

CLEANING GEAR



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introduction

Fencing uniforms are wonderfully protective but can be terribly smelly. Here are some tips to help keep your stuff fresh and clean.

The biggest and most important piece of advice is not to leave sweaty gear in a fencing bag zipped up so it does not have a chance to air out to dry. Yuck. Talk about stinky and moldy. Don't be a fungi. Our families will have a separate "wet clothes" bag different from the other stuff that comes home from practice with everything going in the washing machine. We also have lockers to keep our blades, body cords, and masks at the club. Everything should have a chance to dry. Blades kept in wet or humid enclosed spaces will rust. Body cords could rust. Lamés can get green.

Please also look at the recommendations from the manufacturers for specific care instructions for your specific gear.

Jackets, plastrons, and knickers

Our families regularly washes our jackets and plastrons in the washing machine with cold water (no bleach) and hang it out to dry after *every* practice. That is why we smell so fresh. That is



why both our families have fencing gear in our dining room which serves as a jacket, plastron, and knicker drying area. You will get used to it.



The fencing uniforms are super expensive and can shrink when put in a dryer. Lee family jackets and knickers will rarely go in the dryer (such as when we are at a fencing camp or a North American Cup event for 10 days in a row and are afraid that we will be kicked out of our hotel room due to the smell) but that is more the exception than the rule. The Li family has never put their whites in the drier. Air drying is less risk for shrinking.

gloves

The Li family will prewash their new gloves *before* giving it to the kids to use for the first time. Both our families tends to avoid washing gloves until they start to be a bit smelly. Sometimes that is a bit too late. But gloves can fall apart with too much washing. Or shrink. And the heavily padded ones take longer to dry. We put the gloves in the same wash as the jackets and plastrons when we do wash them. And we air dry these bad boys, too.

masks

Masks are not washed all the time. You may want to check with your mask manufacturer guidelines. Both our families use the Leon Paul X-Change mask. The Li family uses dish soap in a sink and the Lee family puts their masks in the top rack of the dish washer all by itself and without detergent and with the air drying setting (no heat). All the padding in these masks as well as the bib can be removed. The padding can be put in the washer with the jacket and plastron. But washing the Leon Paul ice padding too frequently will cause the Velcro to be less sticky and some of the padding to fall apart. It does come out fresh. The bibs can be dunked in water. And air dried. I would be just as careful about the foil and saber bibs as I would with lamés because you don't want to mess up the conductivity. If you fail the equipment test a new bib is around \$70. The Lee family has put an Uhlmann épée mask through the dishwasher with padding that cannot be removed. It came out smelling great. But it took a few days to air dry.



lamés

The Li family will put their lamés and conductive bibs in the bath with mild detergent and an equal part of Windex following the advice by the Academy of Fencing Masters lamé cleaning tips by Irina Chirashnya. The QR code to the article is included on the right column.

The Lee family will generally hang dry the lamés after practice. The practice lamés have dead spots on them to some degree and otherwise do not pass equipment check. If they start smelling or dead spots seem to get worse the lamé gets put in the shower with no detergent. And they are put on a

hanger to hang dry. Lee family competition lamés which are saved for special occasions (competition only) are put on a hanger to dry immediately after the event. They are very rarely washed and if so in the shower without detergent. Honestly, there is great fear in the Lee household of messing up the conductivity, the lamés generally don't stink because they are the outermost layer, and they do not turn green if you get the more expensive stainless steel or whatever fancy material is available. The least expensive lamés do not seem to last as long and do turn green so may need more regular care with the detergent and Windex washing method.



about the authors

Toby Lee has been fencing since 1986 and has been a volunteer coach at Metro Tacoma Fencing Club (MTFC) since 2008. His jacket and plastron always smell fresh. His glove needs washing.

Deborah Li has twin boys who are both fencers since 2014 but neither offends their opponent because their gear is clean and fresh.

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