



4 Star Self-defence

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Seven Principles of Self-defence

1. **There's more to self-defense than physical techniques:** No matter how much training and practise in martial arts or self-defense techniques you may have you aren't truly equipped for self-defense if that's all you have. Practical self-defense isn't about out-battling an opponent. If you thwart an attacker by not becoming a victim by avoiding or escaping rather than engaging, you succeed.
2. **Avoidance:** First, you must learn to recognize and avoid potentially violent situations before they occur. This is where we win with our brains and our perceptions rather than our fists and feet. When it isn't possible to avoid a confrontation you may still be able to avoid entrapment. This can mean walking out into the middle of the street instead of trying to hide in a doorway or alley or it can mean doing something so totally bizarre and unexpected that you create an opening for escape where one didn't previously exist.
3. **Minimize risk of injury:** You WILL be injured if a confrontation escalates to a physical attack. Therefore your first line of defense after avoidance is to de-escalate things before they reach the physical attack stage. This could involve capitulation (your money, iPod, etc. or your life should not be a difficult decision) or sometimes speaking in a calm, firm but non-confrontational voice to convince the assailant that he or she doesn't really want things to get out of hand either. But remember two things: First, attacking another human being is not necessarily a rational act, so don't be surprised if attempting to reason with someone engaged in an irrational act is unsuccessful. Secondly, someone who does attack is probably not the most trustworthy individual, so don't be surprised if they don't hold up their end of the bargain..

If things do escalate, the key to survival is to use dodges, redirection and misdirection and, if necessary, releases, escapes, blocks, holds and throws to minimize exposure and injury. You should counter attack only when it does not increase your risk. If a counter attack doesn't create an opportunity for escape or isn't definitive enough to at least temporarily disable your

attacker, it will only escalate the situation and therefore make your situation worse.

4. **De-escalate:** Any and every blow that is struck increases the level of intensity, therefore decreasing the chances of extracting yourself from the situation. The first and simplest means of de-escalating a conflict is separation. When the distance between potential combatants increases the intensity of the conflict tends to decrease. The second is control. First get control of yourself – don't let your actions be determined by an attacker. Then, if the other party to the conflict is not inclined or able to control him or herself, you may have to.
5. **Control:** This may mean physical restraint, employing control techniques such as holds and joint locks, but you may also control an attacker with positioning or engaging a third party intervener, but in any case the objective is to prevent further escalation and injury.
6. **Create the opportunity for escape:** On the street we fight to survive, not to win. The sole purpose of counter attacking should be to create the opportunity for escape – sometimes that means neutralizing (by means of inflicting serious pain or injury) one or more attackers. If, however, you can escape without counter attacking, do it. Creating the opportunity for escape may be as simple as attracting attention by making noise, exaggerated gestures or other behavior to attract attention (and potential witnesses) to your situation.
7. **If you must fight back:** Remember that, not only does any counter attack that fails to create an opportunity for escape represent a waste of energy and an ill-advised exposure, it also escalates the conflict. So if you must fight back you must be able to do so effectively.

If you can't create an opportunity for escape without counter attacking, don't count on overpowering an adversary. There are very few people, including experienced martial artists, who can deliver the theoretical one-punch knockout on demand. In real life situations the most effective counter attacks are usually sweeps, strikes to sensitive areas and, to a lesser extent, techniques which inflict pain.

Remember that sparring in a martial arts class is a training exercise, not a self-defense simulation. In self-defense there should be no wasted blows – even a strike that penetrates an attacker's defenses is wasted if it is not delivered definitively to a vital point. The easiest vital points to strike include the knees, throat, temples, the base of the skull and the eyes. Important control points are the wrists, elbows, shoulders and knees.