



# WFC PHYSICAL CONTACT IN FENCING

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## Physical Contact in Fencing

We want to ensure that all people involved in fencing have the best experience possible, but at the same time, we want to ensure that everyone is safe. Coaches should keep in mind the following common sense tips in relation to physical contact.

We recognise that physical contact between a child and an adult may be required to instruct, encourage, protect or comfort.

It is important to recognise that fencing is a multi-cultural sport attracting people from many different ethnic and religious backgrounds. We may also have participants who may be on the Child Protection Register or have previously been, or are currently being abused at home. Not everyone is used to, or is comfortable with any type of touching be it friendly or otherwise. In many cultures, people may be uncomfortable about being touched by strangers of people of the opposite gender. We need to be aware that touching may cause discomfort or embarrassment, and we need to show consideration.

In fencing, there may be times where a coach may wish to assist someone to understand a fencing move in order to improve their performance. There may be other instances when we may need to touch in order to carry out a task or to celebrate. If anyone is uncomfortable with physical contact, it should be made clear that they can make their feelings known privately to the adult. Any contact should be led by the child and not the adult.

All touching should be done for a positive reason. As a responsible adult, you should only use physical contact if its aim is to:

- Develop sports skills or techniques
- Treat an injury
- Prevent an injury or accident from occurring
- Meet the requirements of the sport

You should seek to explain the reason for the physical contact to the child i.e. reinforcing the teaching or coaching skill. Unless the situation is an emergency, the adult should ask the child for permission. Physical contact should always be intended to meet the child's need NOT the adults. The following guidelines should be adhered to:

- If a child becomes injured during a coaching session and the injury requires the child to be carried to a place of treatment, always seek support from another adult before moving the child. Any first aid administered should be in the presence of another adult or in open view of others
- If the child seems uncomfortable in any way with the physical contact, stop immediately
- If the child you are working with is visually impaired, you should tell them who you are and ask their permission before you come into physical contact with them

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- Where physical contact is for motivational or celebratory reason, agree with the children, teachers or other appropriate adults that to praise good performance with a “high five” or similar action will be used
- Never help children dress, for example, to put on protective clothing, helmets, or clothing unless they request this and genuinely require assistance