**TOURNAMENT FAQs**

CFA is primarily a competitive club so you’ll be hearing about a lot of tournaments. The club hosts many Division events as well as School League and internal tournaments. For new (or newer) fencers, here is some basic information about competitions.

**1. What tournaments are available for newer fencers?**

Usually newer fencers start competing in club events and local tournaments, then move on to regional tournaments, then to national and international tournaments. Tournaments are limited by age (Youth, Cadet, Junior, or Veteran), by ability (Div. III, Div. II, or Div. I), or are unlimited for fencers aged 13 & up (Open/Senior). Some tournaments are open to both men & women (Mixed), while others are limited by gender.

CFA fencers are fortunate because the VA Division and the surrounding divisions have many fencing club and a variety of tournaments year-round. CFA has several “ratings rally” tournaments that include youth events, as well as Div II and Div III events in all three weapons. The nearest club to us, RFC (generally a great bunch of folks that run good events) also has several ratings rally events.

We also host one of the regions RYC youth events every year, and RFC hosts another. RYC stands for Regional Youth Circuit and these are sort of like giant youth events with all three weapons fenced that attract fencers from multiple states. The average RYC has the following youth events and categories:

Y10: For fencers 6 -10 years old as of the date of the tournament

Y12: For fencers 8 – 12 years old as of the date of the tournament

Y14: For fencers 10 – 14 years old the date of the tournament.

Fencers can always “fence up” one age category. However because the level of competition increases dramatically each tier, make sure to talk it over with your coach before having your fencer do this.

Fencers who “age out” of their event (become too old for the age-range) after January

1st will be able to continue competing in their event. For example, a fencer who began the Y12 season in September at the age of 12, who then turned 13 after January

1st, would be allowed to continue fencing in the Y12 event until the end of the season in August.

**2. What is a rating (or classification)?**

Ratings can be earned by finishing in one of the top places in a tournament in which other rated fencers also finish in the top places. All fencers start out as “unrated” (or U). Ratings go from E to A, with A as the highest rating. The year listed after the rating refers to when the fencer earned the rating. Ratings last for four years.

No ratings are earned at Youth or Cadet Events unless they are large events that include fencers who are already rated. Generally, ratings for Youth fencers are only earned at regional and national tournaments, such as the Regional Youth Circuit (RYC) or Super RYC events. For tournaments that are not age-limited, ratings can be earned with as few as 6 fencers in the event. Division III (D & Under) and Division II (C & Under) events are a good way to earn your first rating. You can look up more information about event classifications at www.askfred.net. Click on “USFA Event Classifications” on the left side of the webpage.

**3. What is a Division III (or II or I) Tournament?**

Division I, II and III tournaments are restricted based on the fencers’ ratings.

Division III: Limited to D, E, or Unrated fencers (often called D or E and Under)

Division II: Limited to C, D, E, or Unrated fencers (often called C and Under)

Division I: Limited to A, B or C rated fencers (True Div I events are rare. Most Div 1 events are simply called “open” or “senior” events and anyone over 13 can compete)

**4. What gear do fencers need to compete?**

This depends a great deal upon the weapon. All fencers will need a properly fitted jacket, fencing pants, long socks (CFA gives fencers their first pair at the first USFA event), a glove, a chest plate for girls/women (strongly recommended for boys as well), and a plastron, which is a half jacket worn under the primary jacket. This acts as a safety layer should a broken blade pierce the jacket.

Additionally all fencers will need a minimum two weapons and body cords (we suggest at least three), a weapon appropriate mask (each weapon uses a different one) and some way to keep track of it all.

Foil and Saber fencers also have to have lames. A lame vest and bib for foil fencers and a lame jacket, mask and overglove for saber fencers. The will both also need at least two mask cords.

Some gear can be borrowed or rented through CFA and we sell several lines of gear through the club. Having us do the measuring and ordering is the easiest way to go and we charge the same as you would pay through an online store. Unlike most clubs we do not have a huge markup for gear sold through our pro shop.

**5. How do I earn a Mjulnir/Thor’s Hammer necklace?**

You will notice many of our coaches or senior fencers sporting Mjulnirs at the club. These are awarded to our fencers who win a United States Fencing Association sanctioned event. The club gives them free of charge to our warriors who have brought honor to the club through contests of arms.

**6. How do I join the CFA Competition Team?**

Represent CFA for at least 6 tournaments a season in USFA events. To be on the tournament team carries additional responsibilities that your coach will discuss with you.

**7. What are National Points?**

The top finishers in certain national events and super regional events earn points towards the national standings. The fencers with the highest national points in Cadet, Junior, and Senior comprise the U.S. National teams for international events. Having national points also pre-qualifies fencers for certain events at Junior Olympics, Division 1 National Championships, and Summer Nationals.

**8. How do I register for a tournament?**

The CFA website (fencingalliance.org) is your first stop On our Tournaments page we have all the events that will be hosted at CFA listed, as well as away tournaments in the state we recommend all fencers attend.

Most local and regional tournaments are posted on www.askfred.net (referred to as AskFRED). Information about SYCs and national tournaments is available on the USFA website ([www.usfencing.org](http://www.usfencing.org)). Almost all events require you to register ahead of time via one of the websites, so pay attention to when the registration for an event closes.

**9. What is a USFA Membership and why is it required?**

Membership in the U.S. Fencing Association is required in order to participate in any USFA sanctioned tournament. Almost all tournaments in the VA Division are sanctioned.

USFA membership is in addition to your CFA membership. USFA membership can be purchased online at www.usfencing.org for $65 per year per fencer, or you can purchase a one-day membership for $20.

Annual USFA memberships expire on July 31st and can be purchased or renewed at

tournaments. Make sure that you bring your USFA card to every tournament.

**10. What should I do when I arrive at the tournament?**

Go immediately to the registration desk to register or check in. Each event will have a “close of registration” time. Fencers who have not registered by close of registration will be excluded from the tournament. Some tournaments will also require that equipment (masks, bodycords, and lames) be checked before the event starts. This is rare at local events, but if an event says it will have equipment/weapons check, allow extra time for this.

We suggest showing up at least 30 minutes before your event is scheduled to close. Once you get there, remember that you are there to compete, not catch up with friends from other clubs. There will be plenty of time for that throughout the day and after your event. Warm up, stretch, get suited up, and find several people to fence with.

Listen for announcements for your event. If a seeding list is posted, make sure that your name is on it, and that your rating and club information is correct. Remember to check in with your coach before you fence so that he or she knows which strip you are at. You should also check in with your coach before you leave the tournament, so you can discuss how you fenced and what you learned.

**11. How are tournaments run?**

In general, there will be pools of 5-8 fencers, followed by direct elimination bouts. You will fence all of the members of your pool. The results from pools will determine seeding for direct elimination. However, there are many possible variations for tournament formats. If there are few fencers, the event may be one large pool with no direct elimination round. For large tournaments, sometimes there is a cut-off and only the top 32 or 64 fencers continue to direct eliminations after pools.

In unusual cases, every place may be fenced off, meaning that you aren’t eliminated after you lose your first direct elimination bout. Make sure that you understand the event format before you unsuit and leave.

**12. How long does each event take?**

That varies widely based on the number of competitors, the event format, equipment delays, and whether the event starts on time. It also depends on how long it takes for the fencer to be eliminated in the direct elimination round. For introductory tournaments and small local events, allow about 2-3 hours after close of registration.

**13. Do parents need to stay?**

No, but they are very welcome to stay and watch. Please don’t use flash photography, as this can distract fencers. All other photography/taping is welcome. Please see the 8 Rules For Fencing Parents and the Role of the Fencing Parent handouts for more information.

**14. Can I leave as soon as I am eliminated?**

At national tournaments, ROCs, SYCs, or RYCs, CFA fencers are expected to stay until the end of their own event. This allows our fencers to support their teammates, as well as to watch the final bouts to learn from more skilled fencers. The exception is that the fencer should leave by 6:00pm if he or she has an early-starting event the next morning.