Epee Fencing: A Complete System, Imre Vass, SKA SwordPlay Books, 2011, 0978902270, 9780978902278, 304 pages. This book studies epee more thoroughly and completely than any other. Vass, a Hungarian national coach, lays out a comprehensive system from fundamental actions to the most advanced tactics. The book is profusely illustrated with drawings that capture every nuance of Vass’s technique. Readers will return to it again and again for new insights. This is the second, revised edition of Stephan Khinoy’s revised translation.

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Fencing, Joseph Vince, 2010, Sports & Recreation, 72 pages. The conciseness and simplicity with which this work has been written will greatly aid the student of the game in the complete understanding of the fundamentals of this ....

Fencing competitive training and practice, the foil, the D•pD•e, the sabre, Bac Hy Tau, 1994, Sports & Recreation, ..


Training Fencing, Berndt Barth, Katrin Barth, 2003, Sports & Recreation, 167 pages. Explains how to teach fencing techniques and tactics and presents exercises for building endurance, strength, and speed..

Closing the Distance Chasing a Father's Olympic Fencing Legacy, Jeff Bukantz, Jun 1, 2006, , 246 pages. Closing The Distance is a memoir that reveals the trials and tribulations Jeff Bukantz encountered while following in his father’s legendary footsteps. Throughout the book, the ....


The Inner Game of Fencing, Nick Evangelista, Jan 11, 2000, Sports & Recreation, 288 pages. To defeat an opponent, a fencer must use mind and body together -- anticipating attacks, observing the opponent, making contact with the blade, combining strategy with ....

Harnessing Anger The Inner Discipline of Athletic Excellence, Peter Westbrook, Jun 1, 1998, Biography & Autobiography, 192 pages. To Peter Westbrook, "harnessing anger" means controlling one’s fury and channeling it in a positive direction. Westbrook’s success in what he once called "that strange white ....

Fencing A Renaissance Treatise, Camillo Agrippa, 2009, , 138 pages. Agrippa's widely influential
"Treatise on the Science of Arms" was a turning point in the history of fencing. Contained within this handy volume are concrete examples of a new ...

A Dictionary of Universally Used Fencing Terminology With Approval of the Joint Board of Accreditation of the U. S. Fencing Assoc. Coaches College and the San Jose State Univ. Fencing Masters Program, William M. Gaugler, Oct 1, 1997, 62 pages. The Military Fencing Masters Program, established in 1979, is where aspiring fencers go to earn legitimate degrees as teachers of the art of fencing. This internationally ...

Foil, Saber, and Epee Fencing Skills, Safety, Operations, and Responsibilities, Maxwell R. Garret, Emmanuil G. Kaidanov, Gil A. Pezza, 1994, Sports & Recreation, 227 pages. Anyone who wishes to learn the sport of fencing will find the basic elements necessary to begin in Foil, Saber, and epee Fencing. The already accomplished fencer will find the ....


One Touch at a Time , Aladar Kogler, Jan 31, 2004, 333 pages. This essential book gives in-depth coverage to the psychological aspects of fencing, including preparation and tactics--what distinguishes an elite fencer and what the rest of ....

Fencer's Start-Up A Beginner's Guide to Fencing, , Oct 1, 2010, Sports & Recreation, 192 pages. An engaging guide to fencing covers Olympic-style foil, epee and saber methods and includes tips on safety, etiquette and technique; a historical overview of the sport; and an ....

This book studies epee more thoroughly and completely than any other. Vass, a Hungarian national coach, lays out a comprehensive system from fundamental actions to the most advanced tactics. The book is profusely illustrated with drawings that capture every nuance of Vass's technique. Readers will return to it again and again for new insights. This is the second, revised edition of Stephan Khinoy's revised translation.

This isn't to say that there aren't flaws in the book. Epee has moved on since the original publication, and some of the sections look a little old fashioned. This is mitigated by Khinoy's editorial interspersions which present the modern style. This slightly negative comment should not detract from the fact that this book is unrivalled in its treatement of the weapon, and should be read by all epeeists and their coaches.

I agree, generally, with the three previous reviewers of this book. However, I strongly disagree with the author's statements in the Introduction concerning foil as being the basis for epee fencing. Vass insists that the fencer should have a solid grounding in foil before beginning to fence with the epee. He goes on to state that it should take about five years before the fencer has shifted over only 50% from foil to epee. Absurd; it does not make sense first to learn foil and then to spend years unlearning it while converting to epee. There are essential differences between epee and foil: in epee fencing the entire body is fair target, while in foil it is only the torso, and while foil is governed by the right-of-way convention (fencers will know what I mean), in epee the first hit counts, with no regard for convention.

Epee fencing has changed over the years. Vass concentrates on technique, and techniques have changed since he wrote his book. The classical styles and schools of the past have been replaced almost completely by a much more athletic game in which speed, strength, movement, and opportunism count as much or more than sophisticated technique. The great change began in about 1960, when the hemispherical barbed point, which would catch on the opponent's sleeve even if the attacker's blade was almost parallel to his opponent's arm, was replaced by the flat point, modified a couple of years later to have a chamfered edge. The old point made touches easier, and it was the cautious, patient, accurate fencer who often prevailed. The newer point, introduced for safety reasons, usually requires that the hit be at a greater angle. While in the past most touches were
Imre Vass's book on Epee fencing is probably one of the finest books that one could read on the subject. While Vass learned and studied Epee fencing in Hungary, under the very heavy influence of Russian at times, it still shows a system of fencing that is strongly founded in modern competitive fencing and has many practical applications. So, any student of Epee can learn about this fencing system.

Vass primarily lays the book out in a series of chapters on different elements of fencing. Moving from discussions on target areas and engagements of the blade, there is a wide variety of topics that are covered. The material is well laid out, and comprehensive in nature, with some talk by the author of the value of different actions and his thoughts on what an Epee fencer should be doing.

However, this is not a book for the faint of heart. For the starting Epeeist, this may be a very difficult read. Especially when there are discussions of drills and the training. For the intermediate or advanced Epeeist, or a coach, this is an excellent source for practicing fencing and designing new drills to perform. Plus is helps to consider this as a way to analyze one's own fencing.

This book is primarily geared to the competitive fencer, so it does mean that there is some discussion about actions that would be more present in competitive fencing and not historical fencing. So, this book may not appeal to some people. Likewise, because of Vass's Hungarian style, this may also not appeal to those in the competitive circuit if it doesn't fit with your style of fencing. That being said, as someone who appreciate Bruce Lee's views on the martial arts (taking a little bit of something from everything), one can incorporate some of the concepts and learn from them.

One of the first things that attracted me to this book was the fact that it was an honest-to-goodness book about epee fencing. The majority of fencing books that I have read have put more emphasis on foil. Although it can be a little tough to slog through reading-wise (I had some problems, doesn't mean everyone will), Epee Fencing: A Complete System, is extraordinary in the amount of detail presented. A definite must for anyone who has a love for epee! I heartly recommend this book!

I've read much of it. I think the most useful parts have been the terminology and definitions of what the positions and guards are. But then I've also found some minor mistakes in what is probably the translation. Personally I think it is a very valuable book for my fencing reference library. And even worth the trouble to work your way through it. But in some senses it's like the tactical wheel - which I've never been able to use on the strip. Perhaps an epeeist at the very top of the game could see the tactical descriptions as a way of review. But again as to your original question it depends on your intended use.

While a good addition to the epeeist's library, it is hardly the holy grail of epee reference books many of us would like to see. Like jjeffries, some of the problems may be in translation. The glossary at the back doesn't even bother to define words like "imbroccata" and gives a poor explanation of things like a "time degagement thrust." It also suffers from poor organization and pacing, which combined with the other problems makes for a quite difficult read. Having said all that, it contains moves that I'd never even heard of before (never hurts to have a few new ones) and makes a noble attempt to explain drills for coach and student, in addition to many, many useful diagrams.

It occurred to me that I have no reference book on epee and wondered if I should keep it or return it (it is in a plastic shrink wrap so I cannot peek!). The two books I have on fencing (including one by N. Evangelista) spend a lot of time on foil and epee is really mentioned mainly in reference to foil.

I really do not have a coach except perhaps three times a year when I visit and get private lessons (as well as my tail kicked in his club). Thus I spend a lot of time practicing solo. On occasions questions arise which I cannot answer myself. I experiment with contraptions in the garage, I post here, I read books (including a downloaded Canadian Fencing manual) and rarely e-mail the coach (I do not want to overdo it and p..s him off!).
I would consider Vass a poor reference guide for epee. It's primarily a laundry list of actions, counter-actions, and counter-counter-actions, entirely from a blade point of view. The text uses Hungarian terminology, which can be a little obtuse if you've been raised with French terms. The line drawings the book is illustrated with are rarely helpful.

I read the book when I started Epee. I think it's probably a good idea to read it, as you'll probably be fencing people who read the book. I found it pretty confusing - he's not very clear, but I hung onto it and as I continued along in Epee, more and more of it made sense. It's written in a very European mind, sort of fettered, kinda heavy - but by all means hang onto it. [also, yes, I found errors as well, but I also believed it was due to translations rather than lack of knowledge].

Epee Fencing: a complete system is an encyclopedia of epee techniques which add up to a treasury of actions and ideas to select from. Every attack, every preparation, is carefully described; then the parries used against that attack are analyzed, then the counterattacks. Numerous lessons and drills are included, and the book is copiously illustrated. The new translation has been acclaimed, and the original materials supplemented with a discussion of fencing terminology.

The following fencing books are recommended by the club’s instructor, Benerson Little. The list is not exhaustive—there are many good fencing books not listed below. Some books are not listed simply because the compiler has not yet read them. The history list in particular has been severely abridged due to sheer volume. Fencing books can be very useful, but are no substitute for proper instruction and diligent practice. See below for suggestions on ordering.

It should be noted that some modern epeeists consider not only classical epee technique (point d’arrêt technique, especially non-electrical, and true dueling technique), but “modern classical” (electrical pre-Harmenberg, so to speak) technique to be obsolete. This narrow view has no basis in fact except to some degree in the case of elite (world class, that is) epeeists. Purely classical and modern classical epeeists can, and often do, fence as far as a solid A, or national, level, and classical technique is the foundation of elite epee technique. In fact, elite women’s epee retains a significant amount of so-called classical technique, and the compiler of this list is well-acquainted with a Greek-American epeeist some 70 years old whose classical, very old school straight arm technique can still give even young elite epeeists fits. One need only read Achille Edom’s 1910 book on epee fencing (see below) to realize that much of what is considered new in epee is in fact more than a century old. In other words, epeeists should not consider older epee texts, nor any epee style of the past century or more, as unworthy of practical study.

Epee Fencing: A Complete System by Imre Vass, 1965 in Hungarian, 1976 first English edition, revised English editions 1998, 2011. The most thorough epee text ever written, highly recommended for intermediate to advanced fencers (three to five years or more experience), and epee coaches at all levels. The revised editions were edited by fencer and publisher Stephan Khinoy, and amplify and supplement the original text in places. The latest edition argues for the need for such classical training today, in spite of the so-called “new paradigm” (see Harmenberg below, his book is also published by Khinoy). Even for those relatively few fencers (as compared to
the entire body of epeeists) who wish to and are able to emulate Harmenberg's sport methods, a solid base of "classical" epee training is still necessary. For most epeeists, even outstanding ones, it's all they'll ever need. Vass trained medalists József Sákovics and Béla Rerrich, both of whom went on to become leading epee masters and national coaches, the former in Hungary, the latter in Sweden, with numerous international champions to their credit. The revered József Sákovics, considered by many to be the first "modern" epee fencer, died in 2009. The revered Béla Rerrich died in 2005.

La spada: metodo del Maestro caposcuola Giuseppe Mangiarotti by Edoardo Mangiarotti, the Comitato Olimpico Nazionale Italiano, Scuola Centrale Dello Sport, and Federazione Italiana Scherma, 1971. Epee as taught by the famous Guiseppe Mangiarotti: a thorough exposition of his method. Beginner-friendly, too, at least if you read Italian. Includes excellent illustrations of blade positions, better perhaps than in any other epee text. (Side note: the book even includes illustrations from the works of Vass and Szabo.) Prof. Mangiarotti, who studied under Italo Santelli as well as under other masters Italian and French, was an Olympic fencer, seventeen-time Italian national epee champion, father of famous champion Edoardo Mangiarotti as well as of noted fencers Dario and Mario Mangiarotti, and founder of a famous epee school in Milan, still in existence, that blended the French and Italian schools and produced champions for decades. Edoardo won 13 Olympic medals and 26 World Championship medals, and was known for his fluid, very Italian footwork as well as for his strategy of attacking hard and fast early on to get touches, then playing a defensive game. Highly recommended.

Epee Fencing by Steve Paul et al, published by Leon Paul, 2011. A very useful text for the modern competitor. Positive criticisms: thorough and well-illustrated. Negative criticisms: 100% emphasis on epee as pure sport (as opposed to epee as dueling swordplay or martial art modified for sport) and a magazine-style layout, including a thin cover that will not hold up to much wear.

Epee 2.0: The Birth of the New Paradigm by Johan Harmenberg, 2007. For advanced epeeists and coaches only. Some material is controversial and not all masters agree with the described training regimen. The argument remains as to whether the described techniques and tactics are truly revolutionary, or merely one of the final steps in the evolution of sport epee, in that the "paradigm" takes complete advantage of the 20th to 25th of a second tempo provided by the electrical apparatus, and entirely disregards any consideration of classical tempo. Importantly, the book is suited only to truly advanced fencers, although this has not stopped many insufficiently experienced epeeists from foolishly assuming they can emulate its technique and tactics. The book is based on the Swedish epeeist’s experiences leading up to his 1977 world championship and 1980 Olympic gold. In other words, however profound the book may be to sport fencing, its author's ideas were not new in 2007—only their publication was.

All of these works are of use to the modern epeeist, and all demonstrate that there is, overall, little new in modern epee fencing. Even the pistol grip was growing in popularity in France by 1908, although its use in dueling was prohibited and it would be the Italians who found in it the perfect replacement for their rapier grip. Only the tactics and techniques of "outstripping" (of trying to hit a 25th/20th of a second before one gets hit), and of the unrealistic abomination of flicking (and arguably, of foot touches), are new. The latter two techniques are too dangerous to attempt with an epee de combat: they would cause little damage while leaving the user vulnerable to more damaging, even fatal, thrusts. On the other hand, double touches have long been the bane of the salle or sport fencer, even before the advent of electrical scoring and its too short timing.

Le jeu de l'épée by Jules Jacob and Émile André, 1887. Lessons of the fencing master who essentially created modern epee in the 1870s. By the third quarter of the 19th century the foil had become a "weapon" of pure sport, although it had been heading in this direction since the late 17th century. M. Jacob adapted smallsword technique to create a form of swordplay suitable to surviving a duel with the 19th century épée de combat, or epee, as its modern descendant is called. His book outraged many foil purists, who subsequently went into sophistic denial when his epee technique proved far superior to foil technique in a duel: Jacob’s less technically proficient epeeists were deadly against even highly skilled foilists, who maintained that the only difference between the
technique of the salle and of the duel was the accompanying mental attitude. (If true, attitude was clearly deficient among the fleurettistes who fought duels with Jacob’s épéistes.) The book plainly points out the difference between the jeu de salle (sport fencing) and the jeu de terrain (swordplay of the duel), and reminds us that many of the best duelists were usually not “forts tireurs”—good sport fencers, that is. The same would doubtless be true today. Highly recommended.

The Dueling Sword by Claude La Marche, 1884, beautifully translated into English by Brian House, 2010. Very thorough, and the only early French epee and epee dueling manual available in English. Real swordplay, in other words, and useful even to epeeists today. To a degree the book is a somewhat foil-based response to the purely epee-based technique of M. Jacob (see above). M. La Marche differs from M. Jacob on some points, particularly on the value of attacks to the body, of which M. La Marche is in favor. (The modern trend in epee, at least at the elite levels, and among instructors who train less skilled fencers as if they were elite fencers, emphasizes attacks to the body. Where to emphasize attacks—arm or body—has been an ongoing argument ever since the flat electric tip was introduced, rendering arm shots more difficult.) Similar varying perspectives are seen in sport epee today. Highly recommended, and useful even to modern competitive epee fencers.

L’escrime, le duel & l’épée by Achille Edom, 1908. A remarkably prescient and practical work, and one that demonstrates plainly that there is little new in epee fencing today. In particular, M. Edom, a Frenchman, recommends the more physical Italian style over the French, prefers the Greco offset guard and the pistol grip, and bemoans the rise of sport technique such as wide angulations to the wrist—thrusts that with dueling epees (with sharp points, that is) would not stop a fully developed attack to the body, leaving the attacked with a wound to the wrist, and the attacker with a possibly fatal wound to the chest, neck, or head. (The origin of these angulations was due much in part to the single point type of point d’arrêt used by many at the time. The three point “dry” and four point electrical points d’arrêt greatly corrected this, but the modern flat point inspired the popularity of severe angulations once more.) Highly recommended.

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