

Sword Glossary

Annulet -- The small loops extending toward the blade from the quillions intended to protect a finger wrapped over the guard. They developed in the middle-ages and can be found on many styles of Late-Medieval swords. They are common on Renaissance cut & thrust swords and rapiers and also small-swords. For some time they have been incorrectly called the "pas d`ane."

Back -- The part of the blade opposite the edge. Double-edged sword has no back.

Back Edge -- Unsharpened edge on a single-edged sword

Backsword -- A sword blade, which has a cutting edge only on one side. Most commonly found on curved blades, such as sabers, falchion, and cutlass and on Scottish baskethilted swords and Mortuary swords..

Basket -- An arrangement of steel bars, and panels that form a basket-like cage around the grip (and the wielder's hand). These are most commonly found on Scottish basket-hilted swords, and European rapiers.

Basket Hilt -- Sword hilt with basket-shaped guard to cover and protect the hand.

Bastard sword -- from the French *epee batarde*, referring to a hand and a half or long sword. Though the blade can be the same length as a single hand sword (or longer), the tang and grip are long enough to accommodate two hands for better leverage and more power.

Bell -- The bell or dish shaped guard

Blade -- The cutting section of the sword.

Broadsword -- an imprecise term applied to single-hand (especially Scottish basket-hilt) swords, generally meant to mean a broad two-edged blade (distinguishing it from a *backsword*.)

Burr -- Snag or sharp nick in the edge of a sword blade.

Chappe -- A flap of leather attached to a sword's crossguard, which serves to protect the mouth of the scabbard and prevent water from entering. Also called a Rain Guard.

Compound-Hilt/Complex-Guard -- A term used for the various forms of hilt found on Renaissance and some late-Medieval swords. They consist typically of finger-rings, side-rings or ports, a knuckle-bar, and counter-guard or back-guard. Swept-hilts, ring-hilts, cage-hilts, and some basket-hilts are forms of complex-guard.

Cross -- The typically straight bar or "guard" of a Medieval sword, also called a "cross-guard". A Renaissance term for the straight or curved cross-guard was the quillions (possibly from an old

French or Latin term for a type of reed).

Cruciform -- A generic term for any sword which when inverted point downward will form the shape of a crucifix. This was, to a degree, a religious symbol to the knights of the crusading era.

Edge -- This is the sharpened portion of the blade. A sword may be single or double-edged. For example, a Japanese katana has a single edge but the average Medieval sword is sharpened on both sides.

False Edge -- A few inches which was sharpened on the usually unsharpened *Back Edge* at the tip of some single-edged swords.

Foible -- A Renaissance term for the upper portion on a sword blade which is weaker (or "feeble") but has more agility and speed and which does most of the attacking.

Forte -- The stronger and more rigid portion of a blade nearest the bell guard. A Renaissance term for the lower portion on a sword blade which has more control and strength and which does most of the parrying. Also called prime or fort.

Frog -- A looped fastener for attaching a scabbard to the belt (usually made of leather) used for later period swords.

Ferrule -- A metal band at either end of the grip used to secure the leather or wire wraps. Also used as a decoration.

Finger Guard/Finger Ring -- A small crescent shape bar which extends from the sword's guard, and rises parallel to the sword's ricasso, which enables a user to loop their finger over the guard (which increases point control, but decreases cutting power), without fear of being injured by an opponent's blade sliding down their own. Also called the *Annellet*.

Fuller -- A shallow central-groove or channel on a blade which lightens it as well as improves strength and flex. Sometimes mistakenly called a "blood-run" or "blood-groove", it has nothing to do with blood flow, cutting power, or a blade sticking. A sword might have one, none, or several fullers running a portion of its length, on either one or both sides. Narrow deep fullers are also sometimes referred to as flukes. The opposite of a fuller is a riser, which improves rigidity. The fullers function is analogous to the spine of the human body.

Full Tang -- A sword tang that passes the entire length of the grip, and is attached directly to the sword's pommel. Also a modern term for tangs that are not *welded tangs*.

Grip -- The handle of a sword, usually made of leather, wire, wood, bone, horn, or ivory (also, a term for the method of holding the sword).

Guard -- The section of the sword hilt whose purpose is to protect the wielder's hand. It may take of the shape of a simple bar, a steel basket, a flat disc, or any of several other forms.

Half-Swording -- To grasp both the hilt with one hand and the blade with the other hand, to provide leverage and point control in certain period swordplay techniques.

Hand and a Half Sword -- also called a Long Sword or Bastard Sword.

Hamon -- The "wavy line" or visual characteristic along the edge of the blade, typical on Japanese blades, caused by the use of differential hardening.

Hilt -- The portion of a sword consisting of the cross-guard, handle/grip, and pommel (most Medieval swords have a straight cross or cruciform-hilt).

Knife Edge -- a modern term describing a clear, secondary bevel added to a sword's blade to give it a sharp edge. This is to differentiate the edge type from that of another modern term: *Sword Edge*.

Knuckle guard -- A curved bar which extends from the guard to pommel, designed to prevent the user's hand from being cut by a sliding blow from an opponent's weapon.

Long sword -- generally meaning a *hand-and-a-half* or *bastard sword*.

Pas d'An -- A term often used (incorrectly) for the portion of a rapier's guard (usually comprised of a series of rings), which surrounds the base of the sword blade. These were generally intended as a protection for the finger or fingers that would be wrapped around the blade side of the quillon block.

Point -- The tip of the sword's blade.

Pommel -- Latin for "little apple", the counter-weight which secures the hilt to the blade and allows the hand to either rest on it or grip it. Sometimes it includes a small rivet (capstan rivet) called a [een block, pommel nut, pommel bolt, or tang nut. On some Medieval swords the pommel may be partially or fully gripped and handled.

Quillon(s) -- A Renaissance term for the two cross-guards (forward and back) whether straight or curved. It is likely from an old French or Latin term for a reed. On Medieval swords the cross guard may be called simply the "cross", or just the "guard".

Quillon block -- Section of the rapier's hilt where the guard's arms (both bars, and rings) are attached. The tang of the sword blade also passes through this point, with the ricasso on one side, and the sword's grip on the other.

Rapier -- an imprecise term intended to mean a slender, double-edged blade usually with a complex hilt (swept hilt), primarily designed for thrusting. Not all swords with swept hilts are rapiers.

Rat-tail tang -- A more modern method of manufacture involving a small diameter rod being welded onto a normal but short tang. This method has proven faulty in many low-end swords in that they often break due to poor welds.

Ricasso -- Any narrowing or thickening of a sword's blade, which remains unsharpened, at the base of the blade just below the guard. Increases the user's ability to loop a finger over the guard (called *fingering*), or grasp the blade (*Half-swording*) to increase control of the point. Not all sword forms had ricasso. They can be found on many bastard swords, most cut & thrust swords and later rapiers. Those on two-handed swords are sometimes called a "false-grip", and usually allow the entire second hand to grip and hold on. The origin of the term is obscure.

Scabbard -- Sheath for sword, knife, dagger or bayonet

Scent stopper -- Pommel type which resembles the stopper in an antique perfume jar.

Shoulder -- The corner portion of a sword separating the blade from the tang.

Small Sword -- A term for the the later period (late 18th c) sword carried by gentlemen as personal jewelry. Primarily known for its ornately decorated hilts, the small sword had a very narrow triangular blade, often with fullers on all three sides. The blade is usually quite stiff and intended for thrusting. Modern foil sport fencing was originally based on fighting techniques developed for the small sword.

Swept Hilt -- Ornate knuckleguard on later period sword hilts that sweeps over the hand, but which does not cover or protect the hand quite as fully as a *Basket Hilt*

Sword Edge -- A modern term for the integral edge geometry of a sword that makes it inherently sharp. Differentiates that edge geometry from a secondary bevel (Knife Edge) that is added after a blade is shaped and ground.

Tang -- The section of the sword blade ("tongue") of a blade running through the handle and to which the pommel is attached. The place where the tang connects to the blade is called the "shoulder." A sword's tang is sometimes of a different temper than the blade itself.

Waisted-grip - A specially shaped handle on some bastard or hand-and-a-half swords, consisting of a slightly wider middle and tapering towards the pommel.

Welded tang -- A tang where the steel of the blade has had another piece of steel (very often low carbon steel) welded on to it as an extension.

Wheel -- A pommel that is in the shape of a flat disc. It may have added features, such as beveled edges, or raised center sections.

Wire-wrap -- Spun and twisted metal wire (may be iron, brass, bronze, copper, etc.), which is then wrapped around the sword grip. Often used to increase the ability to grip a sword's handle. Also a sign of wealth, as these grips tended to be more expensive to manufacture.