ACC Sword and Shield Duels Rules

Discipline-specific scoring, rounds and fight procedures

These rules govern ACC Sword and Shield Duels and supplement the ACC General Rules, which apply in full. The General Rules remain the foundation for fighter conduct, equipment, prohibited target areas and actions, safety, and sanctions. If these discipline rules do not specify a matter, the General Rules apply.

In these rules, “List Marshal” and “List Referee” refer to the same official, called the maréchal de lice in French. “Points Referees” score the fighters’ actions; the Head Points Referee receives their scores and reports the round results.

1. Sword and shield-specific rules

- All weapon, shield, and armour requirements in the ACC General Rules apply to this discipline.
- Sword strikes may be made with the blade’s edge. Thrusting or stabbing actions with any part of the sword are strictly prohibited. Shield strikes are permitted, but only strikes made with the shield’s edge count as valid scoring hits. Strikes with the shield’s flat or face are permitted but score no points.
- A fighter may not seize or restrain an opponent’s sword by hand, arm, body, or equipment. Grasping or holding any part of the sword, hooking or pinning it, or trapping it under the arm in a ‘chicken wing’ is prohibited.
- A sword may not be attached to the fighter’s hand or gauntlet by a lanyard or other locking mechanism that prevents the fighter from being disarmed.
- All target-area restrictions and other prohibited actions in the ACC General Rules remain in force.

2. Scoring

Scoring action	Points
Valid strike with the sword blade edge or shield edge	1 point
Valid fist, elbow, headbutt, knee, or kick strike	1 point
Disarm	3 points to the opponent
Successful, validated takedown	3 points

A valid strike must be delivered with impact and must comply with the ACC General Rules. The Points Referees are the sole judges of whether a strike is valid, except for the controlled strike used to validate a takedown; the maréchal de lice clearly signals that action.

3. Takedowns and ground fighting

3.1 Takedown validation

A successful takedown is worth 3 points as one action, including its validating strike. The fighter who initiated the takedown must establish a dominant position and clearly demonstrate an unblocked strike to the downed opponent’s upper body, head, or arms. The validating strike does not need to be forceful; a controlled, sportsmanlike demonstration is sufficient and will be recognized by the maréchal de lice.

A takedown that is defended does not score if the fighter who initiated it cannot demonstrate the validating strike from a dominant position. The takedown and validating strike are not scored separately; together they are one 3-point action.

3.2 Dominant position

A fighter is in a dominant position when they have no more than two points of support on the ground, such as both feet, or one foot and one hand. Each hand, foot, or knee on the ground counts as a support point. The shield does not count as an additional point of support, even when it touches the ground. A fighter lying prone is treated as having more than two points of support and is not in a dominant position. A knee placed on the downed opponent’s abdomen does not count as an additional support point.

3.3 Non-dominant position

During ground fighting, a fighter who is not in a dominant position may not strike their opponent. They must focus on grappling and protecting themselves to defend against or neutralize the opponent's strikes.

3.4 Unsafe positioning

Presenting the sword's point toward an opponent in an estoc or thrusting guard is prohibited for safety reasons. A fighter may not deliberately present or interpose a non-target area of the body to block a strike or provoke an illegal strike. This is unsafe behaviour and may be sanctioned by the maréchal de lice under the ACC General Rules.

3.5 Ground-fighting limit

Ground fighting is permitted for no more than five seconds from the moment either fighter reaches the ground, regardless of striking or other activity. At the end of those five seconds, the maréchal de lice halts the ground exchange and orders both fighters to stand. Fighting resumes only on the maréchal de lice's command.

Strikes during ground fighting do not score as ordinary 1-point strikes. The only scoring ground action is a validated takedown: the controlled, unblocked strike to the upper body, head, or arms is part of that single 3-point action. All ground-fighting restrictions in the ACC General Rules continue to apply.

4. Clinch and separation

Clinch work is permitted. If neither fighter strikes for five seconds during a clinch, the maréchal de lice separates them and orders them to resume. Fighters may restart only on that command.

A fighter may also use the flat of their shield to pin an opponent against the list or ring. This is permitted and is not clinch fighting; the five-second separation rule does not apply.

5. Disarms and equipment failures

A sword disarm awards 3 points to the opponent. A sword dropped deliberately or unintentionally counts as a disarm. A sword that breaks during the bout also counts as a disarm and awards 3 points to the opponent.

When the maréchal de lice sees a disarm, they clearly halt the fight and notify the Points Referees. The fighter may retrieve the weapon. The maréchal de lice then re-centres both fighters and, when ready, commands them to resume. Neither fighter may restart before that command.

A broken sword may not be used again under the ACC General Rules. Any replacement sword must be inspected and approved before the bout resumes.

A shield that breaks is treated as equipment failure, not as a disarm; no disarm points are awarded. The maréchal de lice stops the bout and allows the fighter a full 60 seconds to repair or replace the shield. The repaired or replacement shield must be inspected and approved before the bout resumes. If the fighter or their team cannot repair or replace the shield to the maréchal de lice's satisfaction within these 60 seconds, the fighter is declared the loser.

6. Rounds and bout result

A duel begins with two rounds, each lasting up to two minutes. The Points Referees assigned to each fighter record that fighter's valid scoring actions for each round. The scores from the referees assigned to one fighter are averaged; if the average is not a whole number, it is rounded down before being submitted to the Head Points Referee. The fighter with the higher total score wins the round. An equal total is a drawn round.

At the end of the second round, the Head Points Referee communicates the results to the maréchal de lice and ACC officials.

- The fighter who wins both opening rounds wins the duel.
- A third round is held if each fighter has won one of the first two rounds.
- A third round is also held if both fighters have drawn both of the first two rounds.
- If one fighter wins one round and the other round is drawn, there is no third round; the fighter who won the round wins the duel.

- If the third round is drawn, a final 30-second round is held. If that round is also drawn, the duel is declared a draw (match nul).

7. Commands and enforcement

Only the maréchal de lice may separate fighters or command them to resume fighting. Fighters must obey all orders and must not start or resume before the maréchal de lice’s command. Ignoring an order may result in a warning or other sanction under the ACC General Rules.

Warnings and penalties follow the ACC General Rules. The maréchal de lice may stop the bout to protect fighters, enforce the rules, or restore safe conditions.