

What's in your kit?

by Kirsten Crouse

For those who know me, I am big on my little armory kit. I get teased about it and of course there was that one embarrassing episode in Mexico. Most of the time I hardly ever need it, but when there is a problem, gosh, it sure is handy. Since I carry more than a shim and tester I have been asked: "So, what all do you have in there and do you really need it?"

This is not a how-to-fix your 'x, y or z' article. I'll leave that to the experts like Ted Li and other generous armory professionals who have shared their talents with in depth articles, books and online information. Read them and start taking notes in your own armory notebook. There is a lot of good stuff available out there.

I want to encourage and motivate youth, parents and new fencers to start putting together your own "go-kit." I'll share what my personal travel armory must haves are along with some suggestions. Don't worry that this is epee focused. Get recommendations from your coach, club armorer or favorite fencer based on what weapon you use. You can purchase the tools here and there from your favorite fencing vendor online or at the big NACs and Nationals and some SYCs.

As to what you absolutely must have on hand, I'm not claiming any expertise. This is just what I use. Originally I started with a tester set to make our coach happy, but then started acquiring additional repair items as we learned the hard way why it might be nice to have them on hand.

Generally, blades and body cords are what require the most attention and repair. (Hush saber fencers — count yourself lucky with your blades.)

When a body cord fails, we repair it at home and just grab a spare. With blades, most of the components can easily be replaced or fixed strip side. With some problems, like a broken wire, it is easier to grab a spare blade and fix it at home. If it must be fixed ASAP, I rush over to the very much appreciated onsite armorer.

Having all this stuff is a stress saver, but completely useless if it is too troublesome to travel with. I find it critical to have an efficient

way to store it all. After much trial and error, I personally recommend the "Plano ProLatch #2-3750" for roughly \$7.00 followed by a "WorkForce 14" Storage Organizer" for about \$5.00. They both have minor pros and cons.

They fit easily in a fencing bag, a book bag, backpack, or under your arm. They are about the size of a legal pad, thin, and hold everything I like to have on hand. You can see what you need at a glance without rummaging and digging.

A small travel make-up/toiletry bag works great for the first aid & extras kit and stores easily. Ideally you want something that lives in a corner next to the spare blades and cords that you just grab and go when it is tournament time.

Now this is a Captain Obvious statement, but it needs to be said. The more you actually use the tools, the more confident you will be in your repair skills. You should be able to replace a missing tip at competition without breaking a sweat. During a tournament, calm and confident is always a plus, so pick up that old blade that has been giving you fits and go to town.

Even if you make mistakes (and you will), you will still be ahead in that you now have a better understanding of what is going on with your weapon.

FYI, you can over tighten tip screws in a fit of rage so they NEVER come loose and ground out the whole blade by puncturing the insulation in the tip (and a receive a yellow card due to equipment failure if you don't test the blade before taking it on the strip).

Every single time I think my kit or some items are unnecessary, that is when we really need them. Case



in point: 2011 Reno Summer Nationals. While on strip, my son's grips were loose.

All. Of. Them. ???!!! Guess what item was sitting at home? My key wrench now lives in our go kit.

And last, if you travel, go ahead and check your kit in baggage. All it takes is a misinformed security agent handing out bad days or a change in the rules and you could loose the one tool you will be guaranteed to need once you don't have it.

May your equipment never fail and your touches all land true! ■



My Epee Kit Basics & More:

- 1 Tip Screwdriver
- 2 Tip Screws
- 3 Pressure Springs
- 4 Contact Springs
- 5 Extra Tips
- 6 Barrel Wrench
- 7 Tester
- 8 Shim
- 9 Weight
- 10 Key Wrench
- 11 Flat head Screwdriver
- 12 Magnet
- 13 Extra Socket

- 14 Wire Glue
- any cyano-acrylate glue. I find thinner types are stronger. "A drop in time will keep it fine and in the line."
- 15 Tweezers
- socket wire repair.
- actual splinter removal
- 16 White carpet thread with needle
- repair torn darts on jacket or replace knicker buttons.
- Emergency repair on jacket zippers.

EXTRAS:

- 1 White duct tape
- emergency pants repair when knicker Velcro or buttons jump ship.
- best first aid accessory ever.
- 2 Tournament Phone Charger
- 3 Hot/Cold pack
- 4 Neosporin
- 5 Benadryl
- 6 Alcohol Swab Packs
- 7 Band-Aids
- 8 Quart Plastic Bags
- emergency ice packs.