

Footwork – a requirement for any good fencer (if you're not there the opponent cannot hit you). The positive effects of footwork practice are felt quickly on the piste and can be practiced independently.

Step Forward Technique

- Lift the front foot and place down, heel-to-toe, about six inches forward.
- As soon as front foot lands, lift the rear foot and place in down, ball of foot-first, also about six inches forward so stance is regained.
- Rear foot should move as fast as possible to complete the step.
- Feet should stay as close to ground as possible during the step.
- Shoulders level throughout (no up-and-down bobbing of head).
- No movement of trunk and upper body is relaxed.
- Executed smoothly (not mechanically)

Step Backward Technique

- Everything now in reverse from step forward.
- Balls of feet land before heels of both feet.
- Same relaxed upper body.

❖ Practice: Vary in speed – slow (only front foot slow), medium, fast. So slow, slow, fast, etc. Vary in distance – small, medium, large. Small steps good, large bad. Slow forward, fast back.

The Lunge Technique

- Extend sword arm at shoulder height and when about half extended...
- Lift front foot (ball first, heel last) and push into lunge position by straightening the rear leg.
- Front foot land heel first.
- Throw back the non-sword arm at the final stage to increase speed.
- Check on lunge position:
 - Front knee over instep of front foot.
 - Back leg straight with rear foot flat on floor.
 - Rear arm parallel with back leg with palm upwards.
 - Body upright with shoulders parallel to floor.

The Recovery - Backwards

- Lift the front toe and push back through the rear heel while bending the rear leg.
- Time the lifting of the front foot with the generated momentum.
- Place foot down, heel first.
- It should have the character of a single movement to be back to on-guard stance.

The Recovery - Forwards

- Lift the back foot, and position it in correct stance, ball first then heel.

- Raising of rear arm helps get forward momentum.
- Shoulders level through movement.
- It should have the character of a single movement to be back to on-guard stance.

The Flèche Technique

- Extend the sword-arm.
- Straighten rear leg to drive the body forward.
- Keep front knee bend until body's centre of gravity passes over it.
- Drive by extending the front leg, with drive directed forwards (not upwards).
- Shoulders remain parallel to floor throughout (no bobbing up or down).
- Hit lands just before rear foot lands.

Pattinando – a step-lunge with the lunge executed as soon as back foot of the step lands. Best practiced with slow step so sudden change of rhythm surprises and overtakes opponent's slow step back. Execute also with 'gaining on the lunge'.

The Crossover Backward – front foot is moved backwards and placed down ball first behind the rear foot, which is then sharply moved backwards to assume the normal stance. Covers more ground but at the risk of getting caught 'wrong-footed'.

The Crossover Forward – rear foot is brought forward and placed ball first ahead of front foot and then front foot is sharply moved forward landing heel first to assume the normal stance.

Vezzali steps - fencer stands still while feet constantly moving independently in the following order: front foot forward, back foot backwards, front foot backwards, back foot forward. Mix up slow and fast phases.

Avola steps - step forward is executed with back leg moving first, then front foot.

Flunge or *hop-lunge* – starts like a step forward (but rear leg stays where it is), hopping forward when front foot lands into a lunge position.

The *Balestra* – a short jump forward with both feet landing simultaneously.
Balestra-lunge, etc.

The *Appel* – striking the ground with the ball of the foot.

Other footwork: bouncing, drums, feint moving backwards but step forward, and vice versa, steps in low stance, bouncing to steps back to bouncing, flèche from lunge position, etc.