

RETURN TO FENCING - GUIDELINES FOR CLUBS AND MEMBERS - INDOOR FENCING IN ENGLAND FROM 2ND DECEMBER 2020

Last Updated: 2nd December 2020

1. INTRODUCTION

This document lays out the measures that should be taken by fencers, clubs, officials, volunteers, coaches, and spectators before, during and after all recreational fencing activity as well as specific advice relating to clubs, coaches, lessons and sparring.

It applies to indoor fencing activity from 2nd December in England delivered by affiliated clubs and registered coaches to members of British Fencing.

Any resumption of and ongoing participation in fencing activity in England is at all times governed by

1. Government Legislation & Guidelines (this includes Public Health England)
2. Local Tier Lockdown Restrictions
3. Venue Specific Rules (includes use of changing rooms, movement/volume of people, hygiene protocols)
4. British Fencing Guidelines including Fencing Specific Adaptations to meet measures such as social distancing.

This document refers to current UK Government guidance for England available as of 2nd December. It is subject to change in response to the current COVID-19 Alert Level, community prevalence of COVID-19 and/or to reflect additional or updated UK Government guidance.

2. TIER RESTRICTIONS

This document describes the measures that should be put in place where fencing is permitted. Whether or not an activity is permitted, how many households can participate and whether people can travel to these activities is dictated by government guidance. BF have published a guide for the tiers in England [here](#) and the latest status for other Home Nations can be found [here](#). Before engaging in or providing any activity you must check to see which restrictions apply to your area.

3. SUMMARY - INDOOR FENCING

Where government guidance and tier restrictions permit indoor sport:

- All indoor fencing is subject to a full risk assessment being in place.
- Fencing activity can take place in groups of up to six people from different households, as long as you remain 2 metres apart as far as possible.
- Activity is restricted to groups of a maximum of six people where one or more people in the group are age 18 and over (on 31 August 2020).
- For groups of children (those people under the age of 18, including who were under 18 on 31 August 2020) supervised fencing activity can take place in groups of up to 15 in venues that comply with the relevant COVID-19 government guidance (e.g. [community](#), [leisure facilities](#)).
- For fencing activities delivered to students in higher education institutions covered by the [education](#) government exemption (see below) these can take place in groups of up to 15.
- You can have more than one group of six (or group of 15 U18s) in a hall, providing you are able to maintain social distancing within the space available and the total number of people (including non-fencers) within the hall does not exceed government and venue guidelines on use of indoor space.
- Fencers can rotate within the group, but social distancing must be maintained within this group where at all possible. You cannot move groups within a session.
- Fencing activities (including 1:1 lessons, pairs work and sparring) where it may not be possible at all times to stay 2m apart are subject to adaptations and additional measures to reduce risk. This document lays out these adaptations (see below).
- There will be strict equipment rules in place for use of fencing equipment (see below and [here](#)).
- Venue specific restrictions will be in place and you will be responsible for ensuring you adhere to these.

4. PRIOR TO ALL FENCING ACTIVITY

All participants (fencers, coaches, officials, volunteers and spectators) should

- Check for symptoms of COVID-19 before travelling to training. In line with current UK Government Guidance, if an individual is symptomatic and/or living in a household with a possible COVID-19 infection, you should remain at home and follow UK Government guidance. In addition, any participants who have been asked to isolate by NHS Test and Trace because they are a contact of a known COVID-19 case, must not exercise outside their home or garden and must not exercise with others.
- Follow UK Government guidance on shielding and protecting people who are clinically extremely vulnerable from COVID-19 (found [here](#)) if it applies to them.
- Comply with all public health restrictions and avoid high risk behaviour outside the sports setting to reduce the risk to their fellow participants when you do attend a fencing club or venue.
- Carry out personal hygiene measures before and after fencing activity.
- Bring your own hand sanitiser where possible and maintain strict and frequent hand hygiene measures at all times.
- Follow UK Government guidance on best practice for travel, including minimising use of public transport and limiting car sharing (found [here](#)).

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- Follow BF's guidance in relation to equipment cleaning (found [here](#)).
- Ensure that you are familiar with the instructions issued by the club specifically in relation to hygiene and social distancing.
- Ensure that your use of the any changing rooms and toilets adheres to the latest UK Government guidance and facility guidance. **Whilst using these facilities people should avoid mixing between groups or households (depending on the local tier) and maintain social distancing wherever possible.**
- If possible, arrive at club sessions changed and ready to undertake the activity you are participating in.
- Ensure that your contact details are up to date on the BF membership system and the club records. Membership of BF is a requirement – a free 90-day Introduction membership for new members is now available.
- On arrival ensure that your attendance is recorded (this can be through an online mechanism provided by the club).

All Clubs

- Must have a named Club COVID-19 Officer, which must be registered with BF.
- Must have a nominated Session COVID-19 Officer in place for each session. The responsibilities of a COVID-19 Officer can be found [here](#).
- Must have a Club Risk Assessment including COVID-19 mitigation plans in place to ensure their operations are compliant and in line with legislation and guidance from UK Government/PHE/BF relating to COVID-19. Risk mitigation measures must be put in place and regularly monitored.
- Must ensure those in charge of the session take part in specific Club COVID-19 training, as necessary to deliver the Club COVID-19 mitigation plans identified in your Club Risk Assessment.
- Must ask participants to consider if their underlying health may caution against participation. (Checklists and surveys can be found [here](#))
- Should make all participants aware of expected social distancing and hygiene measures during fencing and whilst on site.
- Should ensure that BF's guidance on equipment usage is followed and protocols are in place to reduce participant's contact with shared equipment – e.g. spools.
- Should establish specific cleaning and disinfecting protocols for fencing equipment and ensure that all participants are aware of their responsibilities. Clubs are responsible for ensuring that officials have the appropriate equipment and training to follow protocols. (See [here](#).)
- Should make all participants aware of the increase in transmission risk associated with participating in indoor group activity (even when social distancing is observed at all times) and should ensure that all participants are clear that they are opting to participate in fencing activity.
- Should strictly limit the time spent congregating at a venue before activity begins. Meet-up times should reflect this.
- For clubs that hire venues, they must ask for a copy of the venue risk assessment and confirmation from the venue that they are compliant with current UK Government legislation including legislation and guidance related to COVID-19.
- For clubs that operate their own venue, they must ensure that the facility is compliant with current UK Government legislation including legislation and guidance related to COVID-19. A

risk assessment should have been completed and risk mitigation measures put in place and monitored.

- All clubs running activities for children should also consult the [DfE guidance on Protective measures for out-of-school settings](#), which sets out the further practical steps providers of community activities, holiday clubs, after-school clubs, tuition and other out-of-school provision for children should follow to minimise the risk of transmission for children attending their settings.

5. DURING ALL FENCING ACTIVITY

5.1 GENERAL ADVICE

- All activity must take place in line with the UK Government guidance and venue specific guidelines, specifically those around social distancing and group sizes.
- Fencing activity may take place indoors with the specific adaptations (see below).
- Participants should enter the salle and prepare their personal equipment whilst maintaining social distancing.
- Where at all possible fencers should limit sharing of equipment. If they do, they must practise strict hand hygiene before and after use and the equipment must be cleaned before use by another person.
 - Personal equipment should not be shared during sessions – this includes all items of fencing clothing, fencing masks and gloves.
 - Body-wires and weapons may be used by more than one participant provided they have been disinfected in line with the BF guidelines.
 - Spools/Boxes – In cases where it is unavoidable that certain non-personal equipment must be touched by more than 1 individual, each person must fully sanitise their hands prior to and after touching that equipment. The equipment must be disinfected (or quarantined) between sessions by a club official in line with BF protocols.
 - The BF specific protocols around equipment cleaning and sharing are available [here](#).
- All participants should sanitise their hands prior to the start of the activity and before and after touching any shared equipment (e.g. spools).

5.2 MANAGING YOUR SESSIONS

- Your sessions must be managed by the designated session Covid-19 Officer. This person may be able to take part in activity (e.g. a coach giving a lesson) depending on numbers but must be able to manage the session. The ability to maintain social distancing and the space available will determine the total number of people in your sessions.
- A maximum of six fencers must be grouped together; the number will be determined by the space you have in order to maintain social distancing.
- You can have more than one group in a hall. This depends on the space available and your ability to maintain social distancing.

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- The indoor space must allow for 100sqft/9.29m per person and be suitably ventilated. The government has published requirements covering space and ventilation on the [working safely during coronavirus section of the government's website](#).
- Fencers cannot change groups within a session. They must stay within their allocated group but are able to change groups at the next session.
- Coaches can only give 1:1 adapted lessons within groups and these should be a maximum of 30min. If coaches are giving 1:1 adapted lessons they count towards the group size. Coaches are only permitted to give adapted lessons within one group per session. **Clubs must ensure that groups are appropriately supervised if coaches are giving 1:1 lessons.**
- You must implement a pre-booking system which will enable you to keep attendance records for a minimum of 21 days. This will enable you to manage the number of fencers attending each session and their allocation into groups, allowing for you to maintain social distancing measures. You cannot allow members to fence without them having pre-booked their attendance. You must be able to record who has fenced in each group within your session and collect all information required by NHS Test and Trace. For the latest information in relation to NHS Test and Trace and what your club needs to do in relation to this, please click [here](#).
- BF has an online booking system (Playwaze) available to affiliated clubs (at no cost) which enables you to manage your session and groups in line with social distancing requirements and information that may be required by NHS Test and Trace.
- You must also keep records of all the club volunteers/coaches/welfare officers/parents that attend a session. They count towards the total number of people attending a session and this must not exceed the total number of people permitted in the space, based on Government and Venue guidelines. Procedures must be in place to ensure 2m social distancing is observed where possible at all times.
- If collecting monies from fencers, you should use online or contactless payment wherever possible.
- For coaches delivering back to back sessions, there should be a suitable period of time between the end of the first session and the start of the next session to provide enough time for safe, socially distanced change overs of fencers and any equipment cleaning. Fencers should not participate in more than one session per day.
- More advice and tools to help you run and organise sessions can be found [here](#).

Participating in, and coaching fencing in itself carries some degree of risk and whilst being mindful of the guidelines regarding COVID-19, coaches and clubs should not lose sight of the normal safety rules or safeguarding standards relating to fencing and coaching which continue to apply and must be complied with (DBS, safeguarding, First Aid etc.).

5.2.1 ACTIVITY PROVISION FOR CHILDREN - GROUP SIZES

For groups of children (**including who were under 18 on 31 August 2020**) supervised fencing activity can take place in groups of up to 15 in [COVID-19-secure venues](#).

Should one participant be aged 18 or over (**on 31 August 2020**) the 'rule of six' must be followed.

It may not be sensible or practical to deliver sessions to groups as large as 15. Decisions on group sizes for your setting should be based on:

- the current government guidance on social distancing

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- the ability of the children in attendance to maintain social distancing and practice hand hygiene
- the age of the children in attendance
- your session plan (expected movement, use of space)
- the size or layout of your premises

To reduce the risk of transmission within a setting, providers should aim to minimise the number of different people each child comes into contact with. Our recommendation is that groups of 15 are sub-divided for fencing activity, as it is not typically necessary that one child will need to fence 14 other children in one session.

More information and advice can be found [here](#). Please note that Coaches and Welfare Officers are not included in the 15.

If U18s participate in fencing activity alongside adults (age 18 and over) the 'rule of six' applies.

5.2.2 ACTIVITY PROVISION FOR HIGHER EDUCATION - GROUP SIZES

Exemption from 'Rule of Six' – 'Rule of 15' in fencing now applies:

- Curriculum-related sport for students (over the age of 18) in further and higher education (e.g. a student studying a sport course being able to practice), are exempt from legal gathering limits.
- Extra-curricular clubs for over-18s (including college and university teams) can only play in line with the wider sport guidance.
- The exemption does not currently cover recreational use, i.e. hall bookings for groups of friends to fence. Nor does it cover community clubs using higher education facilities.
- This exemption does include anything related to the curriculum/sport-related degree programmes.
- The exemption does not apply to all activity that happens to take place on the university site. i.e. another club that happens to use the university facilities or is loosely associated would not fall under the exemption. **It may still be able to go ahead based on standard tier restrictions.**
- Over-18s and under-18s (who are students at the university) can play together without restrictions only where this falls under the education exemption (as set out above). If not, the under-18s are exempt, but if an over-18 joins, **the normal tier restrictions apply (e.g. in Tier 1 rule of six applies to everyone).**
- Other than when actually fencing the 2m social distancing rules should be strictly adhered to.
- All other BF guidelines and fencing adaptations should be implemented.
- Consideration should be given to minimise exposure by avoiding unnecessary travel and mixing.

5.3 ADAPTATIONS SPECIFIC TO FENCING TRAINING

- Fencing activity should be for recreational purposes.
- 2m social distancing should be respected where possible (see below for piste layout options).

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- Whilst not engaging in activity everyone should wear face coverings. Face coverings are required in most indoor settings. Although this does not include gyms and leisure centres, some facilities may require you to wear them before or after activity, or in some areas of the building where they are legally required (e.g. a shop).
- Footwork/warm-up exercises must respect 2m social distancing at all times and should not be performed face to face.
- Fencers are advised to limit their interactions with anyone outside of the group they are playing in (e.g. fencers in another group).
- Other than where fencers are from the same household or part of a support bubble, follow Government advice on staying alert and safe, and:
 - Stay at least two metres away from other participants as far as possible including when taking breaks and before and after bouts
 - Do not make any physical contact with other participants (such as shaking hands or high five)
- Adapted sparring between two individuals in the group can take place and is limited to 1 x 15 hits OR 3 x 5 hits, up to a maximum of 10mins of fencing time and 15mins of elapsed time. (This means, for example, a group could choose to run a poule unique of 6 fencers where everyone fences each other once only to 15 hits and each bout takes no longer than 10mins of fencing time and 15mins elapsed time). When it is not possible to count hits (e.g. adapted pairs training), elapsed time must be strictly adhered to.
- In COVID-19 guideline compliant venues where face-coverings (low intensity) and/or mask liners (higher intensity) are in use, adapted sparring between two individuals in the group can take place up to 2 x 15 hits OR 5 x 5 hits, up to a maximum of 20mins of fencing time and 30 mins of elapsed time. Extra care must be taken to ensure that after each hit, fencers immediately return to a position where they are 2m or more apart. This may require fencers to be at a certain level of ability. When it is not possible to count hits (e.g. adapted pairs training), the appropriate fencing/elapsed time must be set by the coach and in no cases exceed 20mins/30mins respectively. The COVID-19 Officer and Coach is responsible for risk assessing this increase and noting it on the risk assessment. When it is not possible to count hits (e.g. adapted pairs training), the appropriate fencing/elapsed time must be set by the coach and in no cases exceed 20mins/30mins respectively. The COVID-19 Officer and Coach is responsible for risk assessing this increase and noting it on the risk assessment.
- Coaches can deliver a maximum of 30 min lessons to individuals within a club session but cannot give lessons to fencers in different groups within the session.
- The handshaking rule is suspended. Fencers should replace the end of bout handshake with a salute observing 2m social distancing.
- **All fencing** - Corps a corps and any actions that result in body contact are not permitted.
- **Advance Competitive Standard Sparring** - Clubs may permit two fencers to spar/fence each other 'normally' i.e. include fleching/running attacks and close quarter moves provided all the following measures are in place:
 1. Both fencers are of a sufficient technical and evidenced competitive competency
 2. To be assessed by a L2 or above BF registered coach. Indicators include:
 - a. a technical ability to execute the moves correctly at competitive speed with no body contact
 - b. prior advanced competitive record (BF/FIE rankings, GBR selections)
 - c. an intention to return to advanced competition (BF U20 or Full compete membership)

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3. An updated risk club assessment is uploaded into the BF platform
4. The activity is taking place in Covid-19 government guideline compliant venues
5. Face-coverings (low intensity) and/or mask liners (higher intensity) are in use by both fencers
6. Temperature checks are in place on arrival
7. After each hit both fencers return immediately return to a position 2m or more apart
8. Existing bout limits are strictly adhered to.

The COVID-19 Officer and Coach are responsible for risk assessing this and noting the decision. For each session, the COVID-19 Officer records:

- that the activity is taking place
- the fencers have been reminded of the protocols (we recommend this is added to the briefing already in place at every session)
- the names of the fencers involved, and the approximate time spent competitive sparring
- confirmation these mitigation steps are in place.

Should any club member test positive, these anonymised records must be provided to the BF Medical Officer to assist with our ongoing efforts to monitor the effectiveness of the guidelines and support our efforts to lobby for relaxation of restrictions particularly in areas where no fencing is currently permitted.

- All other fencing in clubs (including pairs work, beginner classes, recreational fencing):
 - Deliberate close quarter actions and any actions that breach the 1m distancing are not permitted.
 - Fleching/running attacks are not permitted.
- Face coverings should be worn whilst coaching (excluding lessons, see below) and refereeing. Hand signals should be used where possible in place of verbal signals.
- Face coverings can be worn under fencing masks for low intensity training. Participants (fencers and coaches) wearing face coverings should monitor their breathing and heart rate and take regular breaks. If face coverings are not being used, fencing mask liners should be worn. Where face coverings are used, coaches should adapt lessons and training to keep physical intensity levels low with frequent breaks.
- Participants should avoid any shouting/screaming, particularly during 1:1 activity.

6. AFTER ALL FENCING ACTIVITY

- All participants should sanitise their hands after the completion of activity.
- Participants should exit whilst maintaining social distancing.
- One club representative/volunteer should be responsible for collecting and disinfecting any shared equipment.
- Regular cleaning of equipment should take place, particularly between one group finishing, and the next group starting.
- Clubs should encourage all participants to report any infection of their household to the NHS Test and Trace system following use of the facility to limit the spread of the virus (section 3): <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/nhs-test-and-trace-how-it-works>.

7. ADDITIONAL ADVICE FOR COACHES

- These measures cannot cover every eventuality and coaches must conduct a risk assessment, ensuring appropriate measures are put in place to keep participants and coaches safe.
- Participating in, and coaching fencing in itself carries some degree of risk and whilst being mindful of the guidelines regarding COVID-19, coaches and clubs should not lose sight of the normal safety rules or safeguarding standards relating to fencing and coaching which continue to apply and must be complied with (DBS, safeguarding, First Aid etc.).
- Coaches must be on the BF Coaches Register.
- Coaches should make themselves aware of and abide by all guidelines set out by the UK Government, the venue and BF.
- It is the coach's responsibility to ensure that they coach fencers in a safe environment and follow relevant guidelines.
- Coaches should explain the safety guidelines of what is expected pre, during and post session including what participants are expected to do to maintain compliance with social distancing guidelines and all other health and safety guidelines.
- Coaches participating in indoor group sessions must restrict lessons to a maximum of 30 min within one group and follow guidance previously issued (low intensity, long distance lessons) with additional mitigation strategies (see previous guidance) especially in relation to face coverings/fencing mask liners. Close quarter training where distance is maintained at 1m or less is not permitted. Fleching is permitted based on the competency and mitigation indicators as listed in the specific fencing adaptations listed above and should be appropriately minimised to reduce risk to both fencer and coach.

8. SAFEGUARDING

- All Clubs must have a trained designated Welfare Officer in place (see [here](#)) to ensure safeguarding requirements are met.
- It is very important to be aware of, and to focus on, mental health and well-being at times of uncertainty. Remember that many of your members may have been through a difficult period and need reassuring on their return to fencing.
- Adults supervising U18 activity in a safeguarding role are exempt from the group limits
- Due to the tier restrictions on indoor spectating, fencing activity providers must ensure that 'in loco parentis' welfare procedures for U18s are up to date.
- Parents or other adults who are not acting in a supervisory role are considered to be spectators and must follow the restrictions on spectators for their alert tier.
- Fencing activity providers should have procedures in place so that all spectators are aware and follow the rules regarding hygiene, social distancing (2m) and interaction outside of household/support bubbles. Provided spectators do not interact with individuals in an activity group they do not count towards the activity group size.

9. INCLUSION

Remember, some fencers may need additional support or adaptations to support their participation. Further guidance is available [here](#).

10. FURTHER SUPPORT AND GUIDANCE

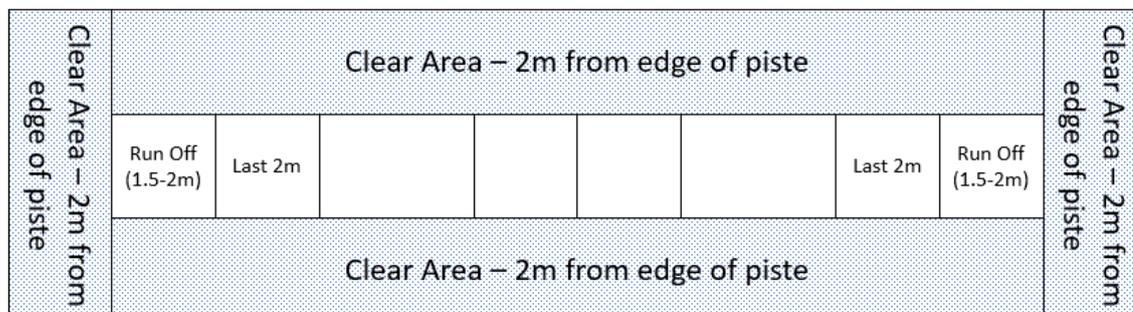
These guidelines are accurate at the date of publication but are subject to change in line with government guidance. Keep checking www.britishfencing.com for the latest version and supporting tools and information.

11. DISCLAIMER

Please note that the subject matter covered in this guidance is in no way exhaustive and the material does not stand on its own nor is intended to be relied upon as a substitute for obtaining specific legal advice. Individual circumstances will differ. The information contained in this guidance is given in good faith but any liability of British Fencing or its professional advisors (including their respective members or employees) to you or any third party which may arise out of the reliance by you or any other party of the contents of this guidance is hereby excluded to the fullest extent permitted by law. British Fencing and its professional advisors accept no duty of care or liability for any loss occasioned, whether caused by negligence or otherwise, to any person acting or refraining from actions as a result of any material in this guidance.

12. APPENDIX A - PISTE LAYOUT

During any 1:1 fencing activity (lessons, sparring, 1:1 technical training) there must be a clear space around the piste area. During activity no more than 2 people should be on the piste at any time. See Fig 1. Below.

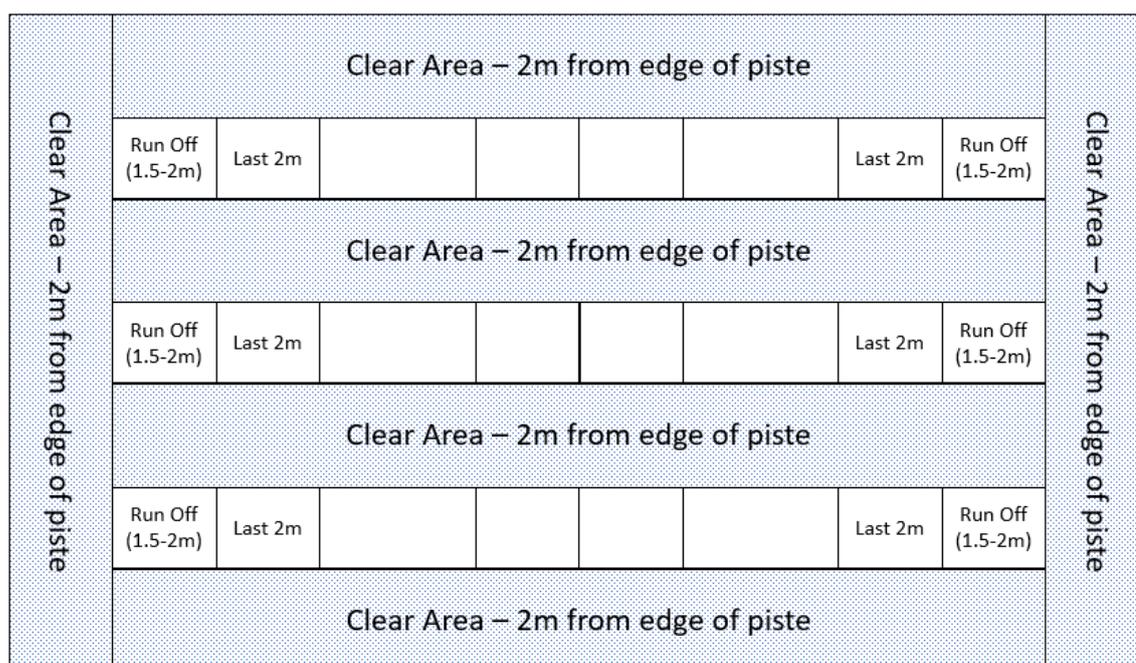


The length of a standard piste is 14m, with 1.5-2m run-off on either end. The width of the piste is 1.5m.

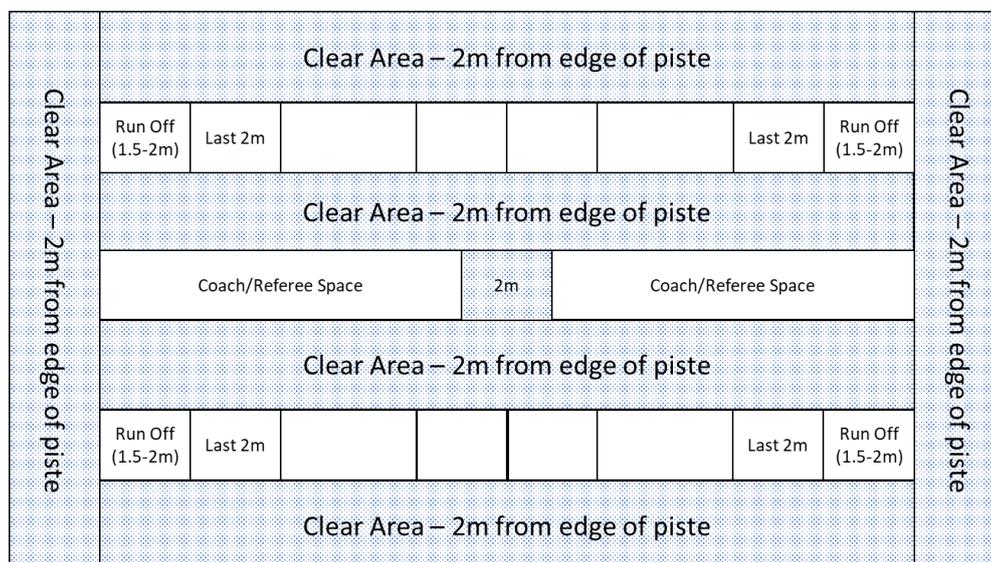
The length and width of the piste can be further reduced for training purposes, however there must be a clear space of 2m (not including the run-off) around the full useable boundary whilst lessons or sparring is taking place. There must be a minimum of 2m between the edge of the piste and the next piste.

Fencers must stay within the piste boundaries where at all possible.

Club officials may temporarily enter the space during the activity provided there is no risk of breaching the 2m social distancing guidelines.



Any piste-side coaching or refereeing must take place outside the clear area. This will require additional areas to be defined. Referees must observe 2m social distancing from other referees/coaches as well. One possible set-up is shown below (note that each defined coach/referee space can only be occupied by 1 person).



13. APPENDIX B - ADVICE FOR FENCING CLUBS OPERATING THEIR OWN FACILITIES

- Prior to re-opening, club representatives should ensure that their facility is compliant with current UK Government legislation including legislation and guidance related to COVID-19. A risk assessment should have been completed and risk mitigation measures put in place and monitored.
- On any day of the activity, club representatives and volunteers should ensure that all COVID-19 measures are in place according to the club operating and safety plans, whilst maintaining social distancing – developing your own ‘opening up checklist’ is helpful for this. This should include:
 - Set-up of public health operating procedures and access signage.
 - Set-up of any equipment (e.g. boxes, spools) and floor markings
 - The duty of care which the club already owed remains and therefore other matters such as First Aid must continue to be provided. First Aid equipment (including AEDs where available) and suitable PPE for First Aid must be made available. Advice on First Aid during the COVID pandemic is available from St John Ambulance.
- Clubs should make hand washing facilities and/or hand sanitiser available for all site users.
- Clubs must have entry and exit, and parking arrangements to venues that ensures social distancing can be maintained and implement traffic flow systems where possible and appropriate.
- Clubs must outline socially distanced areas for teams, officials, and spectators.
- Clubs must ensure that all accessible provision within the site and the facility are available.