

Intermediate Foil I

Lesson 3

<http://www.fencing.calpoly.edu/>

Last revised 12/13/00

Footwork Drills

Distance Drills

Lunge, Adv Lunge, Patinando Duel

80% Extension Drills

Adv Lunge Simple Attack

Patinando Simple Attack

Adv Lunge F-D

Patinando F-D

Jump (Ballestra)

Ballestra Simple attack

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Jump/Ballestra

So far we learned discreet footwork where each foot operates somewhat independently. In the Advance, Retreat and Lunge, one foot always remains in contact with the ground. There are times when the fencer jumps, with both feet in the air. When this jump combines with an immediate lunge, we refer to the entire maneuver as a ballestra.

First let us examine the normal jump forward or backward. When a fencer 'jumps' they attempt to achieve motion forward or backward, NOT upward! We try to reach a retreating opponent, close distance, or quickly move away from an attacking opponent or break distance.

The jump, because both feet move simultaneously takes only one tempo. Look examine the advance and retreat, notice that they take a two tempo action. First the front foot moves, and as the heel comes in contact with the ground, then the back foot executes its advance.

The danger in jumping lies in the fact that the fencer no longer lies in contact with the ground. Should anything arise requiring a change in direction, or stop, the means to enact this change no longer exist! To alleviate this, you must execute the jump with extreme speed, and surprise with the ability to land perfectly in balance ready to change direction instantly.

To prevent the dangerous and useless time going up, the fencers jump must lift their feet the minimum distance off of the strip. Ideally the feet should glide over the piste.

To perform a forward jump, the fencer begins by 'kicking' the front foot forward as in an advance. As the 'kick' pulls the fencer forward, the rear leg provides only enough upward push to allow it to quickly lift itself off the ground (as low as possible!). Now, the front foot begins its downward kick, timing such that returns to its orientation parallel to the ground at the same time it touches the ground. Both the front and rear foot should touch down on the ground simultaneously, and flat footed.

This maneuver, known as the front jump, comprises the first half of a specialized attack motion known as a 'Ballestra.' Some instructors and fencers incorrectly refer to the jump forward as an Ballestra. Historically the Ballestra refers to the jump forward followed by an immediate lunge. We use the ballestra not to gain distance, but rather to gain tempo or surprise.

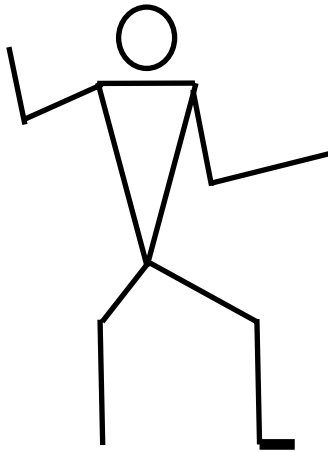
When performing the jump forward of a ballestra, the fencer must concentrate on keeping the forward motion to a minimum. Too much energy driven into the jump forward forces the fencer off balance when they land from the jump, putting them in a precarious state to perform a proper lunge.

The jump forward of a ballestra should never exceed the distance of a single advance (one foot length at most) and in fact should often extend less distance than a standard advance.

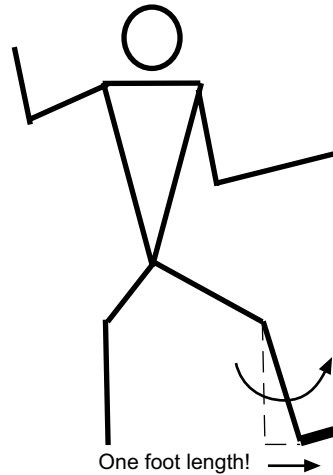
Further, you must minimize the upward distance traveled. The goal of the ballestra lies in stealing time, not distance. You perform an action normally expected to take two tempos (forward motion) in one. As such, the motion needs to complete quickly. If you waste time in the air traveling up then back down, you lose time you steal from your opponent during the surprise stage.

The key to a successful ballestra develops from this mantra "Small, Quick, and in Perfect Balance".

The Jump Forward of a Ballestra



Starting from on guard, with weight equally placed on both feet.

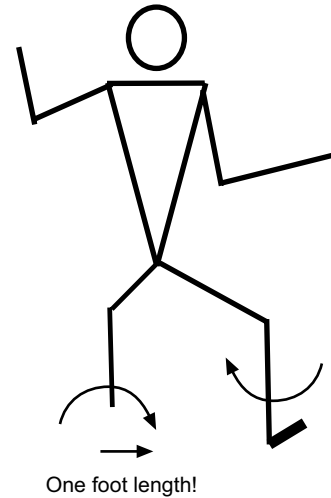


Swing the lower leg out from the knee while keeping the toes pointed up.

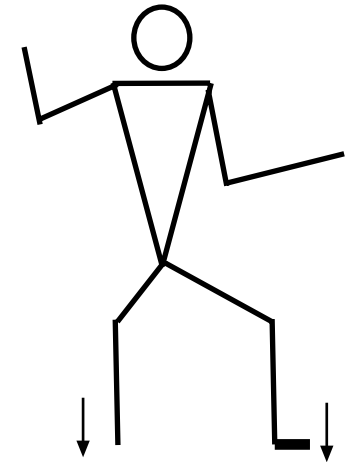
Keep the knee at the same height, do NOT lift from the thigh.

Give a slight push from your rear leg to begin gaining the energy to lift the rear leg.

Get most of your forward motion from the front foot swing, not from the rear leg drive.



As the front foot swings back down, the rear leg lifts, allowing the body in free flight to move forward slightly (NO MORE THAN an advance!)



Finally the both feet lands flat, simultaneously. The fencer then executes an immediate lunge to complete the ballestra.