shield is probably incorrect.

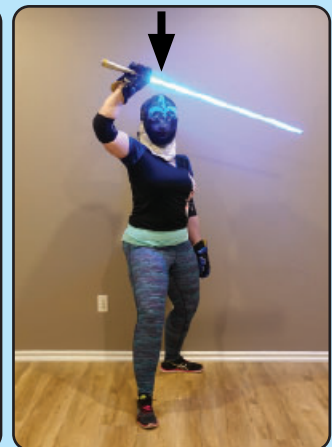


Left: Two-handed Shield 5 is very awkward to hold, though it can be done. Note how far the off-arm must stretch in order to maintain any sort of grip on the weapon. Right: Note the bare grip that is able to be held on the weapon by the off-hand. This shield is practically just as effective and easier to hold one-handed.

COMMON MISTAKES



Shield 5 but angled the wrong way, endangering the hand.



Shield 5 but the weapon is placed too close to the centerline, endangering the hands.

SHIELD 6

Protected target:
High center

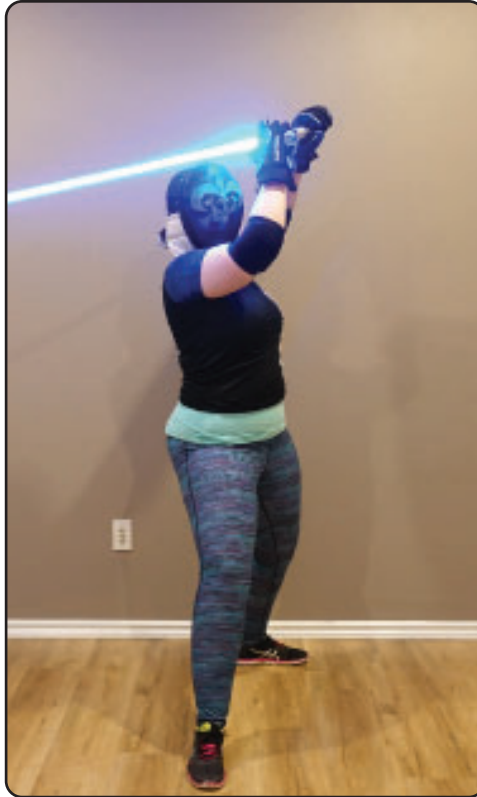
Protected angles:
Diving

Primary grip:
Pommel hand

Shield 6 is Shield 5's twin, although, unlike other shield pairs, they defend the same target and from the same angle. As such, its proscriptions are much the same.

It is common to cover much of the face while executing Shield 6, depending on your mobility. As long as you are not blocking both eyes this does not present a problem.

Shield 6 is usually done two-handed. However, performing it one-handed is possible with enough mobility. Back Stance can enhance mobility enough to properly execute a one-handed Shield 6.



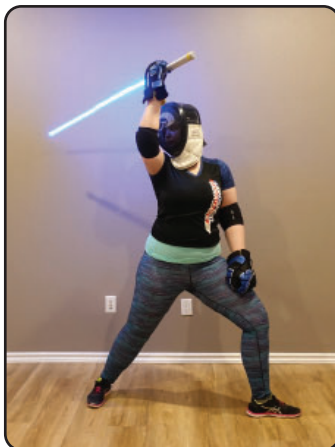
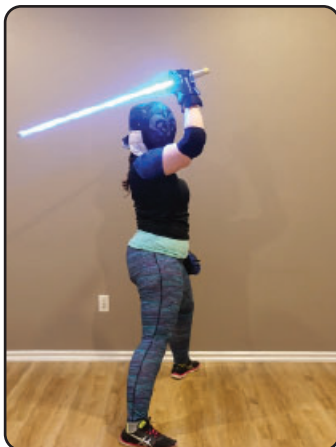
Standard Shield 6 from the front.



Standard Shield 6 from the side. Note that the dominant hand is gripping relatively loosely compared to the pommel hand.

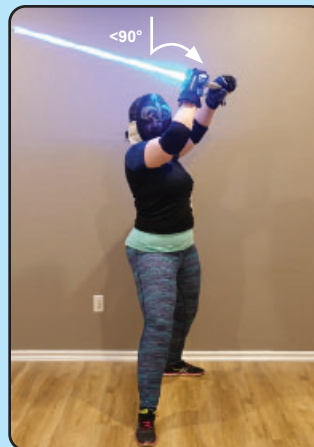
ONE-HANDED VARIATION

While Shield 6 is primarily gripped by the pommel hand, it can be held one-handed from a Back Stance. A Back Stance enables the shoulder mobility necessary to properly grip the weapon and still get all the relevant target areas underneath the shield. Standard Shield 6 (two-handed) also works well from Back Stance.

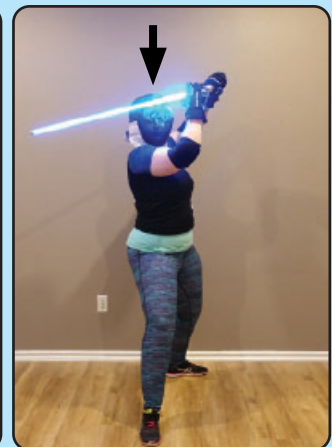


One-handed Shield 6 from the front and from the side. Back Stance is necessary for most practitioners to perform this shield variant correctly.

COMMON MISTAKES



Shield 6 but angled upward, allowing a centerline attack to collect at the hands.



Shield 6 but placed too low. If you raise the weapon high enough such that your bicep covers your mouth, you will usually be at the right height.

SHIELD 7

Protected target:

Low inside

Protected angles:

Lateral & diving

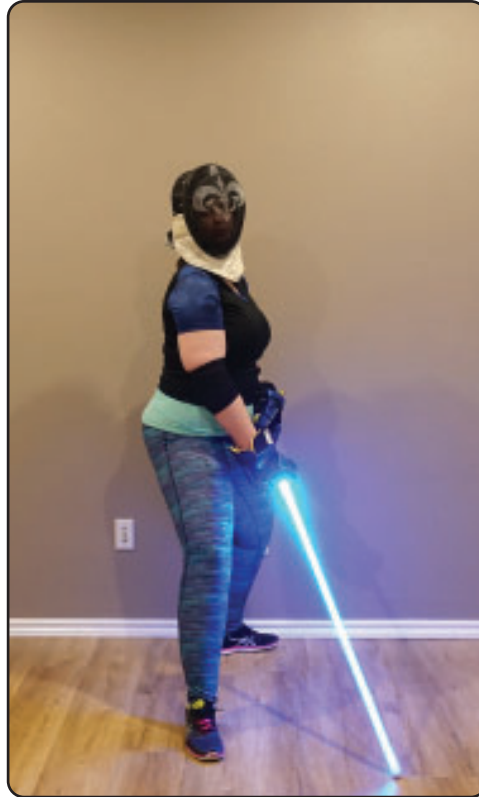
Primary grip:

Either

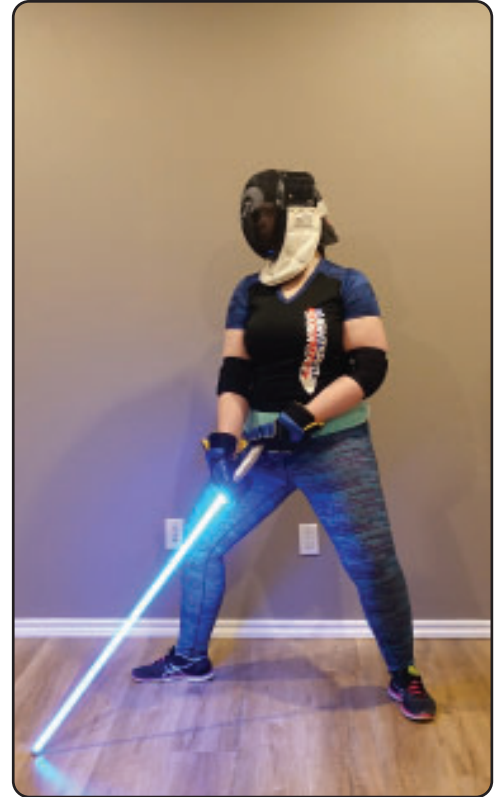
Shield 7 is the low version of Shield 4. Shorter fencers can place the blade directly on the floor if they desire.

Unlike the other shields, Shield 7 should be angled outward. This is to provide the stability necessary to protect the foot using the tip of the blade, which is weaker than the middle or the base of the blade.

Shield 7 can be held comfortably with one or two hands.



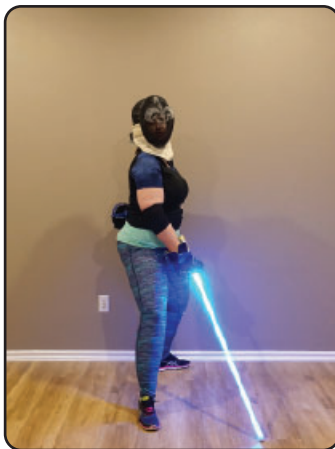
Standard Shield 7 from the front. Note the outward angling of the blade, an exception to Rule #2 of Defensive Geometry. Note also that the tip of the blade exceeds the toes lengthwise.



Standard Shield 7 from the side.

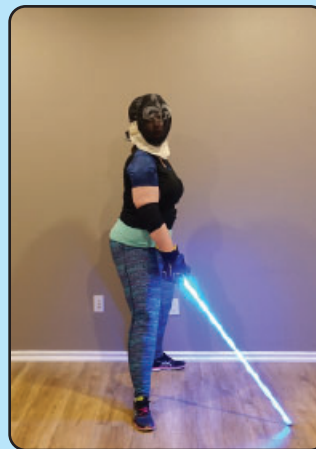
ONE-HANDED VARIATION

Shield 7 works well one-handed, though it is technically not as strong as the two-handed version. However, if the blade is placed on the floor, and as long as the outward angle rule exception is applied, it is more than stable enough to block even the strongest attacks.



One-handed Shield 7 from the front and from the side.

COMMON MISTAKES



Shield 7 placed so far out to the side that a low sweep would still hit the foot.



This Shield 7, even if it blocks the initial incoming, will collapse with enough force. The blade must be angled outward.

SHIELD 8

Protected target:

Low outside

Protected angles:

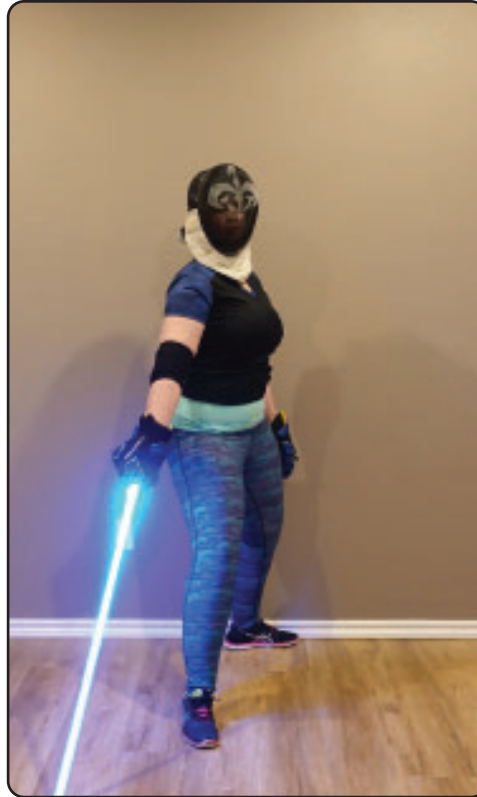
Lateral & diving

Primary grip:

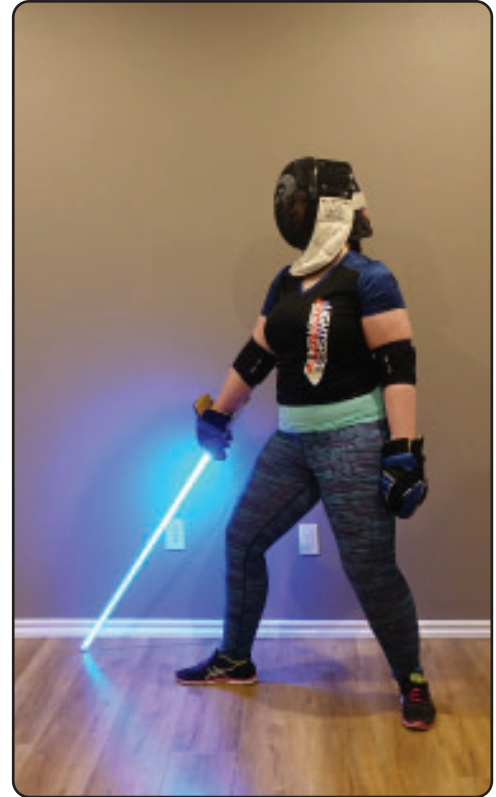
Dominant hand

Shield 8 is the twin to Shield 7. Like Shield 7, it works well one or two-handed, and uses the same outward angle rule exception.

To perform Shield 8 correctly, place the blade close to the floor (on the floor if you can), at an angle, on the outside hemisphere. Straighten the arm and turn the hand down to the floor (pronate).



Standard Shield 8 from the front, executed in the formal fashion with a straight arm and the hand turned over (pronated).

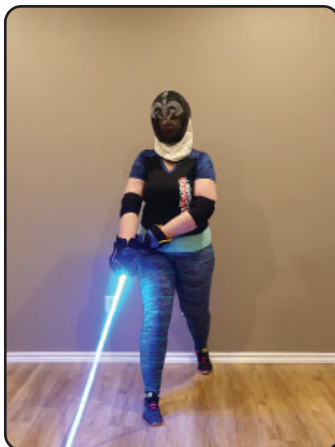
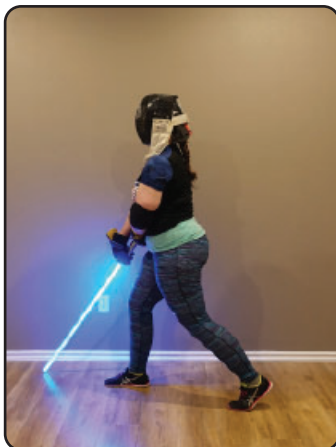


Standard Shield 8 from the side. Note how the blade exceeds the foot lengthwise to ensure it is covered behind the blade.

TANDEM VARIATION

Tandem Shield 8 is slightly stronger than standard. However, as long as the correct geometry rules are applied, there is little difference.

If you have difficulty performing Tandem Shield 8, a Square Stance can help you get the mobility you need to fully protect the low outside hemisphere.



Tandem Shield 8 in Square Stance. Tandem grips often require greater mobility of the user.

COMMON MISTAKES



This Shield 8 leaves a small amount of the upper thigh exposed, which could mean the difference between victory and defeat.



This Shield 8, even if it blocks the initial incoming, will collapse with enough force, even two-handed. The blade must be angled outward.

SHIELD 9

Protected target:

Middle outside

Protected angles:

Lateral and diving

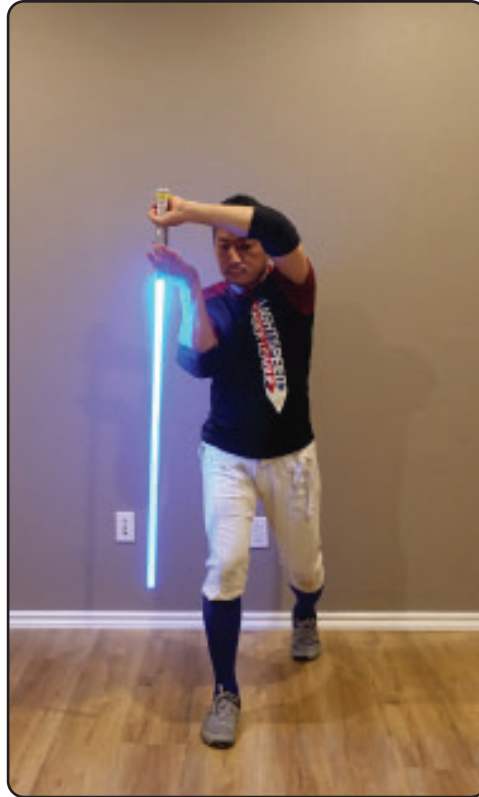
Primary grip:

Pommel hand

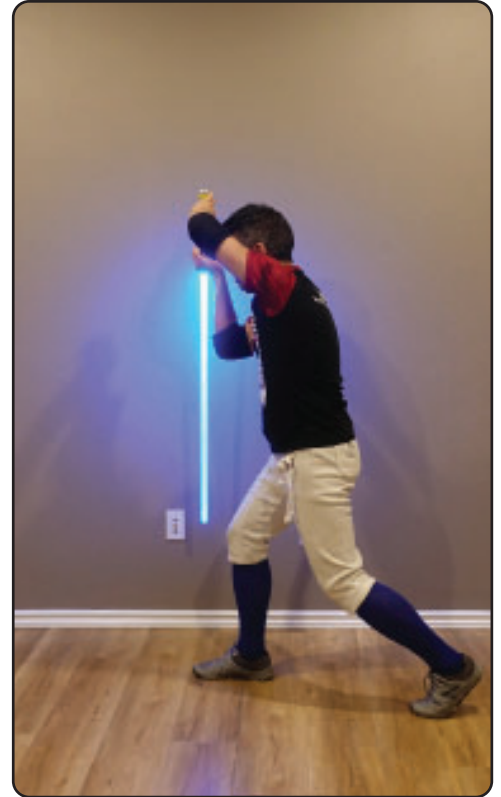
Shield 9 is a cousin to Shield 2, as they both protect the same area but use different methods. Shield 9 is generally considered to be the superior option as it has many more viable elevational variations and opportunities to counterattack.

For a Shield 9, the weapon must be inverted like Shield 2 but in the opposite direction. The pommel hand is pronated and the weapon turned vertically to the outside hemisphere. The wrists should NOT be crossed.

Shield 9 works well when paired with a Square Stance. It is always performed two-handed.



Standard Shield 9 from the front. Note how the arms stay clear from the line of sight, and how loose the grip is of the dominant hand, while the pommel hand is gripping firmly.



Standard Shield 9 from the side. The blade is held as vertically as possible, and is held in the lead of all defensible body parts.

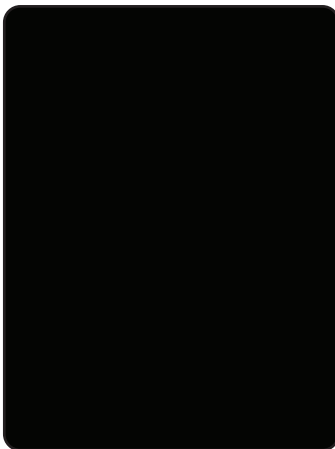
ELEVATIONAL VARIATIONS

Shield 9 can be deployed at multiple heights.

The low variation is best used by placing the blade directly on the floor and angling it outward, similar to Shield 8.

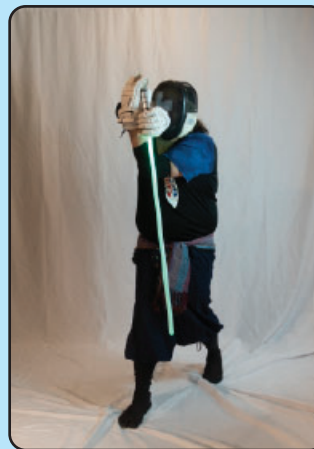


High Shield 9, for protecting the head and shoulder from high lateral attack. Not commonly used, but effective.



Low/ground Shield 9.

COMMON MISTAKES



This fencer has turned their blade the wrong way, ultimately crossing the wrists. This makes the correct geometry almost impossible to hold.



This shield is mis-angled while also obstructing to defender's view.

SHIELD 10

Protected target:

Middle inside

Protected angles:

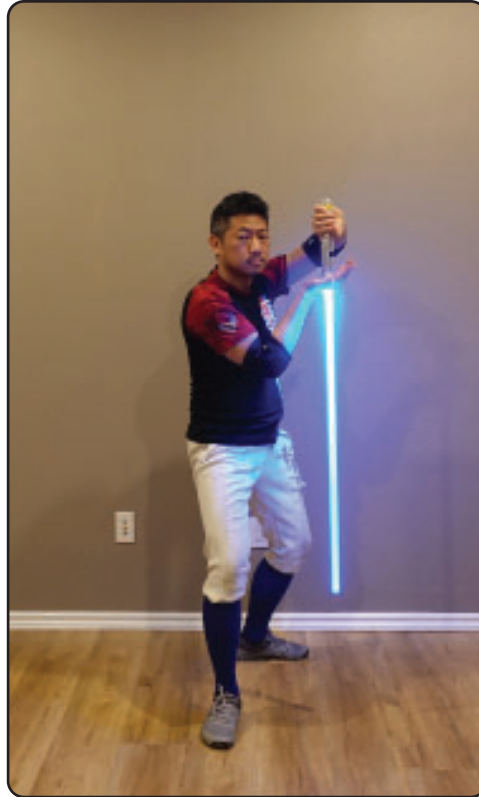
Lateral and diving

Primary grip:

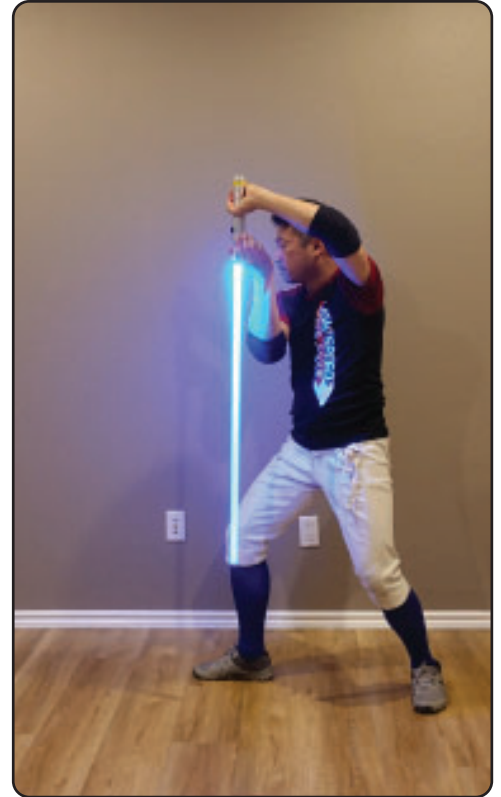
Pommel hand

Shield 10 is the twin to Shield 9 and a cousin to Shield 1, defending the same area. Shield 1 is generally considered to be superior.

As with Shield 9, the wrists should not be crossed.



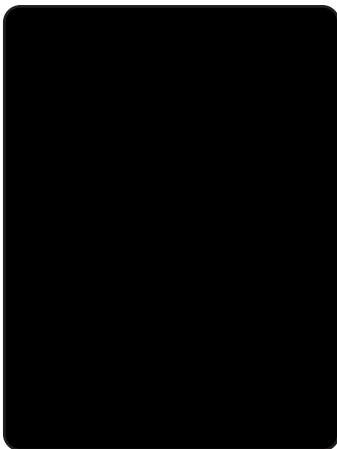
Standard Shield 10 from the front. Not that the dominant hand is barely gripping the weapon.



Standard Shield 10 from the side. The blade is placed in the lead of all defensible targets, and is held as vertically as possible.

VARIATION

One-handed variation, low variation



One-handed Shield 6 from the front and from the side. Back Stance is necessary for most practitioners to perform this shield variant correctly.

COMMON MISTAKES

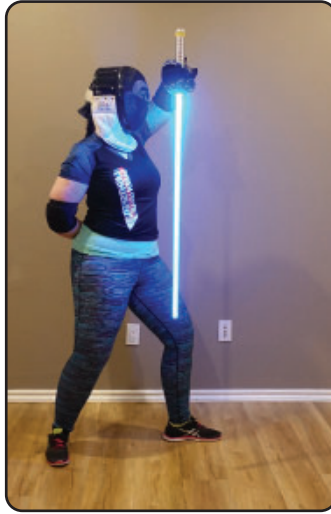


This Shield 10 is rotated in the wrong direction, causing the wrists to cross and make for a very awkward position to hold.

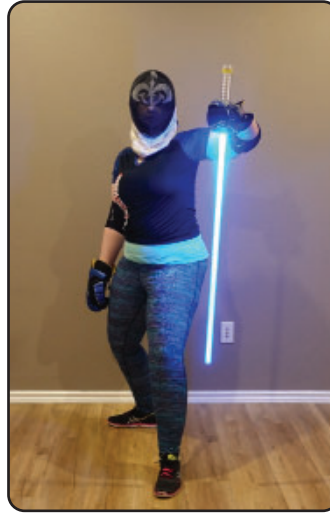
LEFT-HANDER ALTERNATE RESOURCE



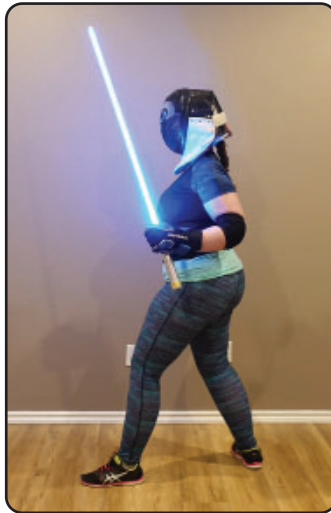
Shield 1



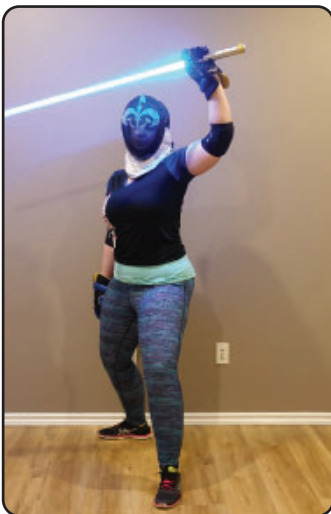
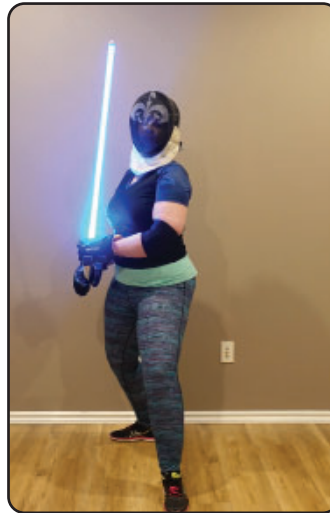
Shield 2



Shield 3



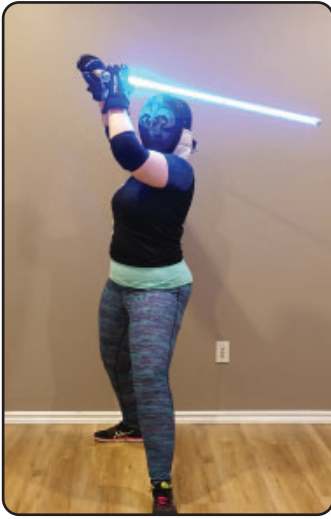
Shield 4



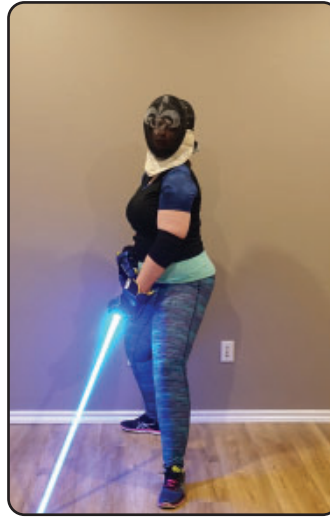
Shield 5



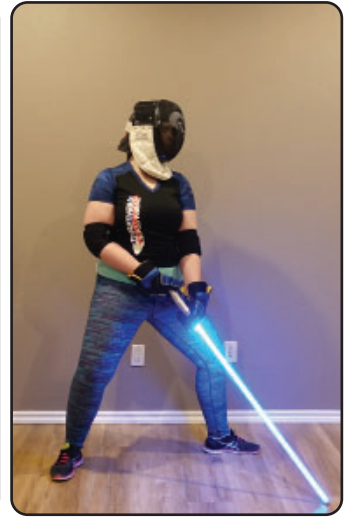
LEFT-HANDER ALTERNATE RESOURCE (continued)



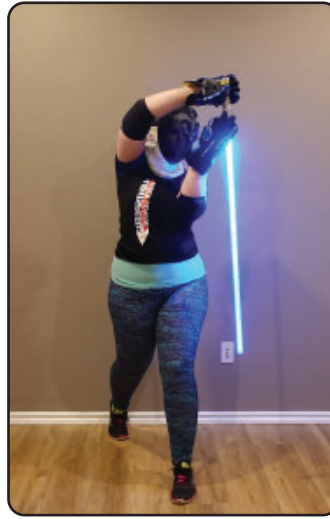
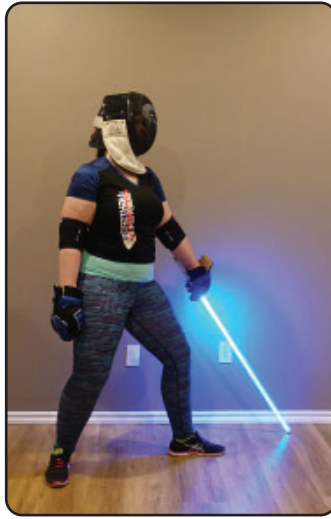
Shield 6



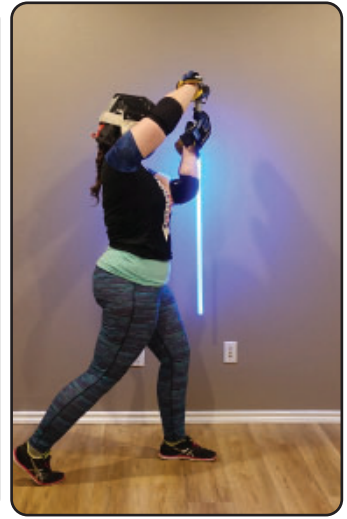
Shield 7



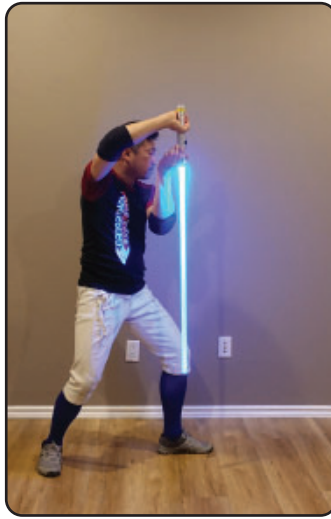
Shield 8



Shield 9



Shield 10



SHIELD EXAMPLES



A beginning student attempts a Shield 5 to protect their head from a diving centerline attack. Their technique could be improved by retracting the arm back closer to the head, rather than reaching out to the opposing blade.



The fencer on the right, expecting a lateral cut to his left flank, executes a Shield 1 while attempting to back away. Note that the arm is raised above the eyes to ensure a clear visual on the opponent.



A beginning student attempts a Shield 2 against a lateral cut to her right flank.



A Reverse Shield 5 originating from the trailing arm, a method modification for dual-wielded weapons. Note that the blade is placed just high enough above the head to protect it.



On the right, Shield 7 is used as a guard. This closes the front leg to attack from the left, allowing the defender to shrink the opponent's options and concentrate their efforts elsewhere.



On the right, the fencer protects himself from the overhead attack with a Shield 6.