

Sword and Shield

Unlike other fighting styles that employ one weapon for both offense and defense, Sword and Shield requires the skilled manipulation of two separate objects which both have very different functions.

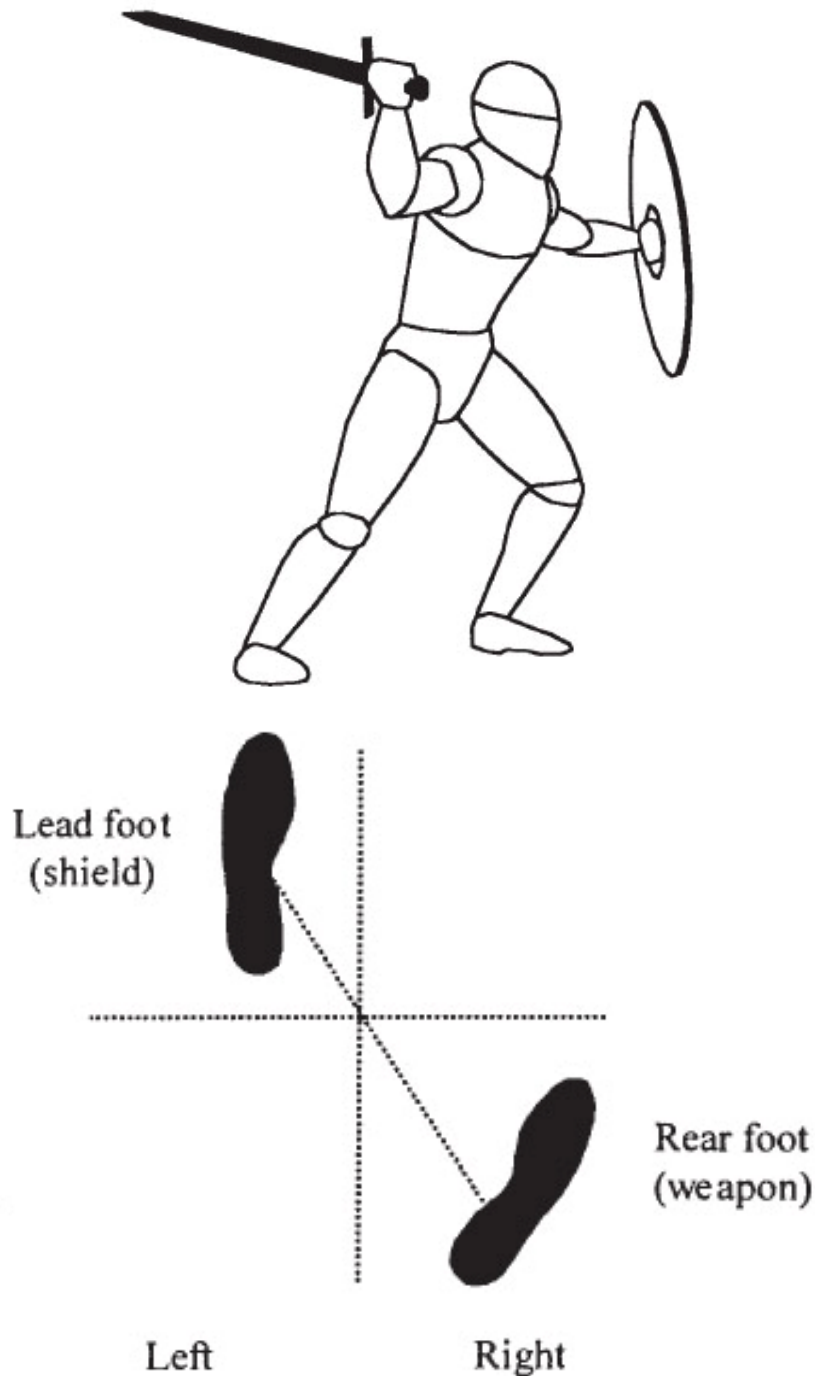
The Shield is your defensive weapon. Its primary purpose is to protect you from all incoming strikes. It can also be used to distract your opponent, block his vision, redirect his blade, and hook his shield to create an opening for your attack. **Your shield should always be between you and your opponent.**

The Sword is your offensive weapon. Its purpose is to cut down the enemy quickly and efficiently. Since a sword that is parrying or blocking cannot also be attacking, **your sword should not be used in a defensive manner.** Your shield is perfectly capable of handling defense on its own.

The key to being successful at Sword and Shield is learning to use both objects simultaneously. You must be able to reposition your shield to block an incoming attack while you are attacking your opponent. Likewise, you must be able to successfully block an opponent's attack, spot an opening caused by that attack, and then take advantage of that opening while you are blocking with your shield.

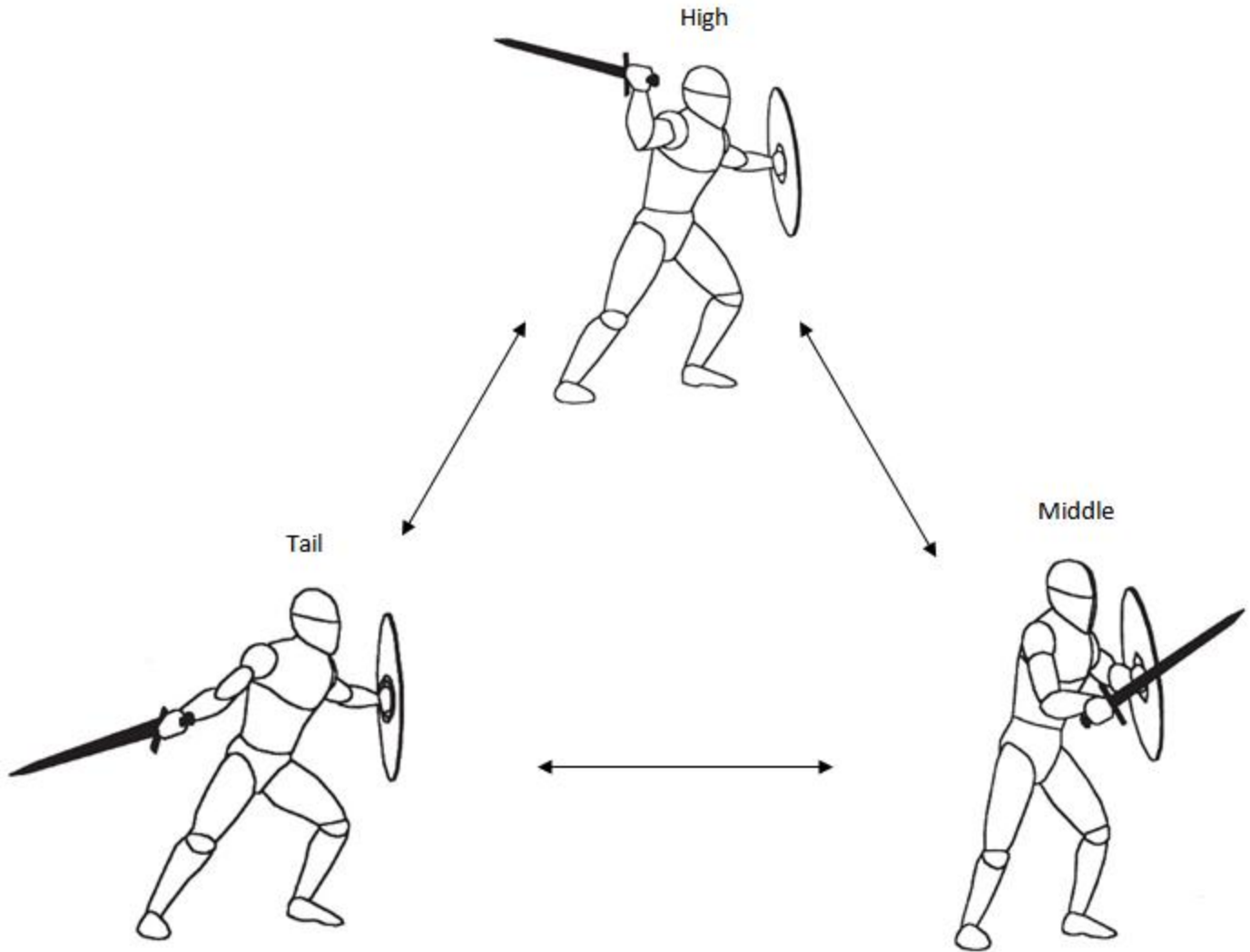
Stance

The knees should be bent slightly to allow for sudden motion. For balance and mobility both feet should be a with the majority of the weight on the balls of the feet. The lead foot should point toward the opponent, and the rear foot should be at roughly a 45-degree angle. The feet should be roughly shoulder distance apart for maximum balance and agility. The back should be straight yet slightly forward and not hunched over or rounded. The shoulders should not be slouched, nor should they be too tense.

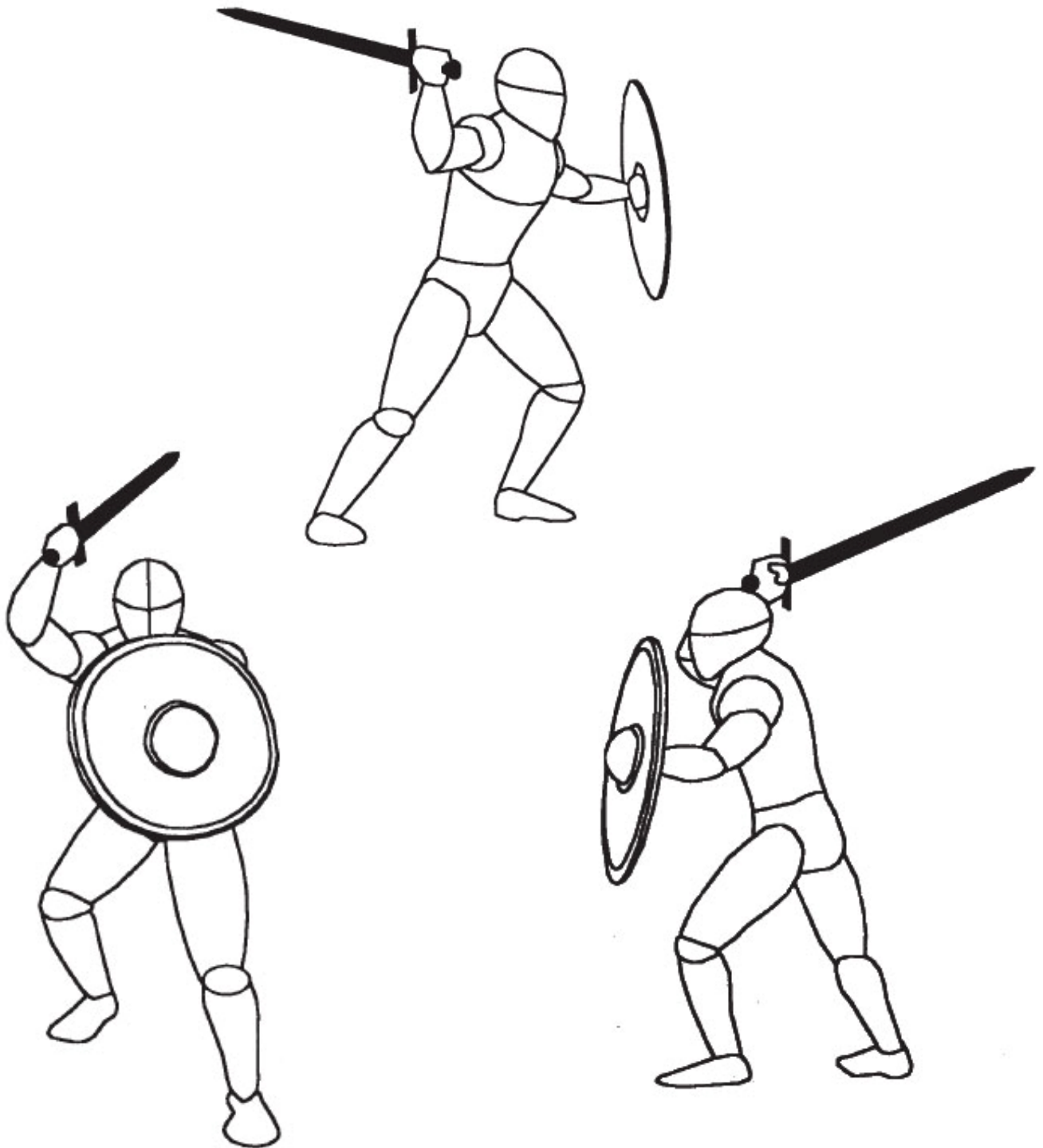


Guards

A guard is a position which provides a tactical advantage. In sword and shield, there are three main guards: High Guard, Middle Guard, and Tail Guard. Each of these guards transitions into each other guard.



High Guard

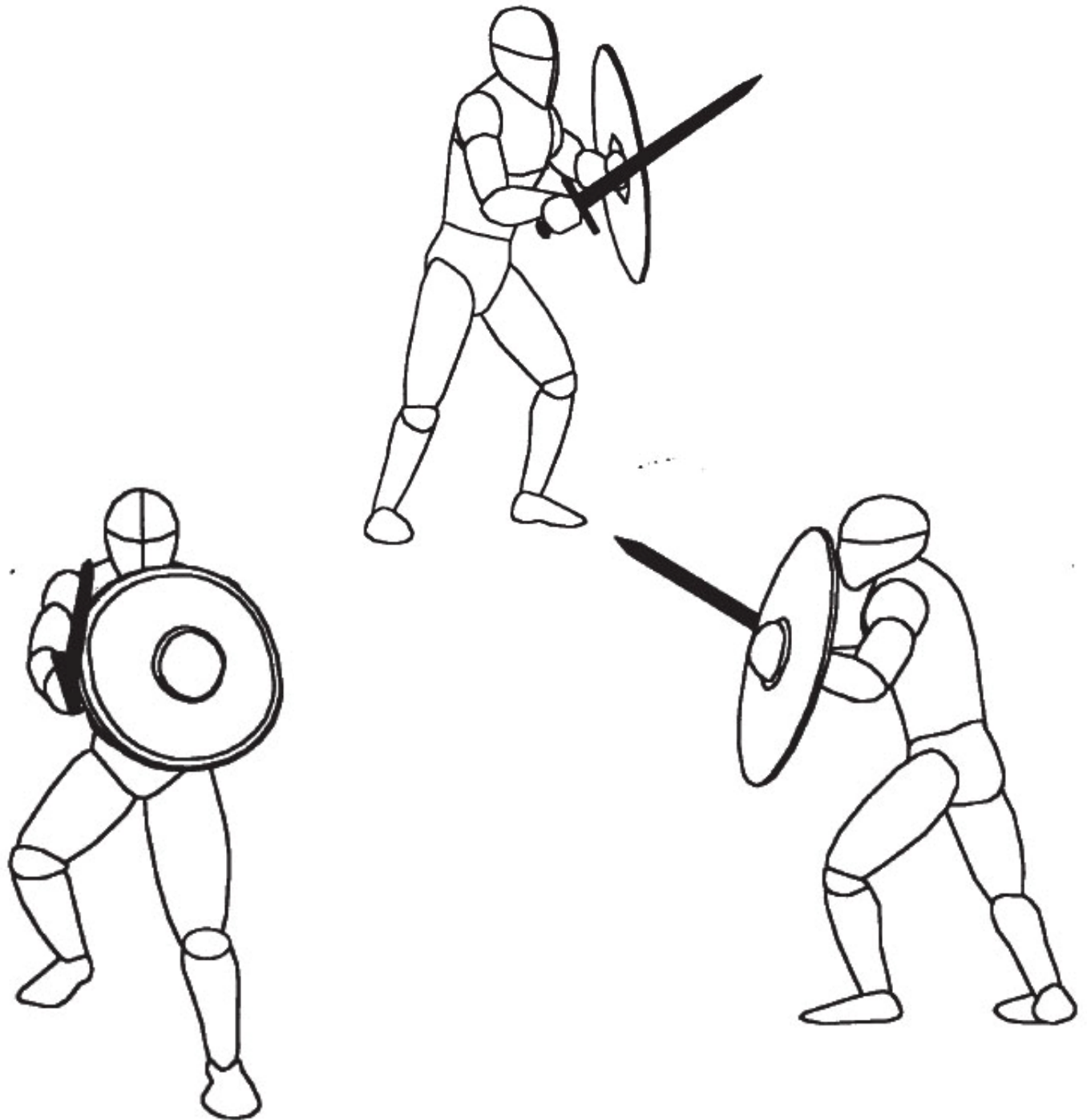


In High Guard, the sword is held high at about a 45-degree angle with the hand positioned above the forehead so the pommel is just within peripheral vision. The edge of the blade is vertically aligned, and the hilt is pointed at the opponent. High Guard is an aggressive, provoking guard.

Advantages: Most primary strikes can be quickly executed from this stance.

Disadvantages: Sword arm is unprotected and becomes a primary target.

Middle Guard

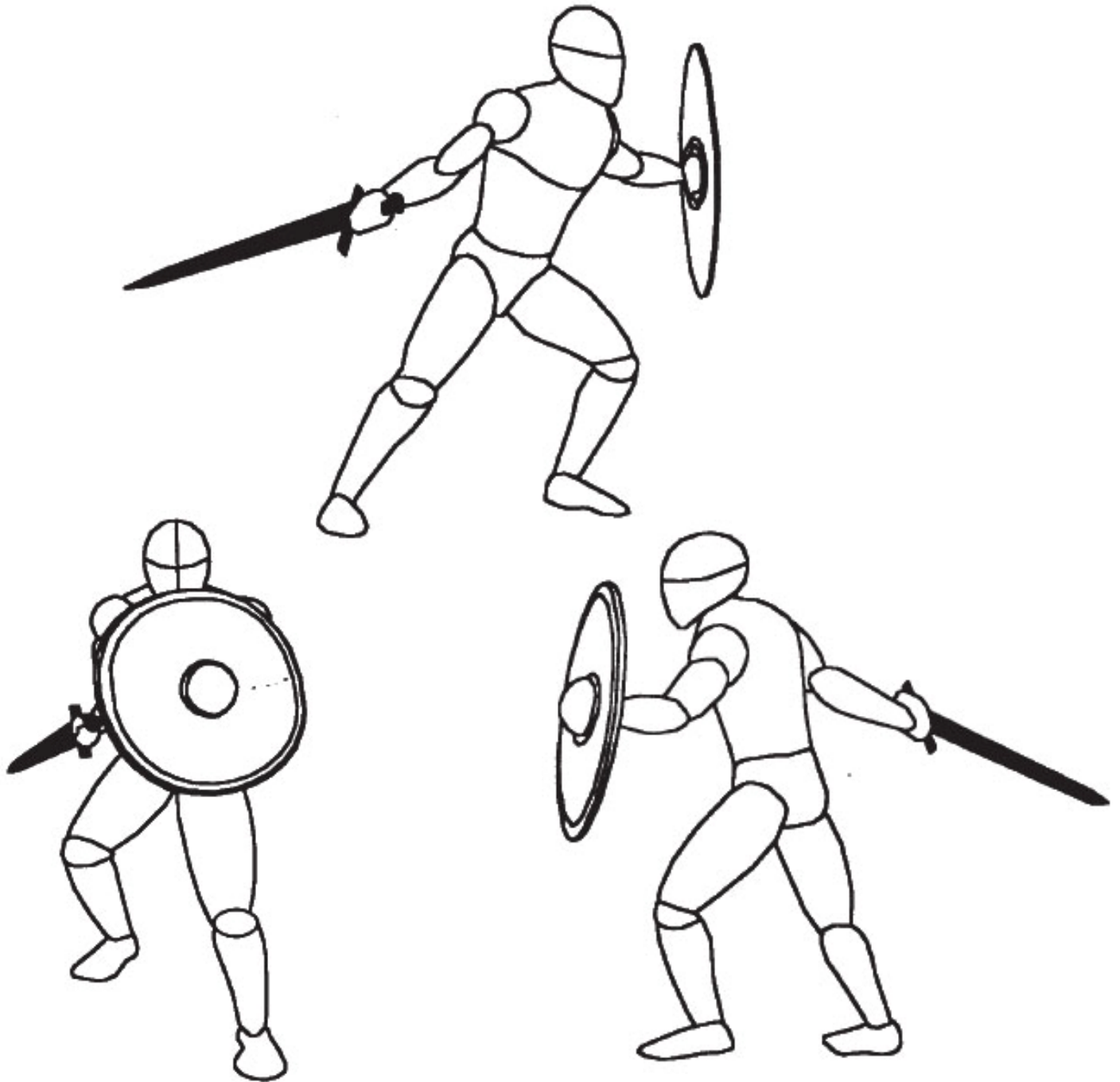


In Middle Guard, the sword is held forward at about a 45-degree angle. The edge of the blade is vertically aligned and should be placed near or against the edge of the shield so as to provide protection for the sword arm and hand. Middle Guard is a somewhat neutral guard that presents a defensive and expectant attitude.

Advantages: Sword arm is well protected by shield.

Disadvantages: More difficult to get around the shield for left side strikes.

Tail Guard



In Tail Guard, the sword is held behind and low with the tip facing backward at about a 45-degree angle. The sword is held such that the knuckles are pointed at the ground and the palm is facing away from the body. Unlike the first two guards, Tail Guard posture is slightly forward with the rear leg slightly back. Tail Guard is a deceptive guard with an appearance of vulnerability.

Advantages: Sword arm protected by distance. Sword is hidden by shield and body, allowing deceptive use of all five primary strikes, but especially low strikes.

Disadvantages: Sword has a longer distance to travel, so strikes become more reliant on speed.

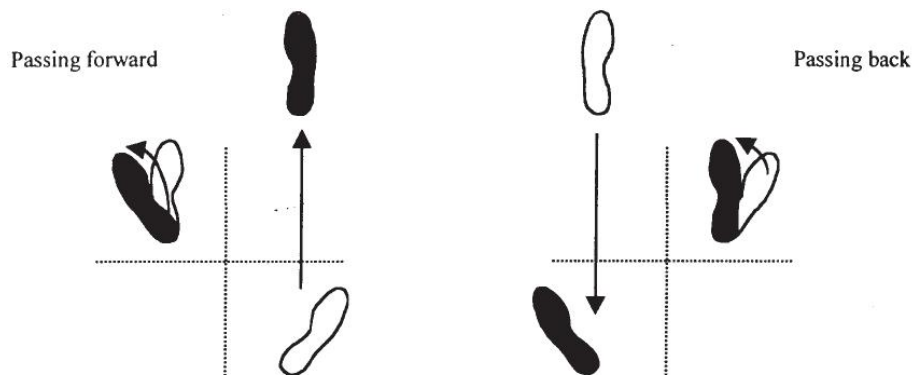
Motion

There are two basic steps in sword and shield: Passing Steps and Gathered Steps.

Passing Steps are accomplished by moving one foot past the other. This type of step is used to cover distance during an attack. Note that this step changes your stance from forward (shield leg forward) to reverse (weapon leg forward).

When Passing Forward, a strong advancing step is made with the rear leg so that it "passes" to the front. The shield leg pivots slightly on the ball of the foot as the rear leg steps to become the new lead.

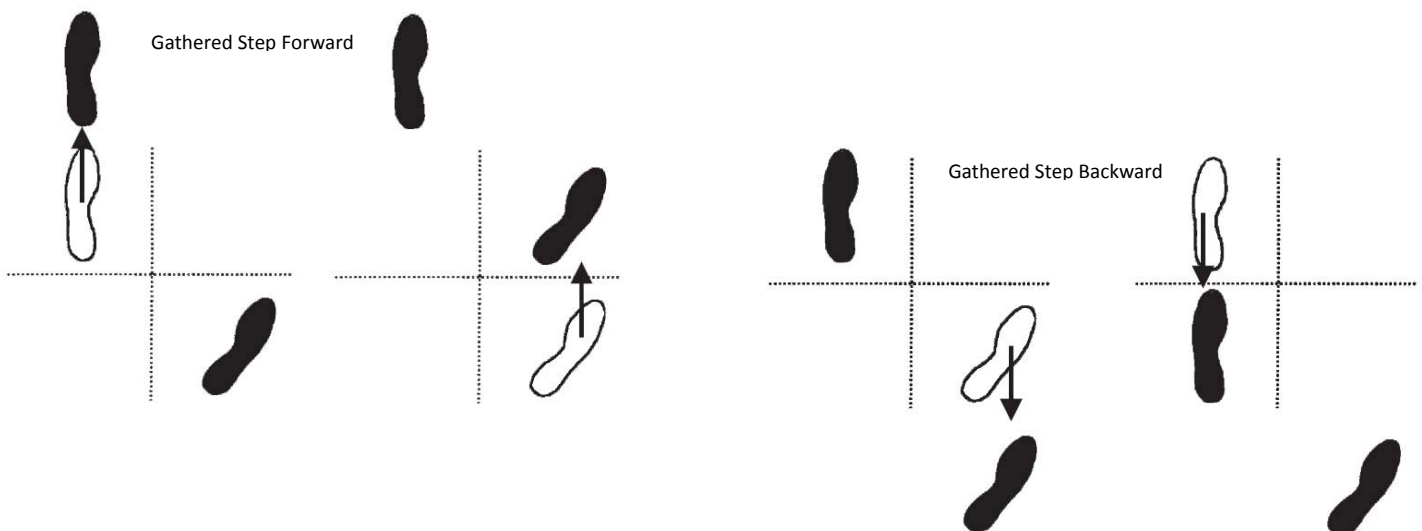
When Passing Back, the leading shield leg "passes" back to reverse the stance. At this same time the rear foot simultaneously turns slightly to become the new lead.



Gathered Steps are accomplished by taking a shuffling step forward or backward. This type of step is used to cover distance while maintaining a Forward Stance.

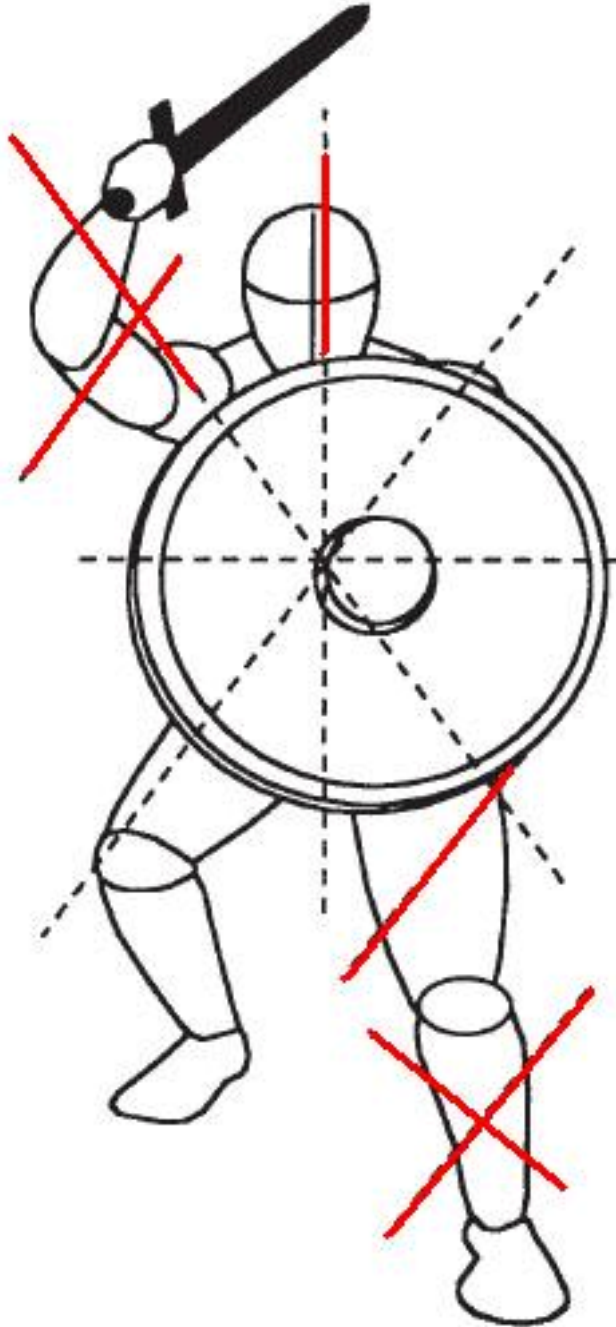
To perform a Gathered Step Forward, take a small step forward with the lead (shield) leg and then move the trailing (weapon) leg forward enough to maintain a proper stance.

To perform a Gathered Step Backward, take a small step backward with the trailing (weapon) leg and then move the lead (shield) leg backward enough to maintain a proper stance.



Targeting

The primary areas to strike are the head, sword arm and hand, and legs. The opponent's stance will determine which of these areas are most vulnerable.



Strikes

There are 5 primary strikes when using sword and shield: left diagonal downward, downward, right diagonal downward, right horizontal, and right diagonal upward. While making a strike, do not allow your shield arm to swing out and away from your body, "opening up" your guard. Keep your shield between you and your opponent at all times.

