



The Academy of European Swordsmanship

Shortsword Initiate Study Sheet

Version 1.1

Initiate Responsibilities

Once initiate ranking is achieved, the responsibilities of the student expand beyond merely studying. An initiate is responsible for assisting non-ranked students in their studies **during classes** only (under instructor supervision). As an initiate, you are also a representative of the AES. Therefore, you are expected to wear your uniform to events with other organizations and at all AES events and practises. Other privileges and responsibilities include:

- can participate as a representative of Academy/school or chapter at symposiums, workshops and conferences
- participate in the challenges of students for the playing for the prize of a initiate and savant rank
- participate in the challenges of students for the playing for the prize of a rank in other schools (upon invitation by that school)
- assist in the general operational and administrative aspects of the Academy/school (workshop coordination and setup, equipment administration, etc.)
- can participate in the governing body of the Academy in an advisory capacity or as part of the executive under invitation
- can participate and contribute to research & development projects, under the direction of a senior scholar, savant or higher ranked member
- provide assistance in training classes when called upon by the senior or junior instructor.

For The **Initiate Exam** you will have to demonstrate each of the following:

1. The standard eight cuts
2. A flourish containing at least 14 distinct moves, including counters, cuts, and thrusts. All eight cuts must be included in this flourish
3. An impromptu flourish.
4. The five numbered guards
5. High guard (Vom Dach)
6. Middle Guard (Pflug)
7. Tail
8. Proper thrusting from the five numbered guards
9. Eight defences to Oberhauwen (high attack)
10. Two Hangings, demonstrating their proper defensive and offensive uses.
11. Explain why Unterhauwen are always done with the long edge, as opposed to the short edge, and explain when the short edge is used in upwards attacks. Demonstrate short edge upwards attacks.
12. Demonstrate three types of attack (before, during, after)
13. Demonstrate voiding an attack from a weapon longer than yours (longsword).
14. Explain the primary targets with the shortsword.
15. Explain why the shortsword is considered superior in the view of George Silver.
16. Name the parts of the sword and describe its place in the historical development of European swords.
17. Explain the difference in using the dominant and non-dominant foot forwards in stances, including the advantages and disadvantages of each.
18. You will also have to do a prize play. This is a sparring event, where you spar against other members of the group and your instructor to demonstrate control and understanding of the principles of your weapon in application.

The shortsword is considered one of the basic weapons in European martial arts. Being an older weapon than any other form of sword, it has been studied from before the written record and writing about it goes back at least 4,000 years. We can see examples of the training from records well over 2,000 years old. However, it isn't until the Middle-Ages that we have records that are complete enough to study near complete systems from. One of the earliest treatises (~1300 C.E.), The I.33 manual, written in Latin by a former soldier turned monk, concentrates on the shortsword and buckler. Much of our modern study comes from this treatise and others like, and is completed by studies of individual examples from art and literature and small portions in other treatises that concentrate on other weapons.

The Basic Types of Strikes

Oberhau: descending strikes whether vertical or diagonal

Unterhau: rising strikes, vertical or diagonal, should only use the true edge with a short sword due to the power of the cut possibly tearing the sword from your hand or damaging the tendons on the wrist where it joins by the thumb.

Abschneiden / Schnitt <cut off / slice>: short, drawing cuts. These are safe from any direction, using either edge. Often the only attacks from below are slices (Schnitten).

There are names for some specific strikes:

1. Scheitelhau <parting cut>: the vertical cut that is high to the top of the head.
2. Zornhau <anger/rage cut>: a diagonal cut, usually from your strong to your weak side.
3. Zwerchhau <waist cut>: horizontal cut right to left
4. Mittelhau <middle cut>: horizontal cut left to right

Hut <guards>:

These are the guard positions that can be used with swords. Although most can be used with any sword, not all of them are appropriate to every sword. Some of the guards have a right, left and centre; some have a right and left, and others are only useful on one side or in the centre.

With the shortsword the guard positions are numbered from the first position (where the guard naturally goes to when drawn from the sheath) around five positions, with the fifth position ending much like Ochs on the non-dominant side (left for most people).

Foot position is primarily done with the left foot forward (for right-handers). However, while this position allows for stronger attacks, it is slightly slower in some attacks and defences. Having the right foot forward allows for very quick attacks and defences, but also limits some of the movements, including attacks and defences, that are possible in sword fighting. It is for this reason that the dominant stances are done with the left foot forward.

Speed of the shortsword is greater than that of any other weapon except knives/daggers and unarmed. For this reason Master George Silver states that the shortsword is a superior weapon to the longsword. When speaking of this, however, he is talking of a Renaissance backsword, which has some form of hand protection built into the sword. This shortsword is a bit longer than earlier swords, can be of a similar weight to earlier swords due to having a thinner blade, and is only sharpened part of the way down the short edge. A Messer could also fall into this category.

Because a shortsword is not usually strong enough to support a straight block, especially against a larger weapon (such as a longsword), many of the defences using it are deflecting the attack of the other opponent. For example, using a left Hengen, as illustrated in plates 224 and 231¹ of Talhoffer's 1467 Fechtbuch, where the sword is supported by the left arm during the deflection.

¹ Plate 231 includes the use of a buckler, yet the sword is still supported on the arm.

Parts of the Sword

Blade: divided into the Stark and the Schwach <weak>. These can be further divided into parts (Halbstark, Vollstark, Halbschwach, Vollschwach). Also called Hart und Weich <hard and soft>. Each edge is also named differently. These are the “true” and the “false”, also known as the front, or leading, and back, or trailing, edges. The sword also contains a fuller or groove/channel. A fuller is a shallow cut into the blade and down part of the length of the blade. This is also called a *channel*. A sword does not always have these, and they may have only one or more than one. A narrow, deep fuller is sometimes called a *fluke*. The opposite of a fuller is a raised portion on the blade, called a *fluke*. The groove is cut to lighten the blade without losing strength. Those few blades that have flukes have this added because they are very thin blades, and the fluke adds to the strength of the blade.

Handle: where you hold onto the sword, also called grip. This is usually made of bone, leather, wire, wood, horn or ivory.

Pommel: “little apple” – the counter balance at the end of the handle. Sometimes it includes a small rivet (capstan rivet) called a pommel nut, pommel bolt, or nut. On some medieval swords the pommel may be partially or fully gripped and handled.

Hilt: the “cross” part of the sword between the handle and the blade. Called the *Krüz* in German. On Renaissance swords, the two sides of the hilt may be called *quillions*. This is also sometimes called a guard.

Shoulder: where the blade meets the hilt

Tang: the hidden portion that runs the length of the handle and attaches to the pommel. Where the tang ends and the blade begins is the “shoulder”, where the hilt rests.

Ricasso: this part of the blade is the unsharpened area below the shoulder. Not all swords have this.

Annulet: also called a “finger ring”, this small ring of metal extends from the hilt to the blade. It is intended to protect a finger when used in a specific grip, where the finger is wrapped around the hilt. The annulet developed in the later Middle Ages and can be found on long swords and short swords, but are more common on Renaissance cut & thrust swords, rapiers and even small swords.

Initiate Oath

1. You shall uphold, maintain and keep to your power all such articles as shall be declared unto you by your Provost or Meister.
2. You shall be true student from this day unto the last day of your life, to love the true and hate falsehood, never to rebel and go against any Provost or Master of this science, always to be ruled by your master and the founding masters of this science.
3. You shall not teach this art to anyone until you have attained the ranking which allows for instruction, except under supervision of your Provost or Meister.
4. You shall not compare any other master to disparage his doings, and especially you shall not compare your Meister, under whom you now proceed and of whom you have had your Cunning, neither with Challenge nor with opprobrious words as touching our science in any way.
5. You shall not allow yourself to be abused in any way, but shall defend yourself from injury to the best of your abilities. This being said, you shall not provoke fights or cause fights to be made on your behalf.

6. You shall swear to keep this Initiate's oath in all points now given and declared unto you by me, your Provost or Meister, in the presence of our brethren of this science, by all you hold true and dear.