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Hello and welcome to the first class. In this class, we're going to cover a very gentle warmup, some basic footwork actions, and some basic sword handling. The idea is, by the end of this class, you will be beginning to move in the manner of a swordsman. Take it gently and remember, no injuries. Let's start with a gentle swing. Nice and relaxed. Nice and easy. Of course, if you're already super fit and you feel like doing your own warmup, that is perfectly all right. And relax and gently turn the foot. Of course, I'm also checking to make sure that you can stand on one leg. Other way. Other side. Other way. And relax. Feet together, hands on your knees. Gentle rotations. Other way. And relax. Feet about shoulder width, and gently sit and come up. The thing to watch for, if you haven't done the knee maintenance videos already, you should do those. The thing to watch for is that your knees track your feet so there's no wobble-wobble.

It doesn't matter if you can't go very low. Just nice and relaxed. Nice and easy. Reach up. Keeping your legs straight, gently stretch forward and up. Pick up a foot and gently stretch the thigh. Very gently. Other side. And relax. Open the shoulders. Other way. Opposite directions. Other way. And relax the wrists. Other way. And relax and gently swing. Now, the point of this warmup is not to get you fit. It's simply to run a set of diagnostics through the system we are about to use, just to make sure there's nothing in your body that's going to distract you from trying to step correctly and use swords and that sort of thing. If during that little run through, you found that your shoulder's a bit stiff or your legs are a bit stiff or what have you, feel free to pause the video for a little bit, sort it out, and get yourself feeling nice and relaxed and properly in your body before you carry on.

Let's begin with the footwork. Fiore gives us, on this page here, basic instructions for four steps and three turns. We'll take these in order. If you start with your feet parallel and as if you're about to walk somewhere and you take a longish step forward with your weight going onto your front foot, you'll find yourself in more or less Fiore's guard position. We will go into details eventually, but now let's just keep things nice and relaxed. In this position, if I want to pass forwards, I end up in this position. If I pass backwards, I'm back where I started. From a standing position, you go into the guard position. If you pass forwards, that's *passare*, to pass. If you pass backwards, that's *tornare*, to return. The first two steps are *passare* and *tornare*. If you start with the other leg, *passare*, *tornare*. Now, an awful lot of what you will be doing will be multiple passes of one sort of another. Feel free to have a little walk, but the thing I want you to pay

attention to is, as you pass forwards and backwards, imagine you had a bowl of water here. You don't want to spill it.

This stays completely level and completely stable. There are limits to how far I can move and stay on camera. If you have more space, feel free to play with your *passare* and *tornare*. There will be times when you want to go forwards or backwards, but you want to keep the same side forward. To do this, you step forward with the front foot or step back with the back foot. Let me show you that from the side. Step forward with the front foot. Step back with the back foot. Of course, this has fancy Italian names. *Accrescere*, to go forwards. *Discreocere*, going backwards. To increase, literally, *accrescere*. To decrease, literally *discreocere*. You should become comfortable in *accrescere* and in *discreocere* with the left foot forward, and *accrescere* and *discreocere* with the right foot forward. *Passare* with either foot and *tornare* with either foot. Those are the four steps. The three turns. The three turns are the stable turn, which Fiore defines quite clearly as with both feet fixed, I can play in front and behind on the same side.

The way you do this is with your weight on one foot, weight on the balls of the feet, you turn and push your weight onto the other foot. It's often helpful to stick your hands out as if you're going in this direction and then change direction and go in this direction. The trick is to get your weight completely from one foot to the other. The weight is completely on this leg. *Volta stabile*. Let me show you that from the front. When, with both feet fixed, in other words neither foot moves on the ground, I can play in front and behind on the same side. *Meza volta*. This is almost a cheat, because you've basically done it. It's a pass, as Fiore says, when with a pass forwards or backwards, you can play on the other side. The jazz hands are completely optional, but if nobody's watching, go ahead and do it. *Meza volta*. Going backwards. I change sides from one to the other. *Meza volta* going forwards. I change sides from one to the other.

Last of the turns is the *tutta volta*, which is as Fiore says, one foot stays fixed and the other one turns around it. He doesn't say how far or in what direction, but generally speaking, if I start on this line, we tend to practice the *tutta volta* in its largest form, which is 180 degrees, and in its most difficult form, which is 180 degrees backwards. In theory, any time one foot stays fixed and the other one turns around it, you have a *tutta volta*. *Tutta volta, tutta volta*. Your three turns are *volta stabile, meza volta*, which can be in either direction, and a *tutta volta*. What I would like you now to do is pause the video and go and play with your four steps, *accrescere, discreocere, passare, tornare*, and your three turns, *volta stabile, meza volta, and tutta volta*. You will find in the additional material for this course, you will find a glossary. If you have difficulty remembering the Italian terms, that puts you in very good company, because most of my students do.

Print out the glossary and keep it handy, because you will need to know these terms because they are specific to this art. Have you done that? Excellent. Welcome back. The four guards that Fiore gives us in the very beginning of the book are *posta longa*, where one arm is extended. *Posta dente di zenghiaro*, where the arm is bent and coming up and is rising like a boar's tooth. *Posta longa* means long positive. *Posta dente di zenghiaro* means the position of the tooth of the wild boar. *Posta frontale*, where both hands go out, which is the frontal position. And *posta di tutta porta di ferro*, which is the position of the whole iron door. So, show those from the front. *Posta longa* is here. *Dente di zenghiaro*. is here. *Frontale* is here, and *tutta porta di ferro* is here. We have a simple way to remember it, though. A little exercise just to get you started. From a normal standing position, grab their throat, break their jaw, thumbs in eyes, head on floor. You can do that going in the other direction. Grab their throat, break their jaw, thumbs in eyes, head on floor.

This makes a lot more sense if you have a partner. This is Zoe Chandler. She's been training with me for a long time. She's helping me on these videos. Now, I just need your throat to begin with. I grab her throat. I break her jaw, crunch. Thumbs in eyes, crunch. Head on floor. I'd end up down here, but I'm nice. If it helps to put an imaginary me in the way as you do it, that's fine. Or a real Zoe, if you can find one. That's also fine. What I'd like you now to do—thank you, Zoe—what I'd like you now to do is seeing what you're doing, play with these four guards, and play with the four steps and the three turns. You have a lot to play with. You have the four guards. *Posta longa*, *posta*, *posta frontale*, and *posta di tutta porta di ferro*. Remember your glossary. You have the three turns. *Volta stabile*, *meza volta*, *tutta volta*. And you have the four steps. *Accrescere*, *discreocere*, *passare*, and *tornare*. The thing is, once you can move fluidly through all the four guards with a combination of steps without ever once feeling unstable, you are starting to move in the way that this system wants you to move.

Now, we'd have a look at the idea of grounding. This is one of the fundamental principles of all martial arts. Basically, what it means is, arranging your skeleton behind the action that you're making so that force coming in from your opponent has a natural and safe path through you into the ground. If I'm in *posta longa*, obviously, I am probably delivering force in some way in this direction. Now, we can test this structure with a little bit of gentle pressure. If Zoe takes my hand, puts it into her shoulder and applies some pressure in the direction where I'm trying to apply force—go ahead. What that does is, it gives me a tactile sense of where the force is going, and that tells me what the structure is doing. If I feel, for example—pause a second. If I feel that, for example, if my shoulder is in the wrong place and I can feel the pressure sticking in my shoulder, I know that I need to pause, make a correction in my shoulder, and see whether that gives me more of a sense of this force coming down into the ground.

With your partner, go through—*posta longa*'s the best place to start, usually. *Posta longa*, please. See if you can, by using this sense of the pressure, see if you can find one place in your body

where you can make a change that would improve the line by which my force is going through Zoe and into her back foot. Notice my purpose in giving this pressure is to help her find those places not to break her structure. And relax. I'm willing to bet that most of you doing this—some pressure—forgot about this arm. See what happens to your grounding if you press back a little bit with this hand. I'm not going to make any predictions. I want you to find it out for yourself. And relax. There is no end to how far you can take this process, but as a general rule, we'll be using gentle pressure to establish the ground path to make specific technical corrections to your guard positions.

Now, I'm not there to say, tuck in your tailbone or drop your shoulder or reach more through the elbow or whatever. You have to make those corrections yourself, but you should be aware that when I'm teaching a class, I don't normally make specific technical corrections. What I do is, I maybe make a physical adjustment with my hands on a person, or I just simply change the exercise so they will naturally find that better position, and then we test the position and sure enough, there it is. I don't want you to have a shopping list in your head of technical corrections for your guard position. What I want you to have is a feeling of, this is beautifully grounded and structured so that you will naturally want to be in this position and you will naturally avoid the Frankenstein version of the arm. Now, a little exercise you can do to help you get started with this process is, we can make a little scientific study. Where should be my weight be on my feet? For this, I'm going to stand with my feet like so, and I'm going to start with my weight on my heels, and I'm going to rock the weight gently forward to at least four different places on the foot before I end up on my toes. What Zoe is going to do is, with a couple of friendly fingers, give me gentle pressure in the middle of my chest so I can establish the stability or otherwise of these positions. Go ahead. I'm looking for a judgement call.

Somewhere in there, there was a position where I feel I can absorb Zoe's pressure into the ground most easily, where it is more difficult for her to make me take a step. That is the placement of your weight on your feet that you will generally want when dealing with pressure coming in this line. In a swordfight, almost all the pressure comes in this sort of line. I want you to do that exercise and establish where on your foot that weight should be, and if you're not sure, just keep doing the exercise until you can find it. Then, I want you to, remembering where your weight should be on your feet and why, I want you to go back and play with your guard positions and your footwork, all the time looking for keeping the weight where you know it ought to be. Now, we get to the bit you've been waiting for. The sword. The most important thing is that you do not injure yourself or anybody else. Even if it is a relatively safe practice weapon with a bit of flex and what have you, it is still perfectly easy to murder people with this.

You have to remember that this is a force multiplier. A slap that would just annoy somebody, if you stick a sword in your hand, suddenly, it gets a whole hell of a lot harder. It does a lot more

damage. So, you want to stay relaxed and gentle and careful. Let's start with, how do you hold the sword? There are lots of grips, and we will get into all of them eventually, but to begin with, the not sharp bit. The cross guard is pretty much up against the fingers, and in this position, the blade is at right angles to my forearm. We call this the chambered grip. If I'm striking, I want to be able to extend the sword, and we do that by letting it move in the grip. The trick to this, the secret is, you take this finger and you hook it under the handle there and you use this part of the palm on top of the handle. That is the thing that holds the sword in your hand, which means that these two fingers, we call this the Ozzy Osbourne grip, these two fingers are free to—the little finger secures it, the forefinger directs it, and the thumb is almost unnecessary, but it's a very, very useful manipulation device, and a lock to hold the sword in the hand so it doesn't escape.

From your chambered grip, you move to your extended grip. This movement is one of the critical skills that you need to pick up. We're going to take a moment to go through it. Hold the sword in a chambered grip, support it with the pommel just so these fingers don't have to do too much work here, and slide it to an extended grip, and slide it back to a chambered grip. Extended. Chambered. Extended. Chambered. Extended. Chambered. If that's easy, then by all means, go ahead and do it just with the fingers. Of course, left handers, exactly the same thing. It's not a bad idea for right handers to practice on both sides, and left handers, too, because it gives your brain another way of handling the information. Once we've got the sword comfortably and relaxed in the grip and your other hand goes on the pommel, and that's either way around, depending on whether your left-handed or right, you can stick the weapon on your shoulder and you can just, in a relaxed and gentle manner, just swing it from one shoulder to the other. No skill, no style. It'll tend to look a little bit like a golf swing. That's okay. You'll notice that the blows are crossing somewhere down there, because that's where most people will naturally start with this motion.

What I want you to do is bring that point where they would cross up. I'm just throwing it from one shoulder to the other. You'll notice, this naturally creating a *volta stabile* effect. Coincidence? Of course, most of the time, your opponent doesn't stand in front of you and you just swing at each other like this. That's not normal sword fighting, but it's really important that you start with something that's comfortable and then we modify it into the desired technical action. If you try and start with the technical action, you end up trying to remember a whole bunch of difficult instructions. Much better just to take this natural motion and adjust it in the desired direction. If it's difficult, it's probably wrong. Now, let's have a look at taking this same motion and just adding a bit of a step. As the sword goes forward, it drags a step out of you. Nice and relaxed, nice and easy. It might be a good idea to pause the video now and have a little practice until this is really comfortable, because there's a bit of instruction coming in a minute, and I don't want you to do the next bit until this is really comfortable.

Are you back? Excellent. From this position, as you swing the sword, I want you to let it drop all the way through so this hand brushes your hip and it comes up on the other side. Then, you swing it forward and it brushes the same hip. Left hand is going to left hip either way. Look at that from the front. I can do it going backwards, but you don't have to. This descending blow forehand, *mandritto*, descending blow, *fendente*, is *mandritto fendente*. This blow coming backhand, *roverso fendente*. *Roverso* is backhand, *fendente*, descending blow. What you've actually been practicing is *mandritto fendente*, *roverso fendente*. Of course, for left handers, forehand is coming from this side, so this is *mandritto fendente*, and this backhand is *roverso fendente*.

That's not all you've been practicing. I didn't want to burden you with too much detail, but you've also been going from a guard position, which is called *posta di donna*, and you can see it here. *Posta di donna*, through an extended position called *posta longa*, down through this withdrawn position, *posta dente di zenghiaro*, and up to *posta di donna*. Your *roverso fendente* went through *posta longa* and to this position, *posta di tutta porta di ferro*, the position of the whole iron door. It swung back through this position, *posta di coda longa*, the position of the long tail, and up to *posta di donna* on the right. While you were practicing your blows, you were creating guards and moving through the guards. *Posta di donna*, *posta longa*, *posta dente di zenghiaro*, *posta di donna*, *posta longa*, *posta di tutta porta di ferro*, and *posta di donna*. Of course, you might have gone through *coda longa* there as well. You already have *posta di donna* on both sides, *tutta porta di ferro*, *dente di zenghiaro*, *posta longa*. That's five guards. With *coda longa*, six guards. There are a total of 12 guards, so you are halfway there.

What I would like you to do before you move onto the next video is this. Get really comfortable with all the material on this video. You should know your four steps, your three turns, *mandritto fendente*, *roverso fendente*, the grip, the chambered grip, the extended grip. You should be comfortable working the sword back and forth, and you should be comfortable moving from *posta di donna* through *posta longa* through *dente di zenghiaro* to *posta di donna* to *posta longa* to *tutta porta di ferro* through *coda longa* to *posta di donna*. That is a lot of Italian. So, don't forget to check the glossary and make sure you understand what all these words mean. I hope you've found this useful and interesting, and I look forward to seeing you on the next class. Cheerio.

END OF RECORDING