

# The lateral boundary of the strip

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In the past year, the rule regarding stepping off the side of the strip changed. Previously, when a fencer stepped off the strip, his opponent would advance one meter from the spot they occupied when the fencer stepped off the strip. Now, the rule (t.28.1) states:

*If a competitor crosses one of the lateral boundaries of the strip, he must retreat one meter from the point where he left the strip, and if he goes off the strip during an attack, he must return to the position he occupied when he started his attack and then retreat a further meter (but cf. t.29).*

Here are some important points to consider in applying this rule:

- An action that ends with one foot off the strip remains valid as before. The fencer must have at least one foot on the strip.
- If the fencer is not making an offensive action (that is, they are not moving forward), they lose one meter from the spot they left the strip.
- If they are making an offensive action, they must return to the spot they started that action, and then retreat one meter.
- The referee must also determine where the offensive action began. The current application of this rule is that it is the final part of your attack (advance-lunge or fleche). Preparatory actions are not considered.
- If the fencer is within the last meter of the strip and steps off the side, he must retreat a meter off the back of the strip, and a point is awarded against him.

Here's an example of this rule being applied:

Bob is fencing John. John steps off the strip immediately in front of Bob. John must now retreat one meter. If this happened in the middle of the strip, Bob would likely also have to retreat in order to take proper distance.

Now suppose that they are at Bob's end of the strip. Bob has both feet on the strip with one foot on the end line. Since Bob cannot be forced off the back of the strip, John must continue to retreat until he reached proper distance.