

Vocabulary

- oberhau (pronounced like "ober-how")
- vom tag (pronounced like "fom tag")
- twerhau (pronounced like "tver-how")

Outline

Introduction

- I'm Nathan Weston, longsword instructor at Athena School of Arms
- Today I'm giving a basic lesson in the use of the longsword

You'll need something to swing: stick, spatula, blunt sword, etc Before we start, check the space around you

- Make sure you have room to swing your sword-like object safely
- Look out for light fixtures, nearby furniture, pets

First, we're going to set up our basic stance

- Feet about hip width apart, knees slightly bent
- Put your right hand on the sword, just below the crossguard
 - If you don't have a crossguard, put it about 6 inches from the bottom of the stick
- If you're left handed, you still put your right hand on top
- Hold your arm straight out in front of you
- Put your left hand on the sword, just below the right hand
- Notice that if I extend my index fingers, they both point straight ahead
- Bring the swords back to your right shoulder. Both index fingers should still point forward
- Don't hold the sword like a baseball bat – it will twist as you swing it and you won't be able to cut well

- Finally, step back with your right foot
- This position is called "vom tag" (from the day/roof/etc)

Now we'll learn how to cut

- Hold the sword in your right hand only, with the thumb and index finger
- It will tilt backward in your hand
- Squeeze with the lower three fingers to snap it forward
- You may feel the momentum of the sword pulling your arm forward – let it go
- Now put both hands on the sword, and squeeze with both hands
- Reach out with your arms and let the sword swing all the way down toward the ground
- Turn your hips and shoulders, let the sword pull your body forward, and take a step as you cut

Now we'll cut from the other side

- With the right foot forward, bring the sword to your left shoulder
- Cut from left to right, while taking a step
- Alternate right and left cuts, taking a step with each one
- When you run out of room, turn around

Next, we'll learn how to defend against a cut

- For this section I'll have a stand with a sword attached to it, to stand in for an attacker
- If they cut in at my left side, I'm going to turn my hips and shoulders about 45 degrees to the left, to face the incoming cut
- I drop my hands to about the level of my solar plexus, and angle the point forward toward their sword
- This makes a barrier that will cover my chest and head

- If they cut down toward my hip, I can drop my hands a little further to block that
- If they cut at my right side, I do the same thing on the other side
- Alternate right and left parries, standing in one place

Finally, we're going to learn a cut that uses the other edge of the sword

- The edge that normally faces forward is called the long edge
- The edge that normally faces backward is called the short edge
- We don't really know why – they're the same length
- By cutting with the short edge we can do some neat things, like attack and defend at the same time
- This cut is called the *twerhau*, which translates as something like "lateral cut" or "crosswise cut"
- To do this cut I'm going to use a different grip, with the sword rotated in my hand so the long edge faces left and the short edge faces right
- My thumb comes up on the flat of the blade
- Normally we'd change into this grip as we cut, but for the moment we'll start in this grip
- As the cut comes toward me I'm going to turn my hips and shoulders toward it, just like I did with my parry
- But instead of dropping my hands, I'm going to lift them up so the sword covers my head, and catch the cut on my crossguard
- Then I can step out with my right foot and snap the sword around to hit my opponent in the side of the head