

# THOUGHTS ON SELF-DEFENCE TRAINING

*[ 4th Dan Thesis - by Shaun Skedgwell ]*



*'We do not rise to the level of our level of expectations. We fall to the level of our training'.  
(Archilochus, Greek Soldier)*

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## INTRODUCTION

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THE AIM OF THIS THESIS IS TO PRESENT AND DISCUSS IDEAS TO MAKE SELF-DEFENCE TRAINING MORE REALISTIC, EFFECTIVE AND INTERESTING.

Given my previous military and current Policing experience I have had exposure to a number of different training ideas and theories. I am currently trained as a Police Firearms Instructor and am regularly involved in the planning and conducting of Police Firearms Training.

I have found that the most enjoyable and rewarding training is usually the training that is the most realistic, demanding and stretches the individual's abilities. In other words to take someone *'outside of their comfort zone'*.

I would also like to point out that while I am a Police Officer and get exposed to confrontational situations on a regular basis on the job, I am also equipped with a number of tools that the average person does not get to carry (i.e. pepper spray, baton, taser and firearms).

The open hand tactics taught by the Police are very basic and are at the bottom of a tall ladder of tactical options when incorporated with the above-mentioned tools. I am therefore by no means an expert in this field of Self-Defence. But over the last year I have attended various courses and seminars, taking what I think will realistically work and basing my thesis on these findings.

At present our TKD Self-Defence syllabus focuses a lot on the 'last resort' physical response. This is fine given the limited amount of instructor's time and the vast range of topics that we need to cover each week at training.

However I have to say that personally my best Self-Defence skill has been my ability to identify and stay out of trouble as opposed to having to fight my way out. The reality is that real life Self-Defence situations are never tidy looking, and never go to plan like they are rehearsed in the do jang. Identifying a threat and avoiding or defusing the situation using communication skills is always a far better option. These skills alone could be covered as a topic in a separate thesis and are only briefly touched on in this paper.

In this thesis I have made suggestions in regards to our current Coloured Belt grading syllabus. I have also discussed some training ideas for the Black Belt grading requirements. It is therefore hoped that the information and ideas suggested in this thesis will serve as a basic reference for instructors and students when instructing and preparing for Self-Defence at gradings.

Not all the techniques in this paper will work for everyone. I therefore invite those who read this to take from it what they like.

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*I would also like to personally thank Master Evan DAVIDSON (8th Dan), Master Steve PELLOW (7th Dan), Master Mark HUTTON (7th Dan), Mr Ian CAMPBELL (5th Dan) and Mr Phil THOMPSON of 'Protect Self-Defence' for assisting me with this paper and agreeing to allow me to use some of the ideas and techniques that they have devised for Self-Defence training.*

*Thanks to Mr Gwyn BROWN and Josh BROWN with their assistance with the photography. I would also like to thank my wife Trudie MALONE for doing a fantastic job of photography and the laying out of this document.*  
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## THE BODY UNDER STRESS

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IN ORDER TO EXPLAIN SOME OF THE TRAINING IDEAS PRESENTED IN THIS PAPER, IT IS IMPORTANT TO UNDERSTAND WHAT HAPPENS TO THE BODY IN A STRESSFUL SITUATION, LIKE AN UNEXPECTED CONFRONTATION. THIS TYPE OF SITUATION PLACES THE BODY UNDER WHAT IS KNOWN AS 'ACUTE STRESS'.

'Acute Stress' is experienced in response to an immediate perceived threat; physical, emotional or psychological. The threat can be real or imagined; it's the perception of threat that triggers the response.

DURING AN ACUTE STRESS RESPONSE THE BODY DOES THE FOLLOWING:

- |   |  |  |
|---|--|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>The automatic nervous system is activated and the body experiences increased levels of adrenalin and other hormones.</b> This instantaneously produces an increased heart rate, and higher blood pressure. This prepares the body for a burst of energy.</li> <li>• <b>The stress effect moves blood flow away from the skin to support the heart and muscle tissues.</b> Blood is shunted from the extremities to the big muscles, preparing the body for the 'fight or flight' response. This loss of blood from the extremities will result in less dexterity in the hands. The blood vessels in the large muscle groups will dilate for extra blood flow.</li> <li>• <b>The blood vessels of the extremities will constrict.</b> This effect reduces blood loss in the event that the body is wounded. The physical effect is a cool, clammy, sweaty skin. The scalp also tightens so that the hair seems to stand up.</li> <li>• <b>Breathing becomes rapid, and the lungs take in more oxygen.</b></li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>The pupils dilate, resulting in tunnel vision and loss of peripheral vision.</b></li> <li>• <b>Auditory exclusion takes effect and a loss of hearing occurs.</b></li> <li>• <b>'Tachypsychia', which is a Greek word meaning 'speed of the mind' takes place.</b> This is when the mind processes information at a faster rate than normal. This can cause a perception of 'slow motion' during real time events.</li> <li>• <b>The spleen discharges red and white blood cells, allowing the blood to transport more oxygen throughout the body.</b> Blood flow may actually increase 300-400%, priming the muscles, lungs, and brain for added demands.</li> <li>• <b>The steroid hormones reduce activity in parts of the immune system, so that specific infection fighters (including important white blood cells) or other immune molecules can be repositioned.</b> These immune-boosting troops are sent to the body's front lines where injury or infection is most likely to occur, such as the skin and the lymph nodes.</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Fluids are diverted from nonessential locations, including the mouth.</b> This causes dryness and difficulty in talking. In addition, stress can cause spasms of the throat muscles, making it difficult to swallow.</li> <li>• <b>There is a slowing down of digestive activity, a nonessential body function during short-term periods of hard physical work or crisis.</b> Nausea can occur due to a portion of the blood supply from the stomach shifted to the large muscle groups.</li> <li>• <b>The body turns on its cooling system in anticipation for increased energy, causing the body to perspire.</b></li> <li>• <b>The body can start to shake and there can also be a relaxation of the bladder.</b></li> <li>• <b>Once the threat has passed and the effect has not been harmful, the stress hormones return to normal.</b> This is known as the relaxation response. In turn, the body's systems also return to normal.</li> </ul> |
|---|--|--|

## *chapter*

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### *two*

#### THE QUESTION IS - HOW DOES THIS EFFECT THE WAY WE SHOULD TRAIN FOR SELF-DEFENCE SITUATIONS?

Firstly if the person has not trained, or had an experience that the brain can relate to that situation, there is a very good chance that the brain will overload causing the person to freeze and do nothing. Under pressure there is no time to think and the response must have been previously rehearsed, instinctive and instantaneous.

Secondly because all the blood has been diverted away from the extremities there is a loss of dexterity, which is the skill in physical movement and manipulating objects, especially in the use of hands. This in-turn means there is a loss in the hands of 'fine motor skills'. That is, any complicated wristlocks and techniques that have been learned become more difficult to competently complete.

An example of this would be if you have arrived home and needed to get inside in a hurry (i.e. the phone is ringing or you desperately need to use the toilet). Under this small amount of pressure it is not uncommon to have difficulty getting your key in the keyhole and the harder you try the harder the task seems to become.

Now magnify this response when it becomes a life and death situation and you can see what problems present themselves. This can also be seen at gradings. A student who previously attained a good level of skill at mastering a wristlock can fall part under the pressure of an examiners gaze.

Thirdly given that a Self-Defence situation can take just a few seconds, it is highly likely that the defender will not initially breath and will exert a lot of energy. If the situation is not concluded in the very early stages fatigue will set in very quickly. Therefore it is vital that the situation be resolved as quickly as possible.

Finally, tunnel vision and loss of hearing means that the defender becomes very focused on what is happening to their immediate front, unaware of anything else that poses a threat to their peripheral. We therefore have to be constantly looking and assessing for further threats until we are satisfied that we are clear of any danger.

#### MY POINT IS THAT PERHAPS TWO OF THE MOST IMPORTANT CONSIDERATIONS FOR SELF-DEFENCE TRAINING ARE:

##### **1. TRAIN UNDER REALISTIC AND INCREASING DEGREES OF STRESS.**

This will expose the individual to slightly more demanding situations, creating experiences / 'files' in their brain that they relate to under pressure and automatically react to. It also stretches their comfort zone and builds confidence.

##### **2. KEEP TECHNIQUES SIMPLE AND EFFECTIVE.**

This will ensure that under pressure fine motor skills are not relied on so much. Simple, gross / broad movements are easier to achieve under pressure, rather than more complex, finer hand movements.

## ASPECTS OF TRAINING TO CONSIDER

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*'Rule number 1 of Self-Defence: There are no rules' (Anon)*

'THE COMBAT MIND-SET': A CIVILIAN FIREARMS INSTRUCTOR WHO WAS INVITED TO COACH SOME OF OUR POLICE STAFF WHILE PISTOL SHOOTING RECENTLY INTRODUCED ME TO THIS PHRASE.

However if you have attended seminars by Master HUTTON and Mr Phil THOMPSON the idea of having a winning mind-set will not be a new concept.

'The Combat Mind-Set' relates to the individuals level of mental alertness, awareness of their surroundings, focusing fully on the problem at hand and their will to survive. The levels of alertness are identified by various colour codes.

The creator of the concept was an ex-marine, Jeff Cooper, who wrote a short book about it called '*Principles of Personal Defence*'. In his book his chapters were headed as 'Alertness', 'Decisiveness', 'Aggressiveness', 'Speed', 'Coolness', 'Ruthlessness' and 'Surprise'.

Mind-set is by far the most important aspect of Self-Defence training. Ask yourself, if two people are physically equal in levels of skill, size, and strength who is more likely to survive an attack? The one with the greatest will to survive, the stronger mind-set.

To put it another way, sometimes in a sparring match the winner is the person who just didn't give up first.

Again a whole thesis could be written on this subject. I guess what I'm trying to say is that your mind is like your body; it must be conditioned to respond. This can be developed to a certain degree by realistic, intensive training. Our response to a real attack will only be as good as the training we have received. We need to develop a positive, 'win-at-all-cost' attitude when it comes to Self-Defence training. Instructors can develop this in their students by verbally encouraging them during Self-Defence training, much like a coach during sparring.

Being more aware of your surroundings and more observant in your daily life can also help develop it. Some people will say that by doing this - it will be like walking around in a constant state of paranoia; but consider it extra training. You can't become a world sparring champion by just going to 2 club trainings a week; the same applies to Self-Defence.

TRAIN AS YOU WOULD FIGHT: THIS IS AN OLD ONE-LINER I KNOW, BUT PEOPLE READ THIS AND TAKE IT AT FACE VALUE - THAT IT JUST MEANS WE SHOULD BE AGGRESSIVE AND TRAIN HARD.

If we go a little deeper with it, we should really analyse and be critical of exactly what habits we are unintentionally creating in our training. I have heard of a number of bizarre examples of people in Self-Defence situations doing exactly what they have done in training, whether they intended to or not. Their minds went into autopilot under stress and did what they had naturally done before repetitively.



## chapter three

THE FOLLOWING ARE SOME EXAMPLES OF WHAT WE SHOULD NOT BE DOING IN TRAINING:

- **Giving up and quitting when a technique doesn't work as planned.** This is probably the worst one of the lot. When supervising students, instructors should urge them to keep going until the situation has been successfully resolved. This may mean delivering several strikes to the attacker.
- **Help our training partner up off the ground after completing a technique.** This is a hard one for me, as a martial artist I like to show respect and courtesy for the person I am training with. But the problem now is that because I have been doing this for so many years, I have to consciously remind myself to break this bad habit.
- **Handing weapons over to training partners.** Another bad habit, I also give my partner a bow when I do this. At a Protect Knife-Defence Seminar I recently attended - Mr Phil THOMPSON was placing the knife on the floor and stepping away when he wanted to hand the knife over. His opponent would then have to retrieve the knife off the floor.

*As an instructor it is our duty to be brutally honest about our training and be on the look out for any bad habits that surface.*

KEEP IT SIMPLE:

*'A simple plan, well rehearsed and violently executed, offers the best chance of success'*  
(*The Ranger Handbook*).

This heading speaks for itself. Well rehearsed, simple, deliberate, effective techniques have a better chance of success than complex ones requiring fine motor skills.

When training, start off slow until the techniques are mastered, then increase the tempo. Simple counters like palm, elbow and knee strikes are most effective and the tools are hard to break.

There's a saying we use frequently when conducting shooting on our Police ranges, particularly when drawing holstered weapons that goes, 'Slow is smooth, smooth is fast'. Speed and accuracy can be developed through deliberate training.

FITNESS:

There are three types of 'energy systems' the body uses to release energy for physical activity:

SYSTEM 1:

**'The Phosphagen system' is used only for activities of very short durations of up to 10 seconds.** This system neither uses oxygen nor produces lactic acid if oxygen is unavailable. This is the primary system behind very short, powerful movements like a golf swing, a 100m sprint or power lifting.

SYSTEM 2:

**'The Anaerobic (or glycolysis) system' predominates in supplying energy for exercises lasting less than 2 minutes.** An example of an activity of this intensity and duration that this system works under would be a 400m sprint.

SYSTEM 3:

**'The Aerobic system' is the long duration energy system.** This could include running for several minutes through to a marathon.

## *chapter*

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## *three*

Generally speaking Self-Defence situations will be short, sharp and intense affairs, lasting no more than 5 to 10 seconds. This means short, sharp bursts of activity in which you are likely not to initially breathe. This being the case, fitness should be geared towards primarily improving the **'Phosphagen system'** and secondly the **'Anaerobic system'**.

Anaerobic training will help develop your ability to perform very intensely for a short period. There is also some who believe that developing your **'Anaerobic system'** will also naturally improve your **'Aerobic system'**.

An effective work-out for the **'Phosphagen system'** would be short, very fast sprints for 10 to 30 seconds, resting for three times as long as you worked out for. Sprinting from one end of a rugby field to the other is a good example. Repeat this 5 to 10 times. The long rest period is required to allow for complete replenishment of creatine phosphate in the muscles so it can be reused in the next interval.

The **'Anaerobic system'** can be trained using faster intervals lasting 30 seconds to 2 minutes with an active-recovery period twice as long as the work-out period. This is similar to the pad work for the Black Belt fitness test, only with a longer rest in between.

*Please note - I have incorporated some ideas in regards to these types of fitness in the 'Additional Training Exercises' section at the end of this paper (see page 39).*

### REALISM V SAFETY:

Having planned various training activities involving firearms and live firing, realism v safety has always been a dilemma. The best training is always the most realistic and the most likely to cause injury. I always view this like a set of scales with realism on one side and safety on the other.

The reality is that safety must come first, not just physical safety, but also mental safety. Training needs to be geared to the right level of mental capacity for the student, without destroying their confidence. At the same time it should not become boring or mundane.

*You are only limited by your imagination. Always be on the look out for new ideas.*



## LAW

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ESSAYS ON NEW ZEALAND LAW HAVE ALREADY BEEN PENNED BY SEVERAL STUDENTS AND CAN BE EASILY ACCESSED ON THE **ITKD** WEBSITE.

It is not my intention to focus too heavily on this topic, however I would like to point out that an understanding of the basic principles of the law can be a huge advantage in a Self-Defence situation.

All of my Police training is based on decision-making; when and when not to use force. When you apply this to firearms, a slight hesitation in decision-making could be the difference between winning or losing.

THE TWO MAIN SECTIONS OF LAW TO BE AWARE OF ARE:

### 1. 'SELF-DEFENCE AND DEFENCE OF ANOTHER'

*Section 48 of the Crimes Act 1961: 'Everyone is justified in using, in the defence of himself or another, such force as, in the circumstances as he believes them to be, it is reasonable to use.'*

This section basically states that you can use reasonable force to defend yourself or another.

If you use force to defend yourself there are two tests that you must pass. The first test is 'subjective'. That is you acted reasonably given what you honestly believed the circumstances were at the time. There is some leeway in regards to this test, in that it is what you honestly thought at the time, regardless of how mistaken of the circumstances you might have been.

Given this first 'subjective' test, you don't have to wait for your attacker to strike you first if you fear for your safety and the perceived danger is imminent. To give you a clearer example, an armed Police officer wouldn't wait for an armed offender to shoot him first.

The second test is 'objective'. That is whether a reasonable person watching what happens (or a Judge and jury) would consider your actions reasonable in the circumstances.

### 2. 'EXCESS FORCE'

*Section 62 of the Crimes Act 1961: 'Everyone authorised by law to use force is criminally responsible for any excess, according to the nature and quality of the act that constitutes the excess.'*

This section basically states that if you use force, it must not be excessive. That is once the attacker ceases to be a threat you are no longer justified in continuing to use force against them. Any unreasonable force used after this point will be considered excessive and you will be charged accordingly.

When Police attend assaults they will try to obtain independent accounts of what happened from those involved, independent witnesses and any other source of evidence such as CCTV footage. This is where the passive stance / safe set up (*see page 11*) is invaluable; it gives witnesses a clear indication of your reluctance to become involved in any fight.

## *chapter*

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## *four*

Police will try to identify who started the incident and charge that person accordingly. Assaults are generally a one sided affair, with a clear attacker and defender. If however it was found that one or both parties could have easily walked away from the situation, but both continued on until a fight started, which they both willingly participated in, then both can be charged with fighting in a public place.

When placed in a confrontational situation the hardest thing can be making the decision to strike or not. Knowing where the 'line' is can mean the difference between hesitating and coming-off second best.

Sometimes the situation is not black and white and you will have to make the decision under pressure. The ultimate goal is to make it home safely to your family and friends.

At the end of the day, whether the actions you took were right or wrong can be analysed after the fact, but the bottom-line is best summarised in the following phrase:

*'It's better to be tried by 12 than carried by 6' (Anon)*

## COLOURED BELT SYLLABUS RECOMMENDATIONS

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AS PREVIOUSLY MENTIONED OUR CURRENT SELF-DEFENCE SYLLABUS IS FOCUSED ON THE 'LAST RESORT' PHYSICAL RESPONSE TO AN ATTACK.

It is clear that there is huge scope for training people firstly to be aware and then avoid a situation if possible.

This involves identifying a threat early on, while you still have advantage of distance and giving it a wide berth if possible. I have included a couple of training drills relating to this in the *'Additional Training Exercises'* section (see page 38). These were presented by Master HUTTON at his Self-Defence seminar in Auckland.

If these don't work the next option would be to verbally engage and try to de-escalate the situation before it becomes physical. This is a true skill in itself and I would urge anyone who has not attended an *'Protect Self-Defence'* course conducted by Mr Phil THOMPSON to do so. Their courses are first-class and cover this aspect in great depth.

This involves being able to think and say the right things at the right time, with the right tone and body language. If this fails and the attacker gets into your personal space you need to prepare to act, hands need to be up in a passive-defensive stance.

In the Police we call this a 'safe set up', and creates a barrier between you and your attacker as well as setting-up for redirecting or countering against you opponent. It also shows an unwillingness to cause any further confrontation. In the Police we are taught to be a little bit 'bladed' to your opponent (half facing) rather than square on. (refer figure 1 & 2)

As you can see with a 'safe set up' it becomes very hard for an attacker to grab you. I believe that this should be incorporated into our Self-Defence syllabus. Especially in the higher coloured belt syllabus, where they have a number of Self-Defence techniques to perform at gradings.

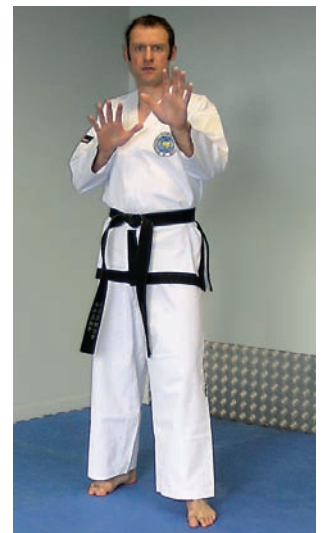


figure 1

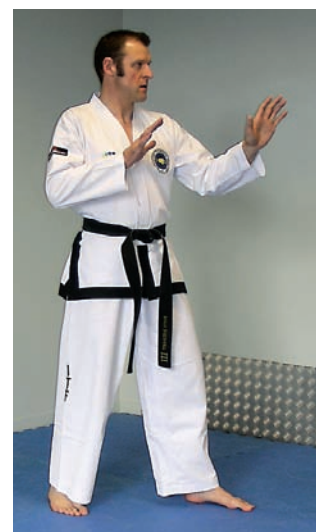


figure 2

## *chapter*

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### *five*

Bearing this in mind, our present Self-Defence syllabus initially incorporates 5 simple effective wrist releases, against 5 basic grabs (yellow to green stripe syllabus). As a result, at gradings the defender has to allow the attacker to grab them. This can be a little unrealistic, but is the only way to practice the techniques required. At a recent *Protect Seminar* it was suggested by Mr Phil THOMPSON that getting the defender to close their eyes before being grabbed can help prevent developing a bad habit of just letting someone grab you.

As the students progress they are required to defend against the same grabs with wristlocks (green belt to blue stripe). I would consider the first 5 grabs that we practice as a more passive type of attack (there is no striking when the attacker grabs). The releases are more than adequate and can be easily followed up by a strike of some kind if required.

These are also a good starting point for children's Self-Defence with modified targets (i.e. the attackers upper body) and restrict attacking tools (i.e. the palm or elbow).

As the students progress they are required to defend against the same grabs with wristlocks (green belt to blue stripe). The wristlocks for the first 5 grabs are good techniques but require some fine motor skills on the student's part. As a result children struggle to learn and apply them effectively, especially under pressure. The task becomes more difficult if the defender is markedly smaller than the attacker.

The releases and wristlocks are essentially a doubling-up, learning two different responses for the exact same attack. Straight away, in a real attack situation, the defender has two choices to make in regards to the same attack. This can cause a delay when the defenders response should be immediate and automatic.

The last 10 grabs in our Self-Defence syllabus, to the body (lapel grabs, bear hugs and head locks) are fine and represent realistic attacks. My only comment in regards to these is that often at gradings the attacks are quite 'static'. By this I mean the attacker just grabs and waits for a response. The attacker needs to be more 'animated', pushing and pulling when grabbing the defender.

I attended Master HUTTON's Self-Defence seminar earlier this year. His seminar covered some simplified, effective defences for some of these grabs. Hopefully these will be incorporated into the proposed new Self-Defence syllabus. Therefore I will not make any further recommendations in regards to these.

However rather than practising wristlocks for the first 5 grabs I believe that it would more beneficial to add to the syllabus attacks involving grabs and strikes, like we used to practice in our old Self-Defence syllabus.

From what I've seen as a Police Officer (apart from being 'king hit' from behind), these represent the most likely type of attacks you would encounter from an 'unarmed' assailant.

THEREFORE THE FOLLOWING PAGES ILLUSTRATE WHAT I WOULD RECOMMEND AS REPLACEMENT ATTACKS AND DEFENCES FOR THE WRISTLOCKS FOR THE GRABS TO THE WRISTS:

# chapter five

## 1. PUSH FROM FRONT



*ATTACK: Attacker moves in to push defenders chest with both hands.*



*Option 1a. Defender defends with a wedging block.*



*1b. Defender grabs attacker's shoulders.*



*1c. Defender pulls forward and targets the solar plexus with the knee.*



*Option 2a. Alternatively - Defender steps offline and redirects with forearm.*



*2b. Defender strikes the face with an open fist.*



*2c. Defender grabs shoulders.*



*2d. Defender pulls forward and targets the ribs with the knee.*



chapter  
five

2. LAPEL GRAB UP CLOSE



*ATTACK: Attacker moves, grabs lapel and pulls defender in close.*



*Option 1a. Defender drives thumbs into attackers eyes.*



*Option 2a. Defender strikes the attackers ears with palms.*



*Option 3a. Defender locks in attackers hand to chest while striking the temple with a high elbow strike.*



*Option 4a. Defender locks in attackers hand to chest while cupping the elbow.*



*4b. Defender rotates attackers elbow sharply upwards, raising attacker onto his toes.*



# chapter five

## 3. HOOKING PUNCH



*ATTACK: Attacker moves in with a hooking type punch. Defender blocks punch with outer forearm.*



*Option 1a. Defender strikes the face with an open fist.*



*Option 2a. Alternatively defender blocks and grabs shoulder at the same time.*



*2b. Defender pulls forward and targets the ribs with the knee.*



*Option 3. An alternate way to block is to cover the head with forearms and drive forward with the leading elbow.*



*3a. Defender drives forward targeting the upper chest with lead elbow.*



*3b. Defender targets the side of the face with an upper elbow strike.*

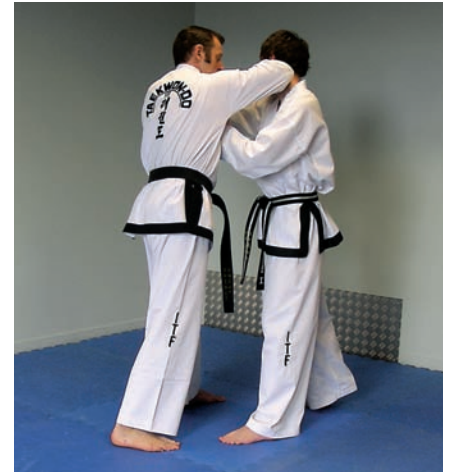
#### 4. GRAB & HOOKING PUNCH



*ATTACK: Attacker grabs lapel and moves in with a hooking punch. Defender blocks punch with outer forearm.*



*Option 1a. Defender strikes the chin/face with an open fist.*



*Option 2a. Defender targets the side of the attackers face with a high elbow strike.*



*Option 3a. Defender drives forward targeting the chin with an open fist, stepping behind attackers leg for a leg sweep.*



# chapter five

## 5. BACK FIST STRIKE



*ATTACK: Attacker moves in with a swinging back fist.*



*Option 1a. Defender defends with parallel forearms.*



*1b. Defender grabs attackers wrist and targets the elbow with an upper elbow strike.*



*Option 2a. Defender pulls attackers wrist and targets the side of the face with an open fist.*



*Option 3a. Defender grabs attackers arm.*



*3b. Defender targets attackers ribs with knee.*



*4a. Defender grabs the wrist and targets the bicep/elbow with outer forearm.*



*4b. Defender steps back, using attackers momentum and driving down with forearm.*



*4c. Defender takes attacker to the floor.*

## BREAK FALLING

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THE SKILL OF 'BREAK FALLING' USED TO BE IN THE COLOURED BELT SYLLABUS WHEN I FIRST STARTED TAEKWON-DO, BUT WAS REMOVED SOME TIME AGO.

Put simply 'break falling' is the art of falling safely if pushed, struck, thrown or simply tripped over. If done correctly it can also offer an opportunity for someone being attacked to create distance between themselves and their attacker.

The idea behind good break falling is that a person can land with minimal injury to themselves.

Although practiced on mats the reality is that real break falling will more than likely take place on a hard surface, like a footpath or road. Grazing and bruising is likely, but the idea is to prevent broken bones and unconsciousness from a fall.

If a student is competent at break falling they are more confident when conducting Self-Defence training and the defending student does not have to worry so much about injuring their partner/attacker. This makes break falling critical when attempting to progress to wrist-locks, take-downs and more complicated techniques.

Basic break falling skills can be practiced on a small matted area. With all break falling, the idea is to disperse the impact over as large a body surface as possible.

Slapping the mat with your hand while break falling is a customary practice that is seen in martial arts like Judo. This hand slap is used to help dissipate the force of the fall. It is also used to alert other practitioners that you had fallen and are now down on the mat (it also looks and sounds impressive at a grading).

***However you should not slap the floor with your hands if you have fallen on a hard surface like concrete, this will cause fractures and injury to the arm.***

Due to the only reference material available in regards to break falling relating to 'training on a matted area', I have therefore shown the traditional method of practicing these break falls for the Do jang. With some guidance from Mr Phil THOMPSON from 'Protect Self-Defence', I have attempted to modify these for real Self-Defence situations on a hard surface. My recommendation would be to initially practice the traditional break falling on mats and then try to move away from slapping the mat with the arm.

## chapter six

THERE ARE 4 BASIC  
BREAK FALLS  
DEMONSTRATED THAT  
CAN BE PRACTICED:

### 1. SIDE BREAK FALL:

With side break falling, the shoulder joint is the most vulnerable. This is because the temptation is to finish in a position where the body is propped up from the floor by the upper-arm/elbow. Landing in this position will create upward force from the elbow through to the shoulder, which can be damaged or dislocated.

The hips and buttocks should meet the mat first and then the upper body and the back of the shoulder. The head should remain tucked forward toward the chest.

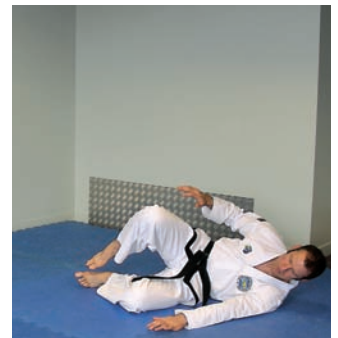
The arm closest to the floor makes contact with the ground on a 45° angle, down towards the waist. The whole arm should make contact with the ground at once, to dissipate the contact of the fall. Throwing this arm up high above the shoulder has the potential to cause injury to the shoulder joint if for some reason your lower body rolls up off the ground towards the head.



*START POSITION: Kneeling*



*Intermediate position.*



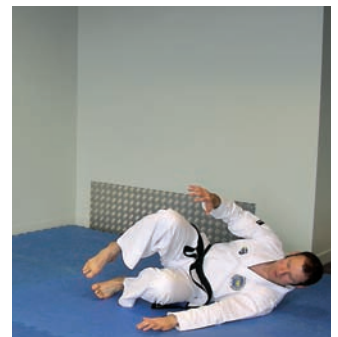
*Roll on to hip, then upper body. Arm makes contact with the floor at 45°.*



*START POSITION: Crouching*



*Intermediate position.*



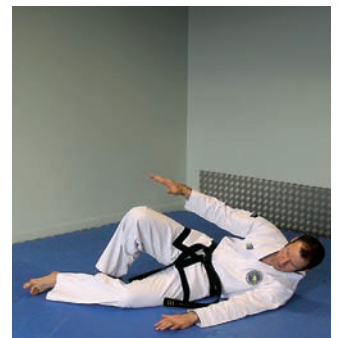
*Roll on to hip, then upper body. Arm makes contact with the floor at 45°.*



*START POSITION: Standing*



*Intermediate position.*



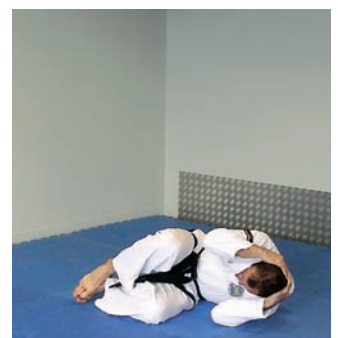
*Roll on to hip, then upper body. Arm makes contact with the floor at 45°.*



*START POSITION: Modified Breakfall*



*Intermediate position.*



*Roll on to hip, then upper body. Protecting head with hands.*



## 2. BACK BREAK FALL

As a person falls backwards they tend to instinctively do two things:

1. They allow the force of the fall to throw their heads backwards.

2. They throw their hands out to either side to help break the force of the fall.

The result is that injury will occur to the back of the head and the wrists.

It is therefore important to tuck the chin forward to the chest and allow your bottom to make contact with the ground first, rolling up the back.

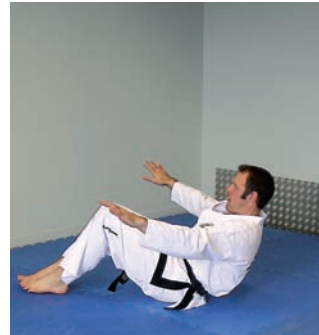
The back break fall can either finish on the back or can continue over into a rolling back break fall over one shoulder rather than the neck.

Rolling back onto your feet is useful during training but not very practical in a real Self-Defence situation as you lose sight of your opponent and become vulnerable to a kick while rolling over.

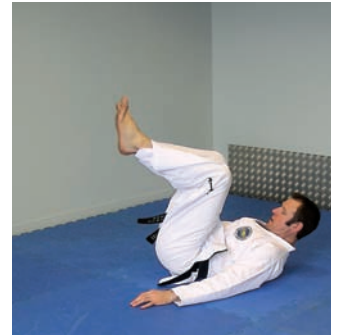
Getting up off the ground is covered in more detail in the Ground Defence Chapter (see page 24).



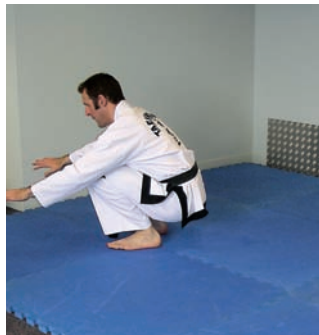
*START POSITION: Seated*



*Intermediate position.*



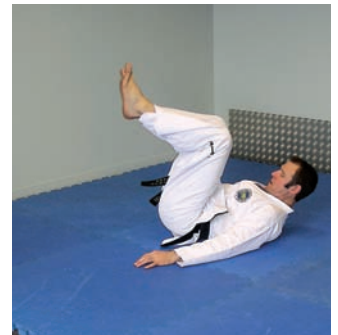
*Roll on to back, with chin tucked forward. Arms make contact with the floor at 45°.*



*START POSITION: Crouching*



*Intermediate position.*



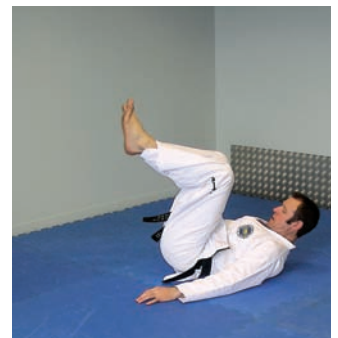
*Roll on to back, with chin tucked forward. Arms make contact with the floor at 45°.*



*START POSITION: Standing*



*Intermediate position.*



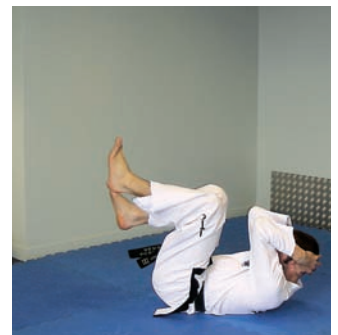
*Roll on to back, with chin tucked forward. Arms make contact with the floor at 45°.*



*START POSITION: Modified Breakfall*



*Intermediate position.*



*Roll on to back, with chin tucked forward. Protecting head with hands.*



## 3. FRONT BREAK FALL

The front break fall demands that you overcome the natural instinct to throw your hands out in front of you and let your hands take most of the impact when you hit the ground.

If you land with your hands out stretched in a 'press-up' position your hands and wrists will bear most of the brunt. Fractured hands or wrists are the most likely outcome.

It is very important to remember at the start of this break fall not to fall stiff and rigid like a pole. The body needs to be relaxed.

At the start of the break fall bend your legs and push forward like you are starting to dive into a pool.

The arms should be in front like a triangle shape, bent at the elbows and with the hands pointing downwards.

The head should be turned to the side to prevent any injury to the jaw and face.

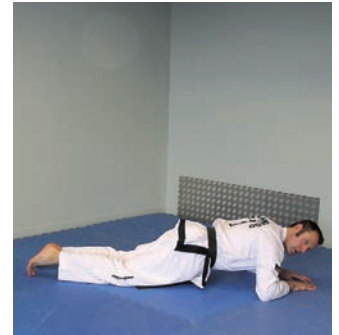
The body is held off the ground, preventing any fractures or winding from the rib cage making heavy contact with the ground.



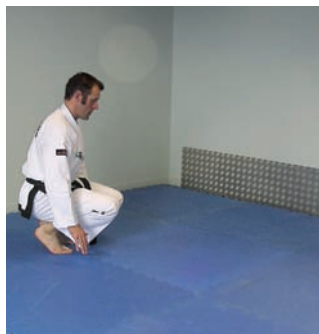
*START POSITION: Kneeling*



*Intermediate position.*



*Forearms make contact with the ground in a triangle, head turned to the side.*



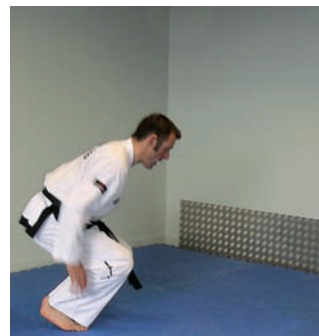
*START POSITION: Crouching*



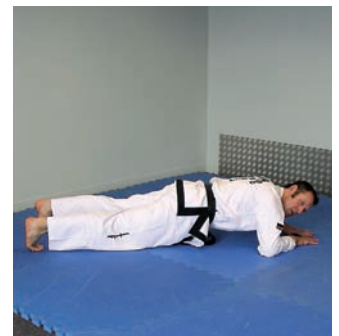
*Forearms make contact with the ground in a triangle, head turned to the side.*



*START POSITION: Standing*



*Intermediate position. Just before making contact with the ground, balls of feet shoot backwards.*



*Forearms make contact with the ground in a triangle, head turned to the side.*



*Alternate view of finished position.*

## chapter six

### 4. FRONT ROLLING BREAK FALL

The front rolling break fall mimics the action of being thrown by a hip or shoulder throw. It can also be used if a person is pushed over from behind or trips over forwards.

The important principles are that the head is tucked forward to the chin; the head and the neck do not make contact with the ground. The back shoulder blade of the leading shoulder, should make contact with the ground first.

Start with the feet about shoulder width apart, with the leading leg (same side as the shoulder you want to roll onto) forward. The arms are stretched out in front at about shoulder height, slightly bent and making a 'wheel' shape.

Bend the torso forward and push with your legs. The top arm touches the mat first, but only works as a guide to help with the body projecting forward to where the back shoulder will make contact with the ground.

The body then rolls from the lead back shoulder blade, down and across the back to the opposite hip. The legs are tucked and the body rolls up onto the feet.



*START POSITION: Kneeling side view.*



*Tuck head and roll forward with lead shoulder making contact with the ground first.*



*Roll on to back, with chin tucked forward.*



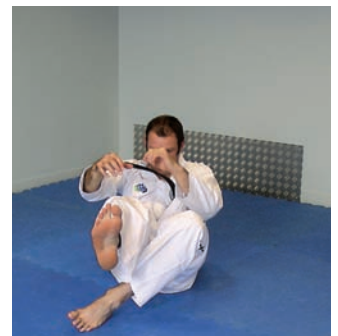
*Roll up into kneeling position.*



*START POSITION: Kneeling front view.*



*Tuck head and roll forward with lead shoulder making contact with the ground first.*



*Roll on to back, with chin tucked forward.*



*Roll up into kneeling position.*

*Although not illustrated - this sequence can also be performed from a standing position.*

## GROUND DEFENCE

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THE GROUND DEFENCE SYLLABUS WE CURRENTLY HAVE IS AN IMPROVEMENT ON THE OLD SYLLABUS, WHICH USED TO BE QUITE 'STAGED'. IT IS MORE REALISTIC AND PUTS THE STUDENT IN THE UNCOMFORTABLE POSITION OF HAVING TO DEFEND THEMSELVES IF THEY ARE KNOCKED OR FORCED TO THE GROUND.

There are limited references students can refer to in regards to what is required and what training they should be undertaking for this aspect of their Black Belt grading.

ONCE ON THE GROUND THE DEFENDERS FIRST TWO PRIMARY AIMS SHOULD BE TO:

- Prevent injury
- Get up off the ground

At present, our Ground Defence focuses a lot on what to do on the ground, but the real emphasis should be for the student to be able to get up off the ground as soon as possible.

### POSITIONING ON THE GROUND



*Back position - on back with head and shoulders off the ground with chin tucked to chest and hands up to protect face. With one foot on the ground allowing you to easily move while keeping your feet between your body/head and your attacker.*



*Side position - on one hip and elbow, bringing top hand up to protect head. Top knee drawn back ready to kick.*



## GETTING UP OFF THE GROUND

This drill is the most practical way of getting up off the ground in a Self-Defence situation. This can initially be a tricky manoeuvre - both sides will need to be practised.

Once in the final crouch position, it requires a little bit of foot shuffling and balance to come up into a standing position. When practicing get into the habit of being ready to guard against any further attack, ie. hands up ready to block and cover the head.



*From the side position, transfer weight to the lower elbow and grounded foot.*



*Lift off the ground and swing lower leg under body.*



*Move to crouching position then stand up. Keeping top hand in position to block any attack.*

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seven

ATTACKING OPTIONS



FRONT KICK



TURNING KICK



SIDE KICK 1



SIDE KICK 2



*This particular kick lends itself nicely to getting up off the ground as shown on page 24*

All of these techniques can also be practiced against the attacker holding a larger air shield as demonstrated in the turning kick option above.



LEG TRAP OPTIONS



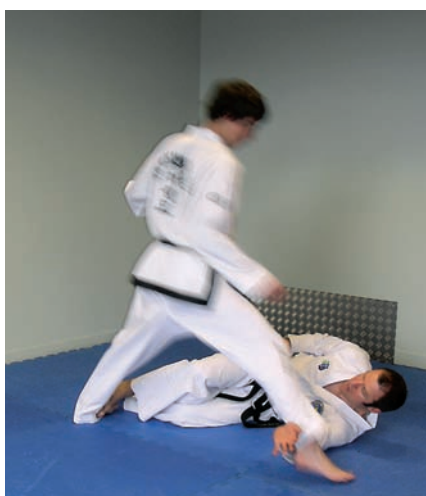
*DOUBLE LEG TRAP FALLING BACKWARDS*



*DOUBLE LEG TRAP FALLING FORWARDS*



*SINGLE LEG TRAP FALLING BACKWARDS*



*LEG SWEEP WITH HAND*



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*seven*

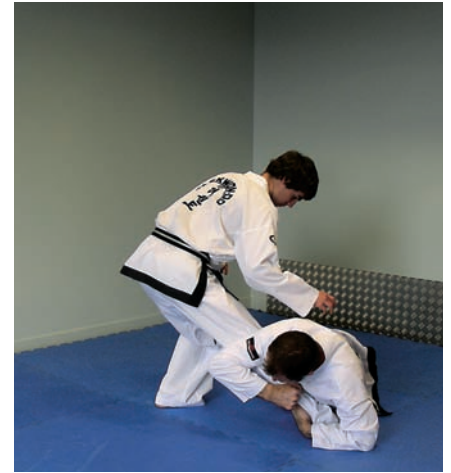
KICK TO HEAD/UPPER BODY, BLOCK & TAKE DOWN



*Block the kick with parallel outer forearms.*



*Roll up onto attackers knee with chest (you could go straight to this movement rather than blocking first).*



*Continue rolling and applying weight to attackers knee joint.*



*Once the attacker is on the ground, continue to roll over and finish with an elbow strike.*

## *chapter*

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### *seven*

#### STICK MOVEMENT DRILL

This drill was demonstrated by Master PELLOW during one of his recent seminars in Tauranga. Get a partner to use a long stick to prod straight down at you on the floor. The idea is that while on the floor you roll and move your body around to avoid the stick. Start off slow, the idea is just to get used to moving on the ground while maintaining a Defence position with your hands and feet.



## STICK DEFENCE

---

WEAPONS DEFENCE IS NOT ASSESSED UNTIL 3RD DAN GRADING AND ONLY RELATES TO DEFENDING AGAINST A STICK ATTACK.

Again little reference material is available to students, they are left to research and choreograph their own routines.

Our previous syllabus used to also incorporate knife defence. I recently attended a knife defence seminar run by Mr Phil THOMPSON from *Protect Self-Defence*. This was one of the best seminars I have ever attended and quickly demonstrated that knife and stick Defence are two completely different skill sets.

Knives are easy to conceal and a real attack with one will be quite 'frenzied'.

Stick attacks required the attacker to initiate their attack at a slightly greater distance, by way of swinging the weapon. The defender must choose his moment and close in on his attacker at the right time in order to neutralise the attack.

In the past I have been guilty of using completely different techniques to defend against 'Inwards Strikes' and a 'Downwards Strikes' with a stick. In reality - once the attacker begins to swing the stick, there is very little time to determine the exact angle the stick will be travelling at. For this reason I have simplified the Defences for these attacks keeping them as similar as possible.



## *chapter* --- *eight*

### ATTACK: INWARD SWING



*ATTACK: Attacker swings stick on an inward angel of about 45°.*



*Option 1a: Defender moves in and blocks swinging arm with outer forearm.*



*Option 1b: Defender follows through and strikes attackers face with a high elbow strike.*



*Option 1b - shown from reverse side.*



*Option 2a - after blocking the swinging arm, defender grabs the attackers shoulder with other arm.*



*Option 2b - Defender pulls attacker forward and targets the solar plexus with the knee.*

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eight

ATTACK: INWARD SWING - continued



*Option 3a - after blocking the swinging arm, defender grabs the attackers shoulder with other arm.*



*Option 3b - Defender drives forward taking the attackers weight backwards.*



*Option 3c - Defender sweeps the attackers leg.*



*Option 3d - Defender takes attacker to the ground.*



*Option 4a - Using the forearms to cover the head - Defender drives forward targeting the upper chest with lead elbow.*



*Option 4b - Defender targets the face with an upper elbow strike.*

*chapter*  

---

*eight*

ATTACK: DOWNWARD SWING



*ATTACK: Attacker swings stick on a downward angel.*



*Option 1a - Defender moves in and blocks swinging arm with a rising outer forearm.*



*Option 1b - Defender targets the face with an high elbow strike.*



*Option 1a - shown from reverse side.*



*Option 1b - shown from reverse side.*



*chapter*  

---

*eight*

ATTACK: BACK HAND SWING



*ATTACK: Attacker swings stick in a backhand motion.*



*Option 1a: Defender blocks with parallel forearms.*



*Option 1b: Defender grabs attackers wrist, and targets the elbow with an upper elbow strike.*



*Option 2a: Defender pulls attackers wrist and targets the side of the face with an open fist.*



*Option 3a: Defender grabs attackers wrist and targets attackers ribs with the knee.*



*Option 4a: Defender grabs attackers wrist and targets the attackers tricep/elbow with outer forearm, taking the attacker to the floor.*

chapter  
eight

ATTACK: LOW IN-WARD SWING



*ATTACK: Attacker swings stick on an inward angle below the waist.*



*Option 1a: Defender steps forward blocking the swinging arm with the tibia.*



*Option 1b: Defender steps forward grabbing the back of the attackers head and targets the solar plexus with the knee.*



*chapter*  
*eight*

ATTACK: JAB



*ATTACK: Attacker drives the stick forward in a stabbing motion.*



*Option 1a: Defender steps offline and deflects the attacking arm with the inner forearm.*



*Option 1b: Defender steps forward targeting the attackers face with a reverse knifehand.*



*Option 1a - shown from reverse side.*



*Option 1b - shown from reverse side.*

## ADDITIONAL TRAINING EXERCISES

---

### SUGGESTED WARM UP EXERCISES:



*Partners grab doboks and push against each other.*



*Partners grab doboks and pull against each other.*



*Partners grab doboks and attempt to tap each others ankles.*



*Partners grab opposing wrists and attempt to tap each others head.*



*Wrist Stretch 1 - from front*



*Wrist Stretch 1 - from side*



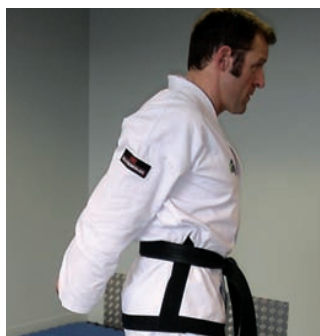
*Wrist Stretch 2 - keep the stretching hand close to body sliding it down vertically.*



*Shoulder Stretch*



*Tricep Stretch*



*Bicep/Shoulder Stretch*



chapter  
nine

SUGGESTED PAD DRILLS



*Upwards kick with knee.*



*High elbow strike.*



*Upper elbow strike.*



*Elbow strike to high rear target.*



*Front elbow strike.*



*Open fist punch.*



*Reverse knifehand strike.*



*Inwards knifehand strike.*



*Side fist strike.*



## chapter nine

### AVOIDANCE EXERCISES:

These were demonstrated by Master HUTTON at his Auckland seminar and involve walking past people at a safe distance. The idea is to pass the other person at a safe distance keeping them in your peripheral vision and not lock eye contact for any extended period.

I have tried this at a club training with half the class walking around a designated square area in one direction and the other half walking past in the opposite direction. I have also introduced one or two people as 'grabbers' - who are either stationery or also walking. Students found this effective and easy to learn.



*Drill 1: Walking past each other*



*Drill 2: Walking around a stationery person (simulating the partner standing on a corner).*



### PERIPHERAL VISION DRILL:

This was demonstrated by Master DAVIDSON at the recent Veterans Camp in Tauranga. The idea is to develop the use of peripheral vision against multiple attackers.

The use of a person's peripheral vision is greatly improved when they look down towards the ground rather than up on a horizontal plane, trying to scan left to right. Foot movement can be picked up easier, without having to move the head greatly from side to side.

Practice by placing the defender inside a circle of attackers who then approach and try to touch or grab the defender.

## SELF-DEFENCE DRILLS:

### WHISTLE DRILL 1:

This drill is used to not only increase fitness, but to test techniques while putting the defender under some stress. Pair students up and designate as '1 & 2' or 'A & B'.

During the course of the training session, without warning blow a whistle. On the whistle blast one of the pair does 5 burpees as fast as they can. On the completion of the burpees their partner will attack or grab them (the attack / grab can be predetermined or left to the students discretion).

The randomness of the drill initiation and the exertion of the burpees will place the student in a stress-induced state similar to being attacked without warning.

We use this technique a lot on the shooting range, prior to shooting, to practice shooting under stress.

### WHISTLE DRILL 2:

Have all the students step into a small designated area and walk / mill around (a matted square area works best). Introduce a small item that can be discretely handed from student to student without all students being aware of who is in possession of it at any given time (something like a coin will suffice).

Without warning blow a whistle and the person holding the item at the time attacks the nearest person with an attack or grab.

This not only places the defender under stress but also gets people to use their peripheral vision. Students will become aware of what is going on around them while trying to locate where the item being handed from person to person is prior to the attack.

This drill can be used for children and adults. With a more senior class the drill can be conducted by handing a training knife from person to person.

### EYES CLOSED:

This is an oldie, but a goodie. It can be done in pairs or as a group with someone standing in the middle of a circle. The defender stands with their eyes closed while they are grabbed / attacked at random.

The defenders object is to open their eyes and react to the attack as swiftly as possible. Another option, if possible, is to dim the lights in the training area.

Another variation on this drill is to have the attacker shove the defender with an air shield / pad (start off lightly) from any direction and have the defender react by opening their eyes and then striking the pad multiple times at short range.



### COVERING UP:

This drill gets people used to getting hit so that when they do find themselves in a real assault situation they have been exposed to it and won't freeze.

The defender stands in a fighting stance with their forearms covering their head. The Attacker uses the focus mitts to prod and hit the defender (lightly) around the head and ribs. The defenders job is to absorb the attacks and keeps their eyes open.

A variation on this is during the attack the Attacker slaps the mitts together and calls out number. When this happens the defender punches / strikes the focus mitts the number of times called out by the Attacker.

Once the defender finishes their strikes they cover up and the Attacker continues prodding and striking.

## *chapter*

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## *nine*

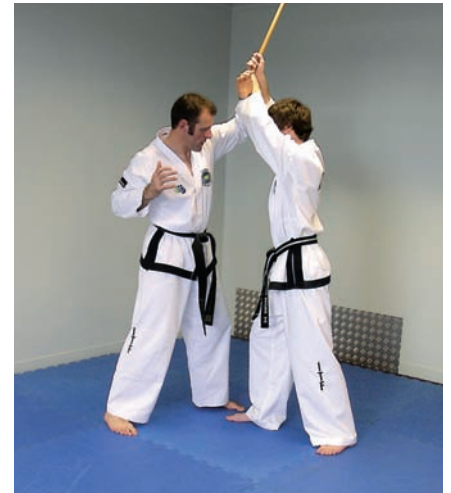
### SELF-DEFENCE DRILLS CONTINUED:

#### STICK AVOIDANCE:

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This drill was shown to me by Master PELLOW and Mr Ian CAMPBELL. Working in pairs, one partner has a short stick, which they swing SLOWLY at their partner (horizontally and vertically).

Their partner moves to avoid being struck by the stick. This drill is really about getting the student to move out of the way of an attack.



## *chapter*

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## *nine*

### SELF-DEFENCE DRILLS CONTINUED:

#### MUFTI NIGHTS:

---

Theses are good for a change. Arrange a training session as a mufti night and have students come and train in their normal clothing.

This also allows students to practice their techniques while wearing shoes, something we don't practice often, if at all.

#### SCENARIOS:

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These are the top end of the training, where you can simulate real Self-Defence situations, safely.

These have to be closely controlled so as not to get out of hand, resulting in injury and are not recommended for children.

Care must also be taken that the participants are not left mentally and emotionally dramatised by the experience.

This training is utilised a lot during Police training and I have also had some exposure to it during 'Protect' training courses. In both environments the participants were wearing civilian clothing and appropriate safety gear. The scenarios were also closely controlled so as not to get out of hand.

I think that simple scenarios can be introduced in club trainings, where adult participants are dressed in dobok. A simple scenario for example is getting one student to walk through a crowded area (simulating a bar) and another student bumps into them or pushes them for no reason.

In scenario based training you are only limited by your imagination, but at all times safety must come first.



## CONCLUSION

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AS MENTIONED AT THE START THE AIM OF THIS THESIS IS TO DISCUSS IDEAS TO MAKE SELF-DEFENCE MORE REALISTIC, EFFECTIVE AND INTERESTING. I HAVE ALSO MADE SOME RECOMMENDATIONS IN REGARDS TO THE CURRENT COLOURED BELT SYLLABUS AND SOME SUGGESTIONS FOR GROUND AND STICK DEFENCE.

For me the 'Self-Defence' syllabus has always been the most interesting aspect of Taekwon-Do. I hope those reading this thesis can take at least one or two 'nuggets' of information from it that works for them.

As instructors it is our responsibility to ensure our students are trained to defend themselves properly. Keep training realistic and simple and you can't go too far wrong.

*'The more you sweat in training,  
the less you bleed in battle'*

*(Motto of the Navy Seals)*

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---

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About.com Health's Disease and Condition content is reviewed by the Medical Review Board

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JUDO - THE ESSENTIAL GUIDE TO MASTERING THE ART

*By Alex Butcher*

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