

Parry – an action where the opponent’s attack is deflected from the target by the defender’s épée.

The parry is intimately linked with *the principle of defence* – the opposition of the forte of the defending blade to the foible of the attacking blade.

Counter Parry

Counter (or circular) parry – starting from a guard position, the point describes a circle to find the opponent’s attacking blade with the forte and returns to original guard position.

Technique

- With the defender in sixte, the attacker attacks the open high line.
- The defender, using fingers and wrist, describes a circle (or ellipse) with the point to find the attacking blade and return to sixte.
- Hand maintains the forward position throughout.
- The opponent’s blade is collected between the rim and forte when action ended in neat sixte.
- Riposte with opposition to open line.

Variants – from different guards, especially quarte and octave.

Semi-circular Parry

Semi-circular Parry – starting from a guard position, the defender’s point describes a semi-circle to find the opponent’s attacking blade with the forte and carries it to the low-line if started in high-line (or vice versa).

Technique

- With the defender in sixte, the attacker attacks the low line.
- The defender, using fingers and wrist, describes a semi-circle (or half-ellipse) to find the attacking blade, collect it, and end in octave.
- Hand maintains the forward position throughout.
- The opponent’s blade collected between the rim and forte when ended in neat octave.
- Riposte with opposition to open line.

Variants – from different guards, especially quarte (to septime) and octave (to sixte).

Parries are less important in épée than in foil or sabre as these weapons have the convention of right-of-way and parrying an attack confers right-of-way. In épée, one can counter-attack into an attack and this ‘offensive defence’ can sometimes be the better option tactically but it should execute it while *closing the line* – ensuring that the attacking line is being *covered* during the counter-attack. Example of a stop-hit while closing the line:

- With the defender in sixte, the attacker attacks the high inside line.

- The defender thrusts to arm of attacker, with the guard following to the quarte position so closing the line.
- Hand starts going forward first before guard moves laterally.
- The hit is made first or simultaneously with deflecting opponent's blade off target.

Note that this action is similar to circular and semi-circular parries in that the point moves before any movement of the guard.

Parries are also linked with the 8 standard on-guard positions, as moving from one guard to another can be executing a parry, if action is properly timed. Simple and diagonal parries are example of parries executed in this manner. Such parries deflect the attacking blade closer to the defender's body than circular or semi-circular parries (due to the guard movement).

Simple Parry

Simple (or lateral or instinctive parry) – starting from a guard position, the blade moves in parallel to original position across the body, finds the opponent's attacking blade with the forte, and ends in guard on the other side.

Technique

- With the defender in sixte, the attacker attacks the open high line.
- The defender moves both point and guard in parallel across to quarte, timed to collect the attacking blade with the forte.
- The opponent's blade collected between the rim and forte when ended in quarte.
- Stop in a neat quarte and riposte.

Variants – from quarte to sixte; from octave to septime (or vice versa) if attack is in low line.

Diagonal Parry

Diagonal Parry – a parry that travels diagonally across the target.

Starting in quarte, the diagonal parry ends in octave (and vice versa). Starting in sixte, the diagonal parry ends in septime (and vice versa).

Technique

- With the defender in octave, the attacker attacks the open high line.
- The attacking blade is parried off-target as the defender moves to quarte.
- The opponent's blade collected between the rim and forte when ended in quarte.
- Stop in a neat quarte and riposte.

Variants – from sixte to septime.

Now try each practice with movement, reducing time window for student to exercise the stoke by being at correct distance/blade presented only briefly. Applying increased pressure until fight mode. Correct faults as they occur.