

DEREK SNYDER



ELITE FENCING COACHING

PRIVATE COACHING RESOURCE SERIES

The Fencer's Journal Template



*A structured system for tracking practices, tournaments, goals, and patterns –
so every session builds on the last and nothing you learn gets lost.*

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A Note from Coach Derek

The best fencers keep a journal. Not because they're sentimental – because they're strategic. A fencing journal tracks what you worked on, what you learned, what went well, what didn't, and what you need to focus on next. Without it, every practice starts from scratch and every tournament is an isolated event.

With a journal, your training has continuity. You can look back at three months of entries and see exactly how you've improved, which problems keep recurring, and which tactical adjustments have worked. Your coach can read your journal and understand where your head is at – not just where your blade is.

This guide explains the system, then provides the templates. Print the templates, put them in a binder, and bring it to every practice and tournament. Fill it out consistently. The 5 minutes it takes after each session will save you hours of wasted training.

– Coach Derek

How to Use This Journal

The Four Types of Entries

Your journal has four types of pages, each designed for a different purpose. You won't use all four every day — use the one that matches what you just did.

Practice Log: Fill this out after every practice. Takes 3–5 minutes. Captures what you worked on, what clicked, what didn't, and what to focus on next time. This is the most frequently used template.

Tournament Log: Fill this out after every tournament. Takes 10–15 minutes. Captures your goals, your results, your bout-by-bout notes, and your key takeaways. This is the most detailed template.

Lesson Log: Fill this out after every private lesson. Takes 3–5 minutes. Captures what your coach worked on with you, the key corrections, and the homework for next time.

Monthly Review: Fill this out once a month. Takes 10 minutes. Steps back from the daily entries to identify larger patterns, track progress toward goals, and set priorities for the next month.

Rules for Effective Journaling

Write immediately after the session, not later that night or the next day. The details fade fast. Be specific, not vague. "Worked on parry 4 riposte to the flank" is useful. "Worked on defense" is not. Be honest. If you had a bad practice, write that. If you didn't try hard, write that. The journal is for you, not for anyone to grade. Keep it short. Each entry should take 5 minutes or less (except the tournament log). If it's taking longer, you're overwriting. Bullet points and short phrases are fine.

COACH'S TIP: Bring your journal to lessons. When I can read your last 3–4 entries before we start, I know exactly where to pick up. It makes our lesson time dramatically more efficient because we're not spending the first 5 minutes figuring out what you remember from last time.



Template 1: Practice Log

Print multiple copies of this template. Use one per practice session.

Field	Your Entry
Date	
Practice Type	Group / Private / Open Fencing / Solo
Duration	

WHAT I WORKED ON TODAY (list the main drills, actions, or focus areas):

WHAT WENT WELL (be specific – name the action, the drill, the moment):

WHAT I STRUGGLED WITH (be specific and honest):

KEY CORRECTION FROM COACH (the one thing they kept coming back to):

FOCUS FOR NEXT PRACTICE (1-2 specific things to work on):

EFFORT LEVEL TODAY (circle one):

1 – Low energy, going through the motions 2 – Moderate, decent focus 3 – Good, solid work

4 – Strong, pushed myself 5 – Outstanding, best effort



Template 2: Tournament Log

Use one of these per tournament. Fill out the top section before the tournament and the rest afterward.

Field	Your Entry
Tournament Name	
Date	
Event	
Location	

PRE-TOURNAMENT GOALS (fill this out BEFORE the tournament):

Outcome Goal: (result-based – e.g., make top 8, win 3 pool bouts)

Tactical Goals: (technique-based – e.g., extend arm before lunging, use feints)

Process Goal: (mental habit – e.g., reset between every touch, stay calm after bad calls)

Focus Word:

POOL RESULTS:

Bout	Opponent	Score	W/L	Notes (what worked, what didn't)
1				
2				
3				
4				
5				
6				
7				

POOL SUMMARY:

Record: ___W ___L Indicator: ___ Seed after pools: ___

DIRECT ELIMINATION RESULTS:

Round	Opponent / Seed	Score	W/L	Key Tactical Notes
Table of ___				
Table of ___				
Table of ___				
Table of ___				

FINAL PLACEMENT: _____ out of _____

POST-TOURNAMENT REVIEW (fill out the same day or next day):

Did I achieve my outcome goal?

Did I achieve my tactical goals?

Did I maintain my process goal?

What worked best today?

What do I need to work on most?

Top 3 action items for practice this week:

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____



Template 3: Lesson Log

Use after every private lesson.

Field	Your Entry
Date	
Coach	
Lesson Focus	

WHAT WE WORKED ON:

KEY CORRECTIONS (the specific technical or tactical adjustments coach made):

WHAT FELT DIFFERENT OR BETTER:

HOMEWORK (what coach wants me to practice on my own):

QUESTIONS I STILL HAVE:



Template 4: Monthly Review

Fill out once a month. Look back at your practice logs, tournament logs, and lesson logs from the past month to identify patterns.

Field	Your Entry
Month / Year	
Practices this month	
Lessons this month	
Tournaments this month	

BIGGEST IMPROVEMENT THIS MONTH (what's noticeably better?):

RECURRING ISSUE (what keeps showing up in my logs?):

GOALS FROM LAST MONTH – DID I HIT THEM?

GOALS FOR NEXT MONTH (1 technical, 1 tactical, 1 mental):

Technical: _____

Tactical: _____

Mental: _____

WHAT DO I WANT TO TALK TO COACH ABOUT?

ONE THING I'M PROUD OF THIS MONTH:



Final Coach's Note

A journal is a conversation with yourself about your fencing. It forces you to think about what you're doing, why you're doing it, and whether it's working. That reflective practice is what separates fencers who train for years and plateau from fencers who train for years and keep improving.

You don't need to write a novel. A few sentences after each practice, a page after each tournament, and 10 minutes once a month. That's it. The consistency matters more than the detail. A short entry every practice is worth more than a detailed entry once a month.

Start today. Your future self will thank you when they can look back and see exactly how far they've come.

— Coach Derek